

## THE CITY ROYAL

The Newsletter of the City of London



Branch Royal Marines Association

Per Mare

Per Terram

### Branch Officers

President

Lt General Sir Robert Fulton KBE

Chairman: Graeme Golightly - Secretary: Tony Luckens BEM - Treasurer: Stephen Gilkes -  
Welfare Representative: Norman Saints - City Royal Editor: David Harris

### INFORMATION MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Due to the coronavirus pandemic the following meetings and events are cancelled

April, May, June and July Branch Meetings

Zeebrugge

Graspan (Postponed until 2021)  
Old Comrades Association Parade  
Armed Forces Flag Raising Day  
National Belgian Day Parade  
National Arboretum

Check the Weekly RMA Reporting Network

Branch website [www.rmacol.co.uk](http://www.rmacol.co.uk)

For any queries contact Branch Secretary Tony Luckens BEM  
Mobile 0756 836 8977  
Email [tony.luckens@gmail.com](mailto:tony.luckens@gmail.com)

**Latest Government advice:**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

**NHS Information**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



**A WORD FROM THE CHAIR** We had a good turn out of over x 32 persons, which is really great considering that the COVID-19 self isolation Government advice, was about to be made public the following week!

Concerning our planned Zeebrugge 2020 trip. I had received an email update from our Chairman Emeritus, Jim Ellard, sadly asking me to relay to all branch members, that this year's remembrance weekend was rightly cancelled. In addition our annual branch meal was also cancelled, both owing to the on-going virus situation, an email had been sent to all signed up members.

Richie Puttock gave a short brief on the new RM Commando Blazer Jacket, which is being made locally in London. Further details to follow.

In my last months 'A Word From The Chair' I had mistakenly stated that one of our newest branch member, Michael Shillabeer, was a former Coldstream Guardsman when in fact he was in the Blues & Royals! My apols Mike.

Finally a lot can be said on these unprecedented and challenging times ahead of us. Remember who we are and let's support each other through phone calls, emails, semaphore and morse code etc, I am sure you get the drift, but let's keep checking on each other regularly.

Dig in '**Royal**' and watch your arcs for this unseen enemy.

Members and Guests were then asked to rise for the Toast

**'ABSENT COMRADES'**

Once a Marine Always a Marine



The RMA Central Office has emailed a list of event cancellations - see below:-

RMA national events have been reviewed in line with government's direction, with the following results - any questions please contact [enquiries@rma-trmc.org](mailto:enquiries@rma-trmc.org) or telephone **01392 414360**. These details have been taken from the notification on the email RepNet week ending 20th March 2020

- Hunter VC 75 (1-4 April 2020) - postponed until 22-25 October 2020. Should you no longer wish to attend this event, please contact the Membership Secretary to ask for a refund.
- Army v Navy Rugby (2 May 2020) - Awaiting a decision by England RFU shortly after 4 April 2020. No refunds until after that decision.
- Graspan/Commando 80 Parade (17 May 2020) - postponed until May 2021. should you no longer wish to attend this event, please contact the Membership Secretary to ask for a refund.
- Normandy 76 (5-8 June 2020) - postponed until June 2021. Should you no longer wish to attend, please contact the Membership Secretary to ask for a refund.
- Spean Bridge (3-5 July 2020) - remains on for the time being.
- NMS (19 July 2020) - remains on for the time being.
- Corps Family Weekend (11-13 September 2020) - remains on for the time being.

### **Advice for those in isolation at home**

Being at home for long periods of time is not something most of us are used to. However, as we're all 'doing our bit' to support the UK's effort to combat COVID-19, it is the position we will find ourselves in.

Here is some advice developed by Beth Sear from Working on Wellbeing to help us all focus in our mental and physical wellbeing.

Take care of your Four Pillars of Wellbeing – Diet, Sleep, Exercise, Relaxation.

These are your basic needs and they provide the foundation for our wellbeing. If one of these pillars gets wobbly, any additional stress that gets piled on top is likely to wobble too. Don't just comfort eat lots of sugar but increase your intake of fruit and veg.

