

MEDUSA
HDML 1387



Spring Newsletter.

I had planned to get this newsletter out in May and tell you about the work done over the winter and look forward to a busy season. As it happened the busy season was upon me before I had the chance to spend a day at the keyboard. The plus side is that there is a bit more news to include.

Medusa now looks the smartest I have ever seen her, this is down to hard work by the volunteers but we could not do it without your support, so thank you to one and all.

Over the winter

Last year's season ended with our usual visit to HMS Hornet for Remembrance Sunday. Although the number of veterans at this service is diminishing, many more families are coming and we had lots of interested visitors aboard. I watched with a little trepidation as Admiral James Morse in full uniform disappeared down the engine room. He emerged some time later as good as new, a tribute to the way Medusa's engineers keep the engine room spotless.

Winter time is when we do the major work on Medusa. All the safety equipment has to be checked and re-certificated and a whole host of items looked at in advance of our annual survey for the MCA Certification which permits us to do paying trips.

This year we had a major project to refit the after 20mm Oerlikon. This involved putting back some of the strengthening in the wardroom to take the weight (over half a ton) and then putting the gun mount back on its pad. We enlisted the help of The Maritime Workshop to do the shipwright work and then on March 26 took Medusa round to Endeavour Quay where the gun mounting was craned on and secured.



20mm mounting looking the worse for wear.



Gently lowering half a ton of gun mount into place.

We had an Oerlikon in pieces in store but it had not been assembled since it was in the fire at our yard at Hythe during the 2005-10 refit. The first attempt to put it back together revealed that one of the side bars was banana shaped instead of straight. The local blacksmith was slightly bemused at a request to use his forge to straighten an anti-aircraft gun but helped out willingly with the result that the Oerlikon went back together perfectly.



The finished result, overtaking vessels beware!

The winter is also the time when we don't need the main engines for a few months, though they are run every two weeks through the winter, so the engineers get the chance to do some more major jobs. This year, both oil coolers were removed, stripped, cleaned and re-assembled with new seals.



Laura and Ian working on the Stbd engine



Ed working on an oil cooler.

On the electrical side, an annoying intermittent problem on the VHF was finally nailed and it has behaved perfectly since.

Over the years we have been collecting bits of equipment to return to Medusa. The Holy Grail of this was to find an example of the prototype Decca set (called QM by the navy) that were used for D Day. Only 25 were made, one complete set is in the Science Museum and examples of the dials which were on a separate panel have been spotted on HMD Belfast and at a museum in France. I could not believe my eyes when one popped up on E Bay. More remarkably nobody else bid on it and it was ours for 99p. Even more amazing was when I contacted the seller; he had the other dial and the backing plate. When I told him about Medusa and how she was the first ship to use this

equipment operationally, he donated the other dial and plate. The equipment was used to fix Medusa's position on her vital D Day role.



QM equipment from ML1383, the other Omaha vessel, showing the dials on extension leads.



The set of dials now part of the Medusa collection; these were originally made from modified gas meters.

April saw us taking Medusa round to Saxon Wharf at Southampton where she was lifted out and pressure washed. It was then down to us to paint her, change the sacrificial anodes and polish the propellers. We are lucky to have Brendan Chase in the team; he is a professional painter and achieves a beautiful finish on the hull in no time flat. We measure the standard by the ratio of paint applied to the ship versus that applied to the person! Some did not emerge as spotless as Brendan.



Richard and Brian, enthusiastic painters.

Our survey went without a hitch and our passenger carrying certificate was renewed.



Launch day.

Four days later we were back in the water and back on our berth at Haslar. The timing was perfect as the Nautical Research Society had their annual lunch on the lightship at Haslar and was able to visit Medusa. It also made the after lunch talk simpler; there was no need to describe Medusa, she was just outside the window.

Medusa has a much visited web site www.hmsmedusa.org.uk. Over the winter we have added some video and the vessel data base maintained by Brian Holmes has had a major update. We have also

added a facility for on line donations and have been delighted to receive a few donations by this method.

The 2015 Season so far.

The season is well underway and is looking like a busy one. We opened to the public on 8/9 May to commemorate VE day. On 26 May we took a party from London Sea Cadets out for the day and in flat calm weather went out to the Nab Tower and back.

Medusa is a registered historic vessel and is one of the 200 ships that form the National Historic Fleet. Each year National Historic Ships award a broad pennant to the ship that is doing the most to promote historic vessels. Medusa has applied before but been pipped by vessels having a more extensive cruising schedule. This year the award committee decided to award regional flags as well as the national one and Medusa won the broad pennant for the Solent and South Coast. This was presented by Hannah Cunliffe and David Newberry on 4th June. It was a great pleasure to have Medusa's last RN Captain, Admiral Roger Morris, on board with us for the occasion. Over lunch Roger told us of a night in Barmouth when Medusa nearly came to grief by toppling away from the quay as the tide, fell. He has kindly written up the story but I shall save it for the next newsletter.



Medusa at Gunwharf, flying new pennant from the masthead.

On June 5 we took the winners of our charity auction out for the day. As it happened the day was also the 150th anniversary of the Royal Yacht Squadron and while we were waiting for our guests at

Gunwharf, the First Sea Lord and several members of the Royal Family came past to join Leander, a magnificent vessel owned by Sir Donald Gosling. We followed Leander over to Cowes and then ran down the line of vessels anchored there. It was an impressive sight, as well as Leander there was Shemara, Galatea (Trinity House) with Prince Philip aboard and the yachts of the Kings of Norway and Sweden. The day was rounded off for our guests with lunch with a visit to HMS Diamond.



Commodore Jeremy Rigby and Commodore Laurie Hopkins with RYS vessels in the background.

On the 6th we had the pleasure of the company of three gentlemen who had served on HDMLs in Hong Kong in the 1950s as the Hong Kong Flotilla operating out of HMS Tamar. The day was billed as “the last patrol” but all agreed that it was so enjoyable that a “last last patrol” will need to be scheduled.



Don Rowland, John Metherell and Peter Yeates of the Hong Kong Flotilla.

On a more sombre note we took the executors and friends of Mr Peter Knight to sea and conducted a short service before scattering his ashes close to where the Mary Rose sank.

The season has continued with a visit by engineering students from Farnham College and another open day as centre piece of the Gosport maritime festival.

And the rest of the year.

On July 15, we are taking members of the Morgan Owners Club out, the connection is a bit tenuous but they are keen and interested. Earlier in the year we looked for a role in the Americas Cup events from 23-26 July but have decided discretion is a better strategy after seeing them charging around at 30 knots plus and will stay well out of the way.

August 21 will see us going to Hayling Island for a commemoration of the “cockleshell heroes” organised by Jill Goulding, granddaughter of the C/O of HMS Northney. We will escort 5 cockleshell canoes up to Northney and be present for the unveiling of a plaque.

Immediately after, we set off for Dartmouth for the Royal regatta on 27/8/9 August and will call in at several ports on the way and way back, including Portland and possibly Alderney.

Following that we have Gosport Heritage Open days from 10-13 September then a trip to Lymington 16-20 September for the 250th of Admiral Burrard Neale.

Usually our year would start to wind down at this point but this year we have been invited round to the Thames to participate in the Lord Mayor's Pageant of 14 November. They would like us as escort to Gloriana which will be carrying the incoming Lord Mayor. Our attendance will cost around £5K and presently we are looking for funding.

I hope this update has been of interest. Medusa is in good heart and is lucky to have an enthusiastic crew. We are always keen to have visitors so please do come and see us.

Alan Watson, trustees and the crew of Medusa.

