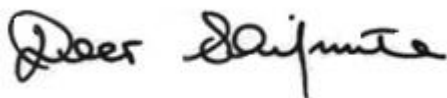


"Do You Hear There"

23 July 1997



Whilst sitting pondering the Mysteries of Life, such as the specific gravity of half-a-tot or that fate which elevates "the chosen ones" to the "Great Fraternity of Gentlemen Stokers", I thought, why not a newsletter for the branch? On reflection I should really have carried on research into the specific gravity of half-a-tot but the glass was empty so a newsletter it is!

January saw the AGM with S/M Peter Brown retiring from the post of Secretary and yours truly retiring the trusty wheel spanner, (often wondered what it was for!), and taking up the quill on behalf of the branch.

Peter's great contribution to the branch was recognised by the presentation of an engraved goblet at the March meeting which he promised to commission with something suitable!

Our new venue at the Trecarn Hotel is proving to be an excellent meeting place with all the facilities we could wish for and the branch is indebted to Brian Pitman the General Manager for his most caring concern for our requirements.

Guest speakers, in the words of the song, "we've had a few" and very interesting they have been, we've learned of the work of Torbay Hospital League of Friends, the dealings of the War Pensions Service and just what does a Town centre Manager do?

"Ted the Treasurer" has with his customary flair organised a game of Tombola on occasion, I'm sure he has a secret "nutty mine" somewhere, there are always splendid nutty bars for prizes, night flying rations!

We also one evening, in true Drake tradition engaged in a splendid game of bowls, well it was something like bowls, "Gentlemen Stokers Rules" which confused the "Rough Upper Deck Chaps" but I'm sure Sir Francis would have recognised the game!

On a more serious note members have attended three parades this year, Slapton Sands Exercise Tiger Commemoration, the Mayors Annual Service and the Service of the Sea when our Chaplain Mike Burton officiated, Admiral Williams, our Patron read a lesson, and we were supported by shipmates from Brixham Branch, the RMA and members of other organisations. George Hedges, our Chairman, has mentioned attendances at services; he would like to see more of a "Clear Lower Deck" on those occasions.

A run to witness The Field Gun Crew, (Devonport of course), in action at a pre-tournament public display was held at the beginning of this month, I'm told it was a good evening rounded off with a small libation or two in Drake Senior Rates Mess.

We have also enjoyed the hospitality of Dartmouth Branch at a couple of barbecues and a few members joined with Newton Abbot Branch at their 40th Anniversary Dinner. From afar off we had an interesting letter from the Antipodes, the Secretary Geelong Branch who had spent time as an evacuee in Torbay wrote to us about her experiences which was most interesting.

Looking ahead we have three interesting speakers lined up for the Autumn, and there's the Trafalgar Dinner & Dance, our Guest of Honour is Commodore Masterton-Smith R.N. the Commanding Officer BRNC Dartmouth. There are also parades & services, Trafalgar & Remembrance and of course the Annual Remembrance Festival. Finally, last but not least, in December the Christmas Party, so we do have a full programme till the end of the year.

Shipmates are no doubt aware Bob Riach has been sick on shore for some time now, (stood out on the bridge wing without his vest on!) and has been unable to attend meetings and has passed his duties as Social Secretary into my care. Bob has asked me to pass on, with his good wishes the message that all members are welcome to call on him and Win anytime, just give him a ring, and they will put the kettle on and be delighted to see you. Thanks Bob for all your efforts on behalf of the branch and get well soon.

We also owe a vote of thanks to Sue Hemmings for her efforts in running the raffle and PRO from which tasks she has now had to retire, thanks Sue you did a great job, "Chairman George" is still trying to work out how the tea towel he won works!

Shipmates that's just about enough I think, for this effort anyway, quill is wearing out and the gulls won't come near? I hope you will consider a "dit" like this a good idea; the aim is to "bang one together" twice a year. Please do let me know whatever you think, good/bad/indifferent, whatever, just don't hit me, as an "Innocent Stoker" I'm allergic to pain!

Finally, I'll finish as I started, considering the Mysteries of Life, like this one. When you've been travelling on draft from, say "Guz to Rosyth", have you ever wondered what engine drivers do during those long un-explained stops in the middle of the country side?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Ness', with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom.

Grant Ness
Honorary Secretary