

## MERCURY OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION

### Minutes of the Mercury Old Boys Association 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held at The Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, PO4 0RN Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

#### 01 - Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Barry West (3975), as President, opened the meeting at 1800 by welcoming everyone present. He then commended the hard work of all the committee members over the past year.

The Chairman, David Parsons (4709) added his own welcome to all attending, particularly those who had travelled a long way.

Apologies from the committee had been received from Steve Wade (4958). Ken Deane (4334) had kindly agreed to deputise as Acting Honorary Secretary for this meeting. Apologies from other members of the Association were taken as read.

He went on to say that, this year, there were 43 old boys and two honorary members attending. He reminded members that the president of the *HMS Worcester Association*, Colin Steere, was an Honorary Member and in attendance. In addition, this year, the president of the *HMS Conway Association*, Chris Smith, would also be joining the reunion dinner and this was most welcome in helping to bring the associations closer together. He noted his particular thanks to Mike and Barbara Ball for their hard work in making the reunion arrangements.

He went on, with sadness, to record the names of Mercury Old Boys that had been notified to the Association as having "crossed the bar" since the last AGM. They were:

2598 Major Matthew Oliver – died 2012  
2902 Trevor Armstrong  
3181 George Macleod – died 2012  
3214 Roger Aske  
3339 John Fancett – died 2014  
3388 Lt Cdr Dennis Ashton  
3389 John Ashton  
3514 Frank Ruddock  
3578 Ron Morris  
3628 Paul Franklin  
3723 Capt Sam Household  
3830 Michael Sutherland  
3917 David Harrison  
3941 Mike Tasker  
4160 Eddie Stott – died 2008  
4217 Capt Robert Kitchener  
4728 Peter French

He paid particular tribute to Peter French, the former Vice Chairman, who had been a close personal friend and one of the longest serving committee members for almost 35 years. In all that time he gave unstinting service and loyalty to the Association, initially as Membership Secretary for 20 years and latterly as Vice Chairman. Even during his serious illness, he threw himself into managing the design and construction of the replacement war memorial in St Andrews Church, Hamble. Outside his family, his two great passions were *Mercury* and the *Broadstone (Dorset) Branch of the Royal British Legion*, where he was chairman.

He also paid tribute to the late Ron Morris who had written the *Captain's Lady* and *The Indomitable Beatrice* – two accounts of the life of Beatrice Fry, both of which covered Mercury.

All those present stood in silence in remembrance of those members who had “crossed the bar”.

## **02 - Approval of Minutes of the 2015 AGM**

The minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> AGM, held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2015, were unanimously approved as an accurate record. There were no matters arising that were not contained elsewhere in the agenda.

## **03 - Chairman's Report**

The Chairman went on to report on the Association's affairs since the last AGM. Importantly everything remained in good order, with a supportive membership and healthy accounts, as would be confirmed in the reports from the Membership Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer.

In particular, he drew attention to the replacement *Mercury* war memorial in St Andrew's Churchyard, Hamble, which had been dedicated on the same day as the previous reunion. This had subsequently received numerous accolades. He went on to say that Snowy White had also collated a “Book of Remembrance” containing the poignant stories of the loss of each Old Boy. Two bound copies had been printed. One would be held by the Association and eventually transferred to Hampshire County Archives. The other would be placed in St Andrew's Church, the next day, at a short dedication service to which all were welcome. Fr Graham Whiting, the rector, had not only very kindly agreed to this but also permanently loaned, to the Association, a beautiful, lockable stand which would allow the Book to be displayed open with the pages turned regularly. Details of all the names recorded were also included on the TSM website. The cost of printing and binding the two books was £392.

The members present formally recorded their thanks, once more, to Snowy White for all his research, to Richard Briggs for placing them on the website and most especially to Fr Graham for all his support to the Association and making available the stand.

Comment [DP1]:

The memorial adjacent the school's old slipway was also in good condition. He reminded members that, beneath it, was a time capsule with historic documents about the school.

He went on to remind the members that, at the last AGM, they approved a contribution, from the Association for a replacement plaque on a memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, that included *Mercury* and four other training ships, namely *Conway*, *Worcester*, *Pangbourne* and *General Botha* (a South African establishment). The previous memorial was of poor quality and in need of replacement. The dedication service was held, appropriately, on Merchant Navy Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September and the new plaque looked magnificent. The shared cost for each association had been £236 each plus a further £131 each towards the rededication service.

Finally, he had been interviewed about life at “Mercury” in a recently broadcast episode of the Antiques Road Trip, which had visited *HMS Gannet*.

#### 04 - Honorary Treasurer's Report

Peter Hillman (4554), Honorary Treasurer gave his report on the 2015 annual accounts and those to August 2016, tabling summaries of both. These showed an income in 2015 of £10,985.75 (2014 -£8,501.17) against an expenditure of £17,120.93 (2014 - £8,306.86). The reason for the high expenditure in late 2015 was to pay the costs of the new memorial. He reminded members however that the late Tony Line (4677) had very kindly donated £1,000 before his untimely death and then left the Association a further £1,000 in his legacy and this money had been added to the Memorial Fund. Closing balances at 31<sup>st</sup> December were as follows:

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	£	£
Current account	5,716.53	2,239.52
Capital reserve	4,479.49	9,527.23
Memorial Fund	<u>0.75</u>	<u>4,465.20</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,196.77</b>	<b>16,331.95</b>

He went to say that, despite the planned diminution of the Memorial Fund, these accounts supported the healthy financial position outlined by the chairman earlier. He added that the memorial fund had now been all but closed.