Find some way to exercise in your house – walking up and down the stairs a few times is good, so is getting those jobs done that you have been promising to do 'when you have time'! There is further information about [The Heroes at Home campaign](#) further down this edition of the RepNet if you feel like a further challenge!

Have times of proper relaxation when you are not glued to your phone but genuinely resting, reading, listening etc.

Activity Association: When we go into lockdown we tend to condense our lives down from having different 'zones' for different activities (e.g. office to work, gym to exercise, home to relax etc.) to having to do all our activities in one space. Our brains like to associate different places with different activities because when we enter those places it triggers our brain to work a particular way. So, if you are not leaving the house, consider which rooms you want to use for which activities and try to stick to it as much as possible. See examples below:

Bedroom – Only for sleeping

Living room – Only for relaxing

Dining room – Only for working

The more you stick to these zones, the more you will start to identify different areas of the house with different activities and it will help you to focus when you need to and relax when you need to.

It's important to have some variation and structure in your day. This can be harder to achieve when we are indoors all the time, so we need to be more proactive. Find a

diary planner (or app) that breaks days up into hourly or 2 hourly chunks and sketch out a plan for your time. Plan when you will do home office, and when you will stop work. Stick to that time! With the rest of your time, you want to make sure you have a mixture of activities you have to do and activities you want to do.

Consider using the ACE goals: Achieve, Connect, Enjoy. Have you got a sense of achievement that day? Have you connected with people? Have you done something you enjoy enjoy?

Using these basic principles could be very effective.

Don't stop connecting with people – use whatever technology you have available! Just because we might have to self-isolate doesn't mean we need to stop interacting. Use Skype, Facetime, phone calls, landlines, letters etc. Anything that helps you to connect to others. Speaking to others verbally and ideally with camera is better than simply texting when we are not seeing people face to face, but letters are so much more personal (and appreciated).

If you are lonely, then you could consider reaching out to your local branch of the RMA, where you can contact like-minded people with whom you have shared experiences. You can find the list of branches on the RMA website <https://royalmarinesassociation.org.uk/branches/1/>, or by calling the Membership Secretary on 02393 874 661

Try to use this time to your advantage. If you are not well, use this time to really rest and let the body heal. If you feel up to it, use this time to exercise your mind. Maybe there is a book you never got around to reading or a skill you'd like to learn?

The way we view a time of self-isolation will have a big impact on the way we feel about it. If we see it as a prison sentence it will feel like one. If we see it as an opportunity to learn a new skill, or to rest and recuperate the time will go faster: you may even get around to doing that thing you've always wanted!



**HEALTH and WELLBEING** Notwithstanding the essential predominance of health and safety information arising from the coronavirus pandemic we should, I believe, carry on as normally as is possible in these circumstances. Thus, via the good offices of Peter Brown, the Branch Newsletter is to introduce a series of leaflets to advise and guide its members in all aspects of good health and wellbeing. The leaflets will be published as a supplement to the newsletter and are also available on the RMA website. The first of these publications is attached to this newsletter.

### HMS PHOEBE - "VENATU TRIUMPHANS"

As reported in the February issue of the CR, my (Editor) interest in this ship arises from a family connection with the **C43 WW2 Dido Class Light Cruiser**, specifically for the period February 1942 to August 1944. However, before I regale you with that tale, I am pleased to report that I did receive a response to my request for anyone who had served on 'the Phoebe' - our Chas stepped up to the plate and sent me the photo shown below - no prizes for guessing which Royal is Chas.



The last of six RN ships to bear the name Phoebe was the **Type 42 Leander Class frigate** on which Chas served. There is at least one more member of the branch who served on "**The Fighting 42**" - where are you?



My tale is about just one incident in which the C43 was involved.



