

From: CHIEF PETTY OFFICER S R COUCH Royal Navy



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ASWI Membership

09 JUN 2004

SEAMASTER NEWSLETTER 01

From the Chairman:

First and foremost welcome to the first of many of the ASWI association 'Seamaster' Newsletters. My intention is for the newsletter not only to be informative but also to reach out to the members who do not have access to the Internet. I hope that we can achieve this, but like anything new, feedback is essential so that we can get it right.

Some fundamental changes have occurred over the past year or so. Most notably is the association's temporary move to Plymouth, which was the result of myself, being voted in as 'Chairman', a post that has been normally filled by an FCPO/Warrant Officer. The present committee is:

Chairman	CPO (UW) Steve Couch (Plymouth)
Vice Chairman	Mr Bill Barrett (Portsmouth)
Treasurer	Mr Bill Bailey (Plymouth)
Social Secretary	Mr Dave Gemmill (Plymouth)
Ex-serving rep	Mr Andy Gleeve (Portsmouth)
Acting Secretary	Mrs C Gemmill (Plymouth)

The committee's first and most important priority is to ensure the association survives well into the new millennium, a priority that was looking distinctly dubious in the not too recent past. But I shall not dwell on past events but look into the future. The association will need to evolve and adapt if it is to have a place in modern day society and social attitudes. The serving membership has dwindled and the association's appeal to the new modern Senior Rate is negligible. This is why change is necessary and needed if we are to attract new members and continue as a healthy and vibrant association.

The next twelve-months are going to be a period of re-building and re-structuring and will not be without its trials and tribulations but with luck and the constant support that you have shown, at the end of it all we should continue to have an association to be proud of and enjoy.

Closure of HMS DRYAD

As of the 1st of April of this year HMS Dryad ceased to exist as a RN training base in its own right. Due to the rationalization of all shore training establishments, it was decided to centralise all Warfare training at HMS Collingwood in Lee-on-Solent. Once again the Sonar school has to move, as it did in the early eighties from HMS Vernon (now a shopping and cinema complex) to Dryad. The move has already begun and all training will be conducted in Collingwood by November of this year. Cook building will be an enclave and kept up and running, whilst the new simulator is built at Collingwood. It is undecided at going to press what is the intention for the rest of the buildings and facilities; rumour has it that the Military Police will move there.

The PRI's club that the association used as a meeting place and social area has also closed. However, my predecessor Dave Williams managed to secure in partnership with the PRI's, a room in the Collingwood Senior Rates mess to use as a general meeting place.

I have had numerous enquiries regarding items that have been donated to the association. It is the intention to move a lot of items which were on display in Lewin building, Dryad, to the new Sonar training section in Collingwood. Other items, such as medals etc will be hopefully put on display in the Plymouth Dockyard Museum for safe keeping until a more permanent display area can be found.

The future Sonar Rate

Many of you already know that the generic 'Sonar' man ceased to exist more than 10 years ago when the 'Operations Branch' and 'Weapon Engineering Branch' merged at Junior Rate level to become the Warfare Branch. The whole methodology of training changed with the focus on shorter training time (just enough, just in time) and more 'On Job Training' (OJT) to bring the operators to the required standard. More advanced technology has led to less manpower requirements, thus resulting in the amalgamation of the two branches – now called the OM(UW). However, 10 years down the line and some major manning and recruitment issues has resulted in a re-think, and a new 'beast' has been created to operate and maintain our equipment. The OM(W) has now hit the streets. In a nutshell the guy or girl (politically correct) will only be trained on a Command system. They then could fill any warfare billet onboard by conducting a TEM (PJT); say sonar operator. Their next draft could see them fill the billet of an AWW or EW billet for which they will then complete the required TEM for that job. Confused!! Think how we feel having to manage these people.

But things are not stopping there, other ideas being banded about for future manning are:

- Training all that is required before joining the Ship in a single warfare discipline (haven't we seen that before??).
- Separate Warfare support branch for minor maintenance (this all sounds very familiar).
- Direct entry Senior Rates (!!!!!)

As I said things are still changing – watch this space.

From the Social Secretary

Well as you should know by now this year's Reunion will be held in HMS Drakes WO&SRs mess on Saturday 23rd Oct 2004. Most of the legwork is now done all I need to wait for now is applications form to be returned. Dress for this year reunion is smart casuals. You will receive a drink on arrival, just to get you into the mood and there will be wine on your table to enjoy with your meal. So I'm hoping to see every one on the night. If you require accommodation please let me know my number is 01752 318466. The **CLOSING DATE** is 11th October 2004.

2005 Annual Dinner

This is the 50th Anniversary of the Branch; so I'm hoping you will all agree that we do a Formal Dinner Dance. At the moment I'm trying to get the mess at RNAS Yeovilton, which is roughly half way between Guzz and Pompy, I would also like to put coaches on from both ends so that everyone can have a really good weekend. Once I get any more information I will pass it onto everyone.

The Webmaster

Hello all and here is my short transmission to let you know that the website has recently (March) been upgraded and a members area has been included. This was requested at the February meeting of the Association.

The website is becoming the main communications tool for the Association so visit the website at

<http://www.aswi.co.uk>

If you have not received an email from me in the last 3 weeks then I do not have your email

address. Please email me at webmaster@aswi.co.uk so that I can get you back on the email list.

If you change your email address please let me know so that I can keep the details up to date.

The ASWI Chatroom is open for a planned chat at 1945 (UK Time) on a Wednesday evening. I hope to see you there.

Remember to have access to the member's area you need to be a paid up member.

Regards

Bob Burton (webmaster)

Strangle searcher

Absent friends

The last year or so has seen the association lose some of its well-known and respected members. We all send our condolences and thoughts to the families and remember fondly the men who have passed from this world.

Mick Legg 1957 – 1987

Reg Madge

Jeff Cleary

Robbie Robinson 1936 – 1976

Closing Remarks

I hope that this Newsletter has achieved its aim and that any feedback is most welcome. On closing may I remind you all that the AGM and Reunion is booked for the 23rd October in HMS Drake. So please send to either myself, or any of the committee, items for the AGM. I look forward to meeting and seeing as many of you there as possible. Get your bids in early for accommodation.

Calm seas

Steve Couch
Chairman