

May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004

Dear Jane (P.T.O)



## The HMS Exmouth 1940 Association

Founded 2001

With just over 4 weeks away, I am writing to advise you of the 'official' programme for those members who are attending the weekend (4,5&6<sup>th</sup> June) in the town of Exmouth, my apologies for leaving this to the 'last minute' as I have been waiting on confirmation.

I would first like to take this opportunity to remind members that the event, first and foremost, is the commemoration of the of the D-Day landings, where the town of Exmouth was used as one of the many embarkation points for the allied army in 1944, not least, a sizeable part of the United States armed forces. The organisers of the event have this fact uppermost in their planning, however, they are thrilled to have our association join them for this event, especially with it's links to the town. Coincidentally, the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of June mirror the *exact* dates that our HMS Exmouth paid a civic visit to the Devon town in 1938, which also throws up two connections to that event.

1) Margaret McMillan, who still resides in the town, met her husband (a sailor aboard HMS Exmouth) during it's visit, and also, who's father also served aboard the ship a few years earlier, both of whom were not aboard the ship when it was lost. Margaret will be attending the official function, see below. 2) Our very own, Able Seaman Gordon 'Froggy' French will also be attending, at a very sprightly 88 years young. 'Froggy' who has published a book of sketch's and anecdotes in memory of his shipmates (on sale at £5 + 95p P&P from your chairman, Chqs made payable to The HMS Exmouth 1940 Assoc), left the ship just two weeks prior to it's sinking. He was also reported in the local Exmouth Gazette as being the ships 'eccentric dancer' during a concert given by the crew to the towns people of Exmouth.....look out for more of the same, I'm sure!!

For your information, Sue Eastwood, Alex Morrison and myself (the committee) with our respective families, will be staying at the DOLPHIN HOTEL in Morton Road, Exmouth. Two minutes walk from here is the (RAFA) Royal Air Force Association Club, 33 Imperial Road, Tel 01395-266685, where most of the 'official' functions will be held, and where we have been kindly invited to use as a 'base' by the event organiser, Mr Lionel Howell. I'm told that various events will be going on over the weekend, and the following are where we have been officially invited.

Friday evening at 7pm, at the RAFA Club, the Mayor of Exmouth, Mr Trevor Cope, will welcome our association to the town and present us with a town crest. Also in attendance will be Margaret McMillan and the present Viscount Exmouth along with various representatives of the Royal Navy and Royal Marine associations. I'm told that a light buffet will also be served and that members are invited to stay on for a chat, and enjoy the 'live band' that will be performing that evening.

On the Sat & Sun, between approx 10am - 7pm, a fete is held in Phear Park, Withycombe Road, Exmouth with all manor of stalls in attendance. It is our intention to promote the memory of our ship and it's crew, and fund raising for the memorial plaque, at this location, by 'manning' a small stand. Please come and make yourself known to us, and perhaps relieve us for an hour or so, so as we can grab a bite to eat, and talk to passing folk about your connection to the ship. You will be most welcome.

On the Sunday, the parade will fall in outside the RAFA Club at 10.20am and march off at 10.25 for the 10-minute walk to Phear Park, where a service of remembrance will be held at the D-Day memorial in the park. The parade will consist of a Royal Marine Guard and Band, United States Navy Colour Party along with Standard Bearers from the Royal British Legion and service associations.

At the time of writing, I am unsure as to whether or not, as representatives of the ship, we will be required to be involved. If you feel you would want to be involved, could I ask that you / we confirm this over the weekend. However, I know that we would be very welcome at the service in the park. All in all it promises to be a good weekend and an opportunity for us all to meet up with both old and new friends.

For those of you who can't make the event, you will be in our thoughts and we will of course publish a full report afterwards. Can I take this opportunity to also respectfully ask that you forward your annual sub's to our treasurer, at the address below. We are in discussion with a manufacturer of memorial plaques, as it is our intention to pay for one to be placed in the Church in Wick (hopefully next year), again we hope to bring you further details in the next newsletter.

Chairman: Mr David Ellis 54 Redhouse Park Gardens, Gosport, Hants PO12 3EQ

Secretary: Mrs Sue Eastwood ~~28 St Peters Court~~, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2UU

Treasurer: Mr Alex Morrison 6 Melbost Borve, Isle of Lewis HS2 0RR