

MEDUSA  
HDML 1387



## Medusa Newsletter, Summer 2018

This year seems to have been a very busy one for Medusa and everyone has worked very hard to make it a success. In writing the Newsletter I am sometimes short on material, not this time, so, for a change, I will describe what we have been up to by types of activity rather than chronology. This will give a better idea of the variety of things we do.

### **Maintenance.**

Medusa is a bit like the Forth Bridge, once we have reached one end, its time to start at the other. To keep her looking tip top and everything working, she needs constant effort and we owe a debt to some very dedicated folk for providing it.

This year, as usual, we lifted out at Saxon Wharf. The yard pressure-wash the hull then it's over to us to prepare and paint the sides and bottom, change the anodes, lower and paint the mast, fit a new radio aerial, clean the propellers and finally paint in the draft marks. The yard was very busy and keen to turn us around as quickly as possible, but we still amazed them by doing the whole job in two days. During this time Medusa is surveyed for her commercial certificate; all fine, no fault found.



*Many hands at work*

Back afloat there is still plenty to do. The engineers have a well organised routine maintaining all the machinery. The superstructure has all been cleaned and painted and the depth charges and racks serviced and painted. Over the winter Mike Dingle has completely stripped the forward 20mm Oerlikon (some 400 parts) and rebuilt it. It now looks like new and ready to take on all comers. Smart new covers will keep it looking good.



*Mike Dingle and Chris Harman stripping the forward Oerlikon*

Inside, the restoration of the wireless office is making slow but steady progress.



*TCS transmitter and receiver, type 286 radar and IFF unit in the wireless office.*

## **Projects.**

Over the winter, we have run two very different projects. The first is in conjunction with Portsmouth University where three final year Masters of Engineering students built a box that takes in GPS positions and drives our 60 year old Decca Navigator. It's quite something to see the Decca dials moving again and we can plot our position from them on Decca charts (found under my stairs). We are hoping to run further projects of this nature to make some more of our WW2 equipment operational.



*Out fit QM, one of only 20 prototype Decca units deployed on D Day, this is number 19.*



*1960 MkIV Decca which now indicates our position, not done that since 1994 thanks to Mark, Luke and Tom.*

The second project is quite different and has been the search for a dinghy to replace the one aboard. Our dinghy, though the right type, came to us from a garden in Gosport where it was a flower bed and in poor shape then. We have looked at restoring it but there would be nothing left of the original so concluded it would be better to start again. We have looked at building from scratch or a GRP replica, both would cost towards £10K. Over the winter eBay has provided the answer with a near identical dinghy made by Walker of Leigh on Sea who are famous for rowing and sailing dinghies. The boat has been in store for many years and needs some repair work which is being done by Steve Greenfield, the head shipwright from our 2004-10 refit. Donations from the families of Richard Garland and Brian Holmes have funded the purchase and restoration and we will have the new dinghy aboard later this year.



*Replacement 10 foot dinghy*

**Combined Cadet Forces.**

Word is getting around about Medusa, and I think the demand from CCF sections for a day out with us will grow. This year we have done a day for Cheltenham and another for Gordons School with a second for Cheltenham in the autumn. Cheltenham came in February; amazingly the weather was kind with a mild calm day, a few days later it snowed. The trips to date have been funded directly by the schools but we are hoping to raise some funding to allow trips from schools which are not in a position to fund.

The picture below is courtesy Cheltenham; we do not permit photography when we have cadets on board as part of the very strict safeguarding rules we follow when we have young people aboard.



*Cheltenham CCF*

## Filming.

In April we did a day's filming at sea for "Dunkirk, the Forgotten Heroes" which was about the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division who were left behind. The film crew were keen to go out into the channel to film but changed their minds when we peeped round Bembridge ledge and caught South Westerly F6. The presenter was very unwell! We retreated to the area around No Man's Land fort where it was sheltered, even so we had to steam slowly so the drone they were filming from could keep up in the strong wind. If the drone got into trouble or ran low on power it automatically returned to its take off point, very sensible ashore but not so good at sea. The film crew were very relieved when it was safely back on board. The programme was shown on 15<sup>th</sup> July on Channel 4 and featured a lot of Medusa.



*Maybe the first deck landing on Medusa*

## Visitors

We are regularly contacted by families of veterans wishing to visit; visits from veterans are now becoming rarer but recently we were contacted by KT Lwin from Myanmar. Now 92, he served with the Burma RNVR on the Arakan front in the 59<sup>th</sup> ML Flotilla on HDMLs and Fairmile Bs. After the war ended he took command of HDML 1456 which had been gifted to Burma. He came on board with his son, now in his 60s who complained that his dad was wearing him out and he could not keep up with him. It is always a joy to meet people who have a connection with HDMLs and hear their story.



