



20 December 2020

Dear Members,

They say never apologies at a start of a letter but in this case I should do as it is rather a long one, but I hope a worthwhile read. It is now nearly the end of what has been an eventful year and I can honestly say I did not think I would be finishing the year by writing to you all as chairman.

As we round up what has been a busy year for the MWA I thought it would be good to look back at what has been achieved and also what we have to look forward to going forward into 2020.

Perhaps the best place to start would be to go back to early march which is a busy month for the MWA with the rounding up of accounts and preparing for the AGM and re-union. My thanks go very much to George T who not only worked to round up our accounts, but also did much of the dog work to put together another successful reunion this time in HMS Nelson. It was good to see it well attended not only by the regular attendees but also to welcome back Dave Smith who travelled from Germany to join us. A bit worse for wear by the end of the night but I hope he enjoyed it enough to make it a more frequent event.

The re-union was preceded by our annual AGM which I found heartening to see so many members in attendance. Despite looking a bit tattered from the Friday night welcome session, it was good to see so many taking an interest in the running of the association. There was good debate not just on the current running of the association but also on the direction going forward. The update on Project Vernon (More on that later) by Dave Sandiford was also well received. All in all a great weekend for all who attended.

In the background much work has been undertaken by the committee. Our Members Sec Sean Slee has been busy updating the membership records in conjunction with George as the treasurer so we now have an accurate reflection of our current membership. Again it is heartening to see that while other associations are in decline, the MWA membership continues to grow. Much of this due to the efforts of Sean who has been actively encouraging serving member's people to join while carrying out his FOST duties. I hasten to add this was not an encouragement to say you would pass your OST assessment if you joined!

As most of you will be aware 2019 has been a difficult year for Ronnie in his webmaster role. After a lot of time and effort spent in rebuilding and modernising the website, earlier this year it was attacked with a viruses and had to be taken down. After a repair and software upgrade it is now back on line and safe to use I thank Ronnie for all his efforts and patience during this. On a similar vein, Shaun keen who oversees our Facebook site has also reviewed the members list to ensure it remains inclusive to just our members. Shaun also took on the role of being the association's Media Rep. This is a growing role which requires you as members to feed him article worthy of inclusion on the website. As we enter 2020 I encourage you all to start using Shaun and the website more fully.

In June we took what has become an annual pilgrimage to Weymouth to celebrate Armed Forces Day. Thanks to all of you who joined in. Due to family commitments I missed the event but I understand the Friday evening prior set the scene for an enjoyable event. It also saw the first outing of the year for our standard. My thanks go to Topsy Toner and Sam Cook for their efforts as