

The HMS Exmouth 1940 Association

Founded September 2001 in Wick, Caithness, Scotland.

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Issue: No2

The Association was formed by relatives of the crew with the aim of furthering an interest in this fine ship and to perpetuate the memory, courage and comradeship of the entire ship's company who were lost when she was sunk by enemy action in the Moray Firth, off the coast of Wick in January 1940.

It is our intention to maintain a strong and continued link with the community of the Old Parish Church in Wick. The Church is the custodian of the White Ensign posthumously awarded to the crew of the Exmouth by Commodore Sandford CBE, on behalf of the Royal Navy, during the Memorial Service held on Sunday 2nd September. The church, through their own means, generously propose to provide a glass case to permanently house the Ensign and to have it on display at all times. This permanent memorial to the entire crew of HMS Exmouth will provide a focal point of remembrance and the comfort afforded us by the Rev. Stevie Thompson that "as long as this church stands ... the men of the Exmouth will be remembered."

The Association does not seek to glorify war, it is not commercially motivated and is entirely non-political. Application for membership is welcomed from anyone of a like mind.

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Association News

Dear Friends

Welcome to the Association's second Newsletter. First, we would like to thank all of those members who have written to us as a result of either the Memorial Weekend or in response to the first Newsletter published last October. It is our intention to publish all of your articles in forthcoming issues of the Newsletter. Thank you again for finding the time to put pen to paper – it is very much appreciated.

The main purpose of this correspondence is to canvass your views on a proposal for the Association to hold a reunion weekend/ memorial service this year in Portsmouth. The Exmouth was a Portsmouth based ship. She was built in Portsmouth and the majority of the ship's company are commemorated on the Naval Memorial on Southsea Common (those men who are not buried in Wick Cemetery).

It is of course very much appreciated that the main focus for remembering the loss of the ship, and her entire crew, should remain with Wick. Those of you who attended the Memorial Weekend in the town last September will undoubtedly share the feeling that this occasion was very much a 'once in a life time' experience that can never be repeated. We know it will not be possible to recreate such an atmosphere elsewhere and our connection with the people of Wick is unique and special

2 However, due to the geographical spread of our membership, we felt it only right that we should provide an opportunity for members to meet in remembrance in a southern location. Portsmouth, a naval town with strong connections to HMS Exmouth, would be the ideal candidate. Many of our more elderly membership living in the south were unable to make the long journey to Wick last September and would very much welcome this second opportunity. In addition, we are aware of one or two ex-crew members who may well be able to join us if we meet in Portsmouth.

The time and date of the proposed service was again given careful consideration. The most obvious dates are the anniversary of the ship's loss (21st January) and Remembrance Sunday itself. However, it was decided against both of these on the grounds of possible inclement weather conditions for both January and November - especially when we return to Wick in the future. It has therefore been decided that the nearest date to the inauguration of the Association would be the preferred option for future years.

Should there be sufficient support from the membership and the service were to go ahead, we also felt that any future memorial service organised by the Association should be on a bi-annual basis, alternating between Wick and Portsmouth for the reasons given above.

The outline plan is as follows, and we would appreciate an early reply from yourselves confirming your intentions so as to enable further detailed planning to go ahead.

Saturday 31st August 2002 - A welcome desk to be manned in the foyer of the Portsmouth Royal Sailor's Home Club, which is situated close to the city's historic dockyard. This will enable you to register your arrival, and for those of you unfamiliar with the city's attractions, to obtain some guidance as to their whereabouts. These include the Southsea Naval Memorial, Royal Naval Museum, HMS Victory, HMS Warrior, The Mary Rose, and / or a short ferry trip across Portsmouth harbour to Gosport and its submarine museum. There will be plenty to occupy those interested in naval history.

That evening, we have reserved a bar and skittle alley in the Home Club, so as we can all meet up and have a chat over a drink and catch up on what we've been up to since we last met. A basket meal can be provided at a reasonable price if required.

On the morning of **Sunday 1st September**, the Royal Naval Chaplain has agreed to hold a service on Southsea Common at the Naval Memorial, where the names of the crew are inscribed. Then we can join with his congregation at the church in the dockyard where a dedication will be given to the men of the Exmouth. Finally returning to the Home Club for a farewell lunch time drink.

Note: We have, as an Association, joined as a member of the Royal Sailor's Home Club for this year (Membership No. 5007). This enables any member of the Association to use the club's facilities, including bar, restaurant, swimming pool, gym, snooker table etc, when visiting Portsmouth at any time throughout this year. Contact them either via their web site at www.homeclub Portsmouth.co.uk or e-mail address: sailors@homeclub Portsmouth.co.uk or phone number 023 9282 4231.

Accommodation is also available here at £62.00 a night for a double/twin room, reducing to £58.00 a night for two nights or more, including cooked breakfast and VAT.

Bargain breaks are available, please contact the club direct for details.

Portsmouth and Southsea being a coastal resort, plenty of accommodation is available elsewhere should you require it, please contact the local Tourist Board direct on 023 9282 6722.

Please complete the attached pro-forma and return to Sue Eastwood **at your earliest opportunity** so as we can gauge a response to the proposal of holding a Memorial Weekend this year. Thank you.