



HMS Penelope Association 32nd Reunion Report

The 32nd annual reunion weekend was again held in Tiffany's Hotel, Blackpool to commemorate the 74th anniversary of the sinking of the cruiser Penelope, lost off Anzio with the lives of 417 men.

For those who may not have attended one of the reunions for some time, or maybe never, they are a great gathering of shipmates old and new, very enjoyable, with a touch of solemnity on Sunday, remembering those who have crossed the bar. The weekend can be as long or as short as you wish, with some members attending from the Thursday through to Monday, ably organised for us by Isle of Wight Tours. Once again, this year it was good to welcome a few new faces to the fold but it would be good to see more of you if you are able to make it.

Friday Evening:

Taxis and the Sea cadet mini bus were organised to transport our members to TS Penelope at Bispham where the CO, Kay Jackson, gave us a warm welcome with a cup of tea and biscuits before directing us to the main deck.

This year we were entertained by the cadets along with our members playing battleships on the main deck, rifle drills with SA 80, semaphore (facebook messenger but with flags) Quickest time to pack a Royal Marine bergen. We now take part in evening colours this year volunteers were shipmates, Mike bee, JJ Robson and Keith Parnell.

Harry Harrison and Pete Boyling then spoke to sea cadets for a few minutes on their time on board the frigate HMS Penelope. We hope this will be a regular event from now on, with different members having the opportunity to engage with the cadets about their roles on-board, so volunteers please?

Our President Paul Sutermeister thanked the unit for their hospitality and Glenda Inman, daughter of the late Mr Harry Pugh, then presented the 'Harry Pugh Memorial Trophy to the best cadet Cpl Nathan Smith. who will be going aboard TS Royalist. He was also presented with a certificate & cheque for £250.00 towards the cost of the sea training.

Our evening ended with a reception in the wardroom where we were all suitably refreshed with a beer or three and members took part in the raffle in aid of much needed funds for the unit. Transport was then provided back to the hotel for a final chinwag and night-cap.

Saturday Morning:

The 32nd AGM held at Tiffany's Hotel Blackpool (See minutes AGM 2018)

Saturday Night:

Our guests for this year's annual association gala dinner were the Mayor of Blackpool and Tony Jo. Our very own Lady Penelope, the puppet, also graced the top table. Other guests included CO Kay Jackson & Matt Jackson plus 15 staff from the Sea Cadet Unit. The customary speeches and formal toasts followed and our ladies did a splendid job of robbing the members of their money for the raffle which raised £413.00 for the association. A huge thank you to everyone for their support. Then it was disco time to the end of the evening

Sunday Morning:

Reverend Linda Tomlinson put together a splendid service to commemorate the 74th anniversary of the sinking of the cruiser Penelope for us. The traditional naval comradeship was highly visible with the attendance of some 8 Naval Standards from the Blackpool & Fylde area under the control of Mrs Liz Clayton, to whom we are most grateful.

It was then back to the hotel for a sandwich and cup of tea and after a hectic morning and lunchtime, and for those who had kept the middle and part of the morning watches in various local establishments, it was in order to grant members a Make-a-Mend.

Sunday Evening: Sods Opera:

Lewie Armstrong, Mike Bee, Spike Hughes & Robbie Robson gave us a new blast of campanology, (that's BELL RINGING to you and me) the likes of which I doubt will ever be seen again. HMS Penelope Display team was back with the girls dancing the Tango. Leo & Bonnie hosted a session of Play Your Cards Right with several boxes of chocolates for prizes. Chris, Arron and Abbey Bennie were back again with the Mystic Meg & Septic Peg, duelling accordions, an interview with Senator Collins not forgetting Pete Boying and his four candles & world-famous composer Andre Preview. Leo provided a bit of traditional music for everyone to dance to rounding off a very spectacular evening.

We are always on the look-out for new talent so come along and join in and next year may be even better so remember the dates and put them in your diaries.

Booking forms for next year's reunion to be held over the weekend 15th-18th February 2019 at Tiffany's Hotel, Blackpool are available from Isle of Wight Tour Ltd

More information online www.hms-penelope.com