



HMS GANGES MUSEUM NEWSLETTER WINTER 2009

Chairman's report

This year we have been very fortunate in having lots of visitors. Our coach parties have been successful again and we have also opened for quite a few groups, i.e. History Society, Over 60's Club etc. George (secretary) gave talks at clubs as well, all of which gave donations.

The highlight of our year was to welcome back the Figurehead after restoration, which is now in pride of place within the Museum.

We are now closed for the winter which is when we carry out maintenance and add more items that have been donated for our display. Although closed, we do try to open for visitors if given prior notice.

May I wish you all a Happy Christmas

Chairman of Trustees

Carol Barnham

Treasurer's report

Amazingly, in the current financial position, donations to the Museum in 2009 have so far increased by 10% over last year. To our generous friends and visitors, many thanks.

As expected, outgoings have doubled in the year to date. The Museum drew on savings to pay our insurance, a sign for

the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) project and to restore the Figurehead. All these costs came along together. However, thanks to public generosity the current account is looking healthy again as we go into the closed period.

We will need to use savings to fund the Museum's project to digitize the Shotley Magazines. This will be very worthwhile as they contain so much important information.

The Trustees are very pleased that the membership numbers have increased by 25% this year, many of whom are friends of the Museum. It is hoped that this is a continuing trend as more shipmates, friends and families will join us.

The unveiling of the Figurehead

On the 26th. September 2009 the Museum welcomed some 150 visitors to witness the unveiling of the 'Indian Prince' by Dickie Doyle and his wife Eileen. Kelvin Thatcher, the restorer, gave a brief outline of the work he had completed. The Museum Secretary, George Barnham thanked Kelvin and Dickie and his wife before everyone retired to the Shipwreck function room to enjoy a buffet lunch. A small raffle was organised and thanks to everyone's generosity £140 was made.

The 2009 open season

This has been a very successful season in terms of visitors to the Museum. We have been fortunate in the weather. Also, the City Village Tours called in regularly. The total number of people through the doors was 5,284.

As a volunteer, who assists in the opening, I have found it very interesting and informative to talk to ex Ganges Boys about their exploits whilst at Ganges and time spent in the Royal Navy. The pride everyone shows in their Navy and all who sail in her is commendable. My Husband states, often, that not a day goes by for what he learns something new about HMS Ganges. Something that has become very apparent to me (never having served in the RN) how proud all of you are of HMS Ganges. It makes the time spent opening and archiving worth while in preserving that pride and letting others know Ganges existed. The powerful message it gave to all who served in her about discipline, confidence, self reliance, courage really did make boys into young men. All this reinforces the importance of preserving the history of HMS Ganges (i.e. the Museum) for future generations.

Those visitors I talked to were often revisiting their past and exchanging stories/anecdotes of time spent in the Navy. Many family members visited the Museum to research their Father's, Grandfather's, Uncle's etcetera naval career. We at the Museum try hard to help and when we find something of real relevance to them, not only are they excited but we feel proud that the Museum has been of assistance in their quest to find out more information about their ancestors.

Many elderly gentlemen and ladies visited who where often boys at Ganges, some ship's company Wrens and nurses. They recalled their time in the Navy and pondered over the photographs on the wall and in the albums looking for

themselves and lost comrades. Many a sad tale was relayed about fallen colleagues and war time duties that bought tears to my eyes. What courageous young men they were to battle against all odds at sea and on land to secure my freedom.

The steady deluge of photographs and memorabilia donated to the Museum has been gratefully received and catalogued. These pictorial images of life are invaluable in keeping the memory alive. In the very near future all the photographs catalogued will be on line via the Suffolk Heritage Museum website. Trustees and volunteers have been working hard cataloguing, loading onto the computer and negotiating with Suffolk Museums to get the collection on line.

The next project, which is being organised, is the digitalisation of the Shotley Magazines and other printed material throughout the Museum. Once this has been completed they will be available in the Museum making them an invaluable resource to those researching their ancestors from 1916. Also it will preserve the originals as they are becoming damaged through handling.

Before I retired I wasn't really interested in history. However, since becoming involved with the Museum my eyes have been opened into the importance of keeping the memories alive for future generations. My only regret is that I cannot always answer visitors' questions as very often the required documents, e.g class list are not available. However, I thoroughly enjoy my days opening up for the public and furthering the memory of the Ship HMS Ganges, the shore base Royal Naval Training Establishment Shotley later to become HMS Ganges.

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**A Merry Christmas to one and
all**