Built by Fairfield of Govan the Dido Class Light Cruiser HMS Phoebe (C43) was laid down on 2nd September 1937, launched on the 25th March 1939 and commissioned on the 27th September 1940. On completion, under the command of Captain G. Grantham RN, she took passage to Scapa Flow to work up with ships of the Home fleet and subsequently assigned to the 15th Cruiser Squadron of the Home Fleet operating in the North Atlantic on trade protection duties. In November Phoebe was deployed with HM

Battlecruisers, Hood, Renown, Repulse, HM Cruisers Dido, Arid, Naiad in the Bay of Biscay to prevent entry by the German battleship Scheer following attacks on Atlantic convoys and the loss of HM Armed Cruiser Jervis Bay. In December she was transferred to the Mediterranean rejoining the Home Fleet on the 11th and detailed for the escort of military convoy WS5B with HM Battleship Ramilles, Cruisers HMAS Australia and HMS Naiad during passage to Alexandria. In January 1942 Phoebe was detached from Convoy WS5B to undertake working up for operational service and for Atlantic convoy defence.

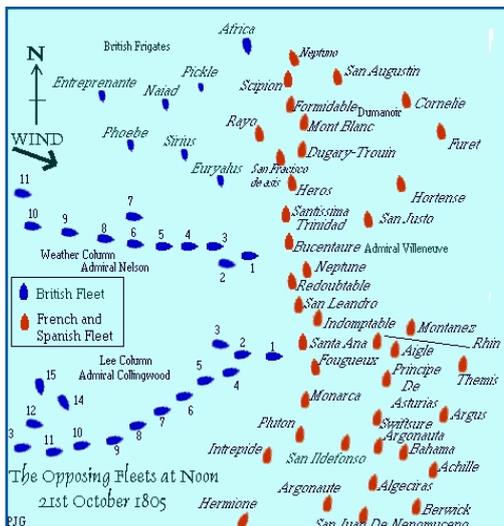
Captain C.P. Frend RN took command in February 1942 and it is from this time that this particular period of its history relates. The vessel took part in the evacuation of Greece and Crete and accompanying some Malta convoys. She returned to Alexandria on the 29th May with New Zealand troops evacuated from Crete. Accompanied by the destroyers HMAS Napier, HMAS Nizam, HMS Kelvin and HMS Kandahar she returned to Crete to assist with the evacuation of remaining ANZAC soldiers before the capitulation of the island. The cruiser subsequently served as flagship in the operations against Vichy-French Syria.

On the 3rd July 1941 Phoebe had been attacked by an Italian submarine, the Malachite; luckily, the projectile missed. Unfortunately, on the 27th August of that year, she was struck by an aerial torpedo whilst covering troop transports to the besieged Tobruk and following temporary repairs in Alexandria sailed to New York where full repairs were carried out between the 21st November 1941 and the 21st April 1942 - she returned to service in May 1942.

During the period February - April 1942 Phoebe was under repair at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York and following the completion of permanent repairs Phoebe took passage to Plymouth for works unable to be undertaken in the U.S.A. In June of that year, alterations and sea trials

completed she made to rejoin The Fleet at Scapa Flow for deployment to the Atlantic for convoy defence. Following an escort voyage to Freetown, in August Phoebe proceeded to Gibraltar with the aircraft carrier HMS Indomitable. During passage she linked up with HM aircraft carriers Eagle, Victorious, Furious, Argus and HM cruisers Charybdis and sister ship **Sirius** for exercises to develop joint aircraft carrier operation and fighter direction in preparation for Operation Pedestal, to defend the convoy attempting to bring food, fuel, aircraft and munitions desperately needed in Malta. In particular, HMS Phoebe was escorting the aircraft carriers conveying Spitfires. On the 9th August Phoebe joined Convoy WS21S off Gibraltar; the following day she deployed in Force 2 to cover the passage of the convoy to Skerki Channel with HM Battleships, Nelson, Rodney, HM Aircraft Carriers Victorious, Indomitable and Eagle together with HM Cruisers **Sirius** and Charybdis - so began Phoebe's involvement in Operation Pedestal.

Of the 14 merchant ships sailing in the convoy only 5 reached grand Harbour, the 'most famous' being the SS Ohio, an American fuel tanker manned by British sailors. More than 500 merchant and Royal Navy sailors and airmen lost their lives during this operation. The docking of the merchant ships bringing their valuable cargoes gave a massive boost to the island as did the Spitfires flown off HMS Furious which, in addition to the aviation fuel on the Ohio, revitalised the Maltese air offensive against the Axis forces. Submarines were once again able to use Malta's facilities and following the successful second Battle of El Alamein during October/November and Operation Torch in the Western Mediterranean Allied air cover was available to protect convoys.



Later in August, Phoebe, together with Sirius and HM Destroyers Quentin and Vansittart sailed from Gibraltar to Freetown for Atlantic convoy duties; this included escorting RMS Queen Elizabeth to the USA - HM Destroyers Pathfinder and Vimy having been added to the escort.

In September, accompanied by **HMS Sirius**, Phoebe was re-assigned to Capetown to patrol against Axis blockade runners - this operation had no success.

*Is it coincidental that wherever Phoebe goes, her sister ship **Sirius** goes too? On the left is the deployment of the British Fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar - there they both are, on station to the North-West.*

HMS Phoebe resumed convoy defence duties in the South Atlantic. On the 23rd October 1942, during her passage to Freetown, whilst off Pointe Noire in Equatorial Africa, she was hit on the port side forward of the bridge by a torpedo and sustained major structural damage and flooding - all forward turrets were put out of action. At greatly reduced speed she was escorted by **Sirius** to Pointe Noire.

### Copy of Action Damage Report

*H.M..S. PHOEBE - TORPEDOED 23rd. OCTOBER 1942*

1. At 0720 on the 23rd. October 1942, "PHOEBE" stationed one mile astern of "SIRIUS" was making landfall at Pointe Noire in bad visibility caused by heavy rain which obscured the land.

At 0726 course was altered to 035 degrees in "SIRIUS" wake, when a low point of land, later identified as Port Indienne, was sighted. Zig-zagging was negated at this time by signal to simplify navigation.

*At 0730 course was altered in succession to 020 degrees to close the point, now bearing 023 degrees.*

*At 0737, in heavy rain speed was reduced to 15 knots by signal.*

*At 0745 speed was reduced to 8 knots by signal as visibility had now fallen to two miles and the land was no longer in sight.*

*At 0749 course was altered to 000 degrees in succession, H.M.S. AMARANTHUS was sighted at this time close to the east of "SIRUS" and signalling her.*

*At 0752 speed was reduced to slow to avoid running up on "SIRIUS".*

*At 0755, a signalman on the lower bridge sighted a periscope very close on the port quarter and he rushed to the bridge and informed the Captain.*

*"STARBOARD 20" was ordered and the Captain and Navigating Officer ran to the back of the bridge. A spume of spray was immediately observed about 100 yards distant bearing "Red 130" and a few seconds later the ship was struck by a torpedo on the port side before the bridge. The spray sighted must have been caused by the torpedo and it is considered that it was fired at a range of about 400 yards. The estimated position of the ship was 282 degrees, Pointe Noir 91 ft. lighthouse, 6 miles, depth of water 19 faths.*

*2. The wheel of the lower steering position was jammed and steering was therefore changed to After Steering position. The ship was able to proceed at 6 knots.*

*3. "ARAMANTHUS" was ordered to patrol one mile to sea-ward and to drop depth charges, while 'PHOEBE" was brought fully under control, proceeding towards the shore on a course of 090 degrees, shortly afterwards the corvette sighted the periscope 1600 yards from "PHOEBE" and carried out a heavy attack with depth charges.*

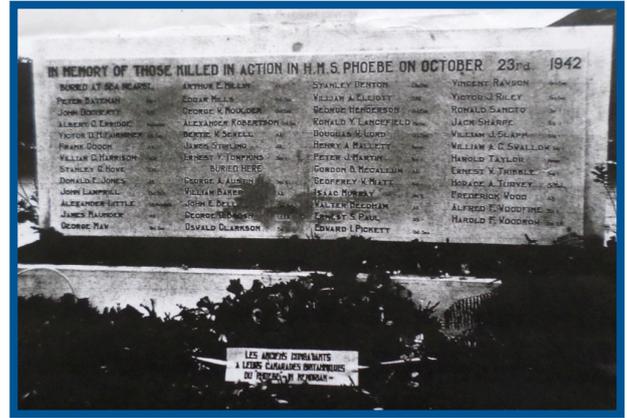
*4. Heavy rain continued and it was not possible to obtain a reliable fix until 1038. The ship entered harbour at 1125 and anchored in shallow water, as the bow was still settling at that time. The ship was berthed alongside during the evening, by which time the flooding was well under control.*

*5. It is regretted to have to report that 27 ratings were killed, 15 died after arrival in harbour, six bodies were recovered later, and one is missing.*

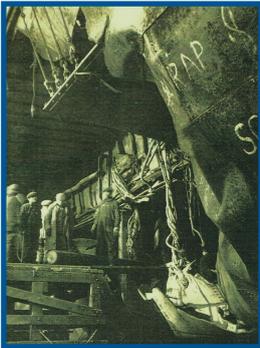
*C.P FREND, Captain*

HMS Phoebe had been torpedoed by U-Boat 161 commanded by Kapitanleutnant Lt. Albrecht Achilles (Knight Cross). U-161 was laid down at Bremen in March 1940 and launched one year later in March 1941 and commissioned in July of that year. In common with many such vessels she had a short life and was sunk by depth charges dropped by a U.S. Mariner aircraft in the South Atlantic east of Salvador, Brazil on 27th September 1943 with the loss of all hands. On 5th April 1945 Kapitanleutnant Achilles was posthumously promoted to Korvettenkapitan.

Temporary repairs had been effected whilst tied up at the jetty prior to which efforts had been made to shore up bulkheads by using native timber. During this period there took place the funerals of those who had lost their lives, five of whom were Royal Marines.



Meantime, arrangements were made for repairs to be undertaken at the Brooklyn Navy Yard at New York USA the same yard at which she had been repaired earlier that year. On the 2nd December 1942, escorted by the sloop HMS Bridgewater, Phoebe slipped anchor and made way to the USA via Takoradi (Ghana) and Trinidad (Eastern Caribbean) arriving at the dockyard on the 15th January 1943, a journey of 44 days. The scale of the damage is shown by the photographs below:-



The repairs took place over a period of almost five months and following sea trials in June, Phoebe set sail for the UK on the 14th June 1943 arriving at Barrow-in-Furness in July where further repair work and modifications took place. The modifications included the replacement of "A" turret, the installation of fire control radar for HA mountings and other radar devices. Work was completed on the 8th of July and the ship prepared for operational service. During August she worked up at Scapa Flow and in September deployed to Plymouth for attachment to the Plymouth Command for interception operations against French coastal convoys. She subsequently joined naval operations in the Aegean. In January 1944 Phoebe provided naval gunfire support during the Anzio landings and redeployed to the Indian Ocean for interception duties. HMS Phoebe ended her war service intact returning home for refitting spending five years with the Mediterranean Fleet until sold for scrap in 1956.

**Editor's note:** HMS Phoebe Association contact - [hmsphoebeassociation@outlook.com](mailto:hmsphoebeassociation@outlook.com)



Should you have any items suitable for publication in the City Royal (including cherished/memorable photos) please contact me at [davidharris73@sky.com](mailto:davidharris73@sky.com)

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

Live each day as if your  
life had just begun.

*Goethe*

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

Keep your eyes on the stars  
and your feet on the ground.

*Theodore Roosevelt*



**DID YOU REMEMBER TO ADVANCE YOUR CLOCKS BY ONE HOUR?**



**THE ROYAL MARINES ASSOCIATION CITY OF LONDON BRANCH NEWSLETTER**

**E&OE**