*KT Lwin, c/o HDML 1456*

### **The French trip.**

Each year we make a passage of around two weeks; for the last two years this has been over to France for the D-Day commemorations. This year we went via Dartmouth and Alderney before going to Grandcamp Maisy adjacent to Omaha beach.

Our first port of call was Bucklers Hard where we opened to visitors. In the evening we had a reception on board, hosted by Mary Montagu with guests including the historian, Dan Snow.

Our next stop was Weymouth with an evening with Mike and Pam Boyce, skipper of Medusa from 1968 to 2013. As we rounded Portland Bill the next morning, we spotted them both there to wave us off.



*Medusa (left hand vessel) and ML1185 in Dartmouth circa 1960*

Our first two days at Dartmouth were on the Admiralty jetty at Sandquay with visits from Royal Navy Officer Cadets. We also had a tour of the Royal Naval College and enjoyed the stunning views from the top of the hill.



*Crew at Britannia Royal Navy College Dartmouth*

After two days, we moved to the town quay for the weekend and were very busy showing round visitors. On the morning of our departure, we were treated to a wonderful breakfast by the Alf Resco café, to be recommended to anyone visiting Dartmouth.



*Hearty breakfast thanks to Alf Resco*

On leaving Dartmouth, we were escorted briefly by a pod of dolphins and then set course for the Channel Lightship. I had spun a story over breakfast that there was a branch of Costa Coffee on the lightship and all I had to do was radio ahead our order. Unfortunately, it was shut when we arrived! We arrived at Alderney at tea time and found the North Easterly wind freshening making the anchorage quite unpleasant with Medusa rolling even in a light swell. The harbour master advised that it was due to freshen further so we decided, with some regret, to press on to Cherbourg.

Our two days in Cherbourg was an opportunity for a little down time, a partial crew change and a visit from some Free French re-enactors. On the 8<sup>th</sup> June we set off for Grandcamp Maisy. As we approached the visibility became very poor with thick fog and we had a real challenge finding a small landing craft that we had to lead in. We managed to contact him on the radio but his GPS was not working so he could not give us a position. A boat that is pretty much a plywood skip does not show up well on radar either. Finally, we found him and then found the tiny entrance to the port in thick fog (over nearly a mile of drying unmarked approach channel) and arrived spot on time.



*A very welcome welcome!*

We were made very welcome and, as well as many visitors, hosted a reception for the local mayor and dignitaries. It was great to meet up with the friends we had made the previous year and several of the crew were able to go on the military vehicle parade. The French celebrate the occasion as their liberation and really enter the spirit, most dressed in period costume or uniform.

We had planned to stay a couple of days before returning but the weather was deteriorating so we headed for home. The first half of the passage back was lumpy with a fresh NE wind but, once past the half way mark, the wind dropped, the sea state improved, and the sun came out.

Next year will be the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day and we are planning to be part of the commemoration in France.

### **Ashes scattering.**

Last year we did several ashes scatterings, sadly and memorably one was for our cox'n of 30 years, Brian Holmes. This year, so far, only one, which was for Dave Swift, a former Royal Navy Gunnery Instructor, at the request of his daughter Kelly. These are always solemn occasions and its difficult not to be moved as I read the service with our ensign at half mast and the church pennant hoisted.

### **Crew training and social event.**

The vast majority of our trips are for a specific purpose; we either have guests on board or are somehow in the public gaze. On those occasions we just have to get it right, so we set aside some time away from critical eyes for crew training and a little bit of social time. Our crew day this year started with trying out all our methods of recovering a man overboard, then a lasso the cleat competition and finally a passage to Cowes and back with us all swapping around roles and all trying our hand at manoeuvring the vessel to pick up a simulated man overboard.



*Sam in the MOB sling.*



*Nick with the winning throw*



*Louise taking the controls in the engine room.*

We have two social events in our calendar, a summer BBQ on the Mary Mouse for crew and families and a more formal Trafalgar Night dinner (which coincides with Medusa's birthday).

This year the BBQ took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> July with a clear blue sky and hot sun. As well as the BBQ we did 45 minute trips round the harbour for families of the crew as a little thank you for the time and effort put into the vessel over the year. This year we did four trips with an age span of those on board of over 8 decades.



*The next generation of crew*

Looking forward to the rest of 2018.

Traditionally we have a lull in proceedings in August for our own holidays and then back to our schedule in September. We have a full diary for the autumn with some charter days, some filming, heritage open days, Trafalgar Night, a return to Bucklers Hard for Medusa's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday party and, finally, Remembrance. By the time the year ends, will have put in some 50 operational days and steamed nearly 1000 miles. All this can only happen with the support of our volunteers and those who have given generously of time, materials and cash. To all, a heartfelt, thank you.