Acceptance of the financial report was proposed, seconded and unanimously approved. The chairman thanked Peter Hillman for his careful management of the accounts adding that, as always, it was a great comfort to know that these were in such good hands.

#### 05 - Membership Secretary's Report

Richard Biggs (4920), Membership Secretary, reported that since the last AGM, 17 OMs had been reported as "crossing the bar", none had resigned from the Association, but five were recorded as lost contacts. On the positive side there were four new subscribing members, one re-established contact and three new Associate and Honorary members. These included Mrs Gilly French, wife of the late Vice Chairman. There were currently 410 active members (2015 – 421) of which 78 lived abroad. Of these 227 were currently subscribing. All Old Boys were considered members, but only those who subscribed received a copy of the magazine. Each edition of the magazine and the website now contained a "Where are they now" column in the hope that existing members would help find those people.

One member suggested that, in the last two years of the Association, every member, subscribing or not, should receive a magazine. The Chairman thanked him for his suggestion, but reminded members that the cost of posting magazines was considerable. Notwithstanding all known members received, annually, an invitation to the reunion. Another member asked if was possible to include printed membership lists with each magazine. Richard Briggs advised that these had been omitted to save on postage costs. They were, however, available on request to all subscribing members, either by email or in hard copy. This was accepted. He added that the Association was now utilising emails for circulars, where possible, to reduce the postage costs.

The website continued to be updated and was well used. For a short time, some parts of it, mainly the picture gallery, had been unavailable due to technical problems with the contractor. He was pleased to report that all pages had now been reinstated.

The chairman thanked Richard Briggs for his report.

## **06 - Social Secretary's Report**

Mike Ball (4500) began by advising members that the Association had booked the 2017 reunion in the King Charles Hotel, Chatham on 23<sup>rd</sup> September where it was intended to arrange a visit, with refreshments, to *HMS Gannet*. The 2018 reunion would be held, once again, at the *Royal Beach Hotel* and include a farewell lunchtime function in Hamble.

The Chairman thanked Mike Ball for his report.

## **07 - Magazine Editor's Report**

Snowy White (4151) reminded members that, whilst he already had some content for the 2017 magazine, he continued to welcome articles and memories. He went on to say that he had been contacted by Jim Mason (3416) to ask whether the Association would like a collection of papers that had been held by the "*Mercury Trust*". He had subsequently picked up almost all the minutes of the meetings of the school's governors during the CB Fry and Cmdr Hoyle eras, which made very interesting reading. In addition, the collection included all the paperwork relating to the sale of the school's collection of model ships to Sir James Caird in the 1930's. Sir James had bought the collection to prevent it from going abroad from where there had been a lot of interest. He then donated it to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, who were now showing a great interest in acquiring these papers. The proceeds of the sale of this collection saved the school from closure at that time.

The next magazine would be published in the spring 2017.

The chairman thanked Snowy White for his report.

## **08- Election of the Committee**

The chairman informed members that, sadly, Steve Wade (4958) had decided not to stand for re-election to the Committee as he was currently receiving treatment for a serious illness. He proposed a vote of thanks for all Steve Wade's support over many years and this was unanimously supported along with the Association's good wishes for his speedy recovery. The Chairman continued that, once he was recovered, Steve Wade would be invited to re-join the Committee.

He was very pleased to report that Trevor Johns (4165) had kindly agreed to stand for election, which he commended to the members. He asked whether there were any other members who would like to seek election to the Committee. There were none. He then handed the chair to Ken Deane, Acting Honorary Secretary, for the election of the chairman.

Ken Deane asked for a proposer and seconder to re-elect David Parsons (4709) as Chairman. This was proposed, seconded and unanimously supported.

David Parsons (4709) resumed the chair and thanked members present. He then asked for a proposer and seconder to re-elect the remainder of the committee. This was proposed, seconded and unanimously supported. The following were elected, or re-elected:

Mike Ball (4500) - Social Secretary  
Richard Briggs (4920) - Membership Secretary and Webmaster  
Ken Deane - (4334) Member  
Peter Hillman (4554) - Honorary Treasurer  
Trevor Johns (4165) - Honorary Secretary  
Snowy White (4151) - Archivist & Magazine Editor

On behalf of the committee, the Chairman thanked all the members for their support and confidence in his colleagues and himself, adding that it continued to be a great privilege to serve the Association. He was confident that all the committee members would continue to look after the affairs properly. He added his particular thanks to Trevor Johns, who would take on the role of Honorary Secretary and to his predecessor Steve Wade for all his work in the past years.

#### **09 - Future of the Association.**

The Chairman reminded members that, at the last AGM, they had supported the proposal to hold the last formal reunion in 2018. This would mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school's closure and 40<sup>th</sup> AGM of the founding of the Association.

He continued that that formal closure the Association, in its present format, did not mean an end to keeping members in touch. On the contrary the intention was that, after the final magazine was published in 2019, news items would be placed on the website. This would be continued for as long as possible. Furthermore, lunches would be arranged for members at various venues. The replacement of the joint training ship war memorial had brought the associations closer together. Each, except Pangbourne, was facing a continuing diminution of numbers and was willing to share some functions in the future. Members once again endorsed the sense in this decision and the value of continuing in a less formal way.

The Chairman added that, over the next year, consideration would be given to where to place the memorabilia and recommendations would be put to the next AGM. He also reminded members that it would be necessary to retain funds to maintain the website beyond 2018 and also set aside money to look after the school memorials in perpetuity. This was endorsed.

#### **10 - Any Other Business**

There was none. The chairman closed the meeting by thanking all those present for their contributions and support.

#### **11- Dates and places of next AGMs.**

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017 at The King Charles Hotel, Chatham, Kent

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018 at The Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea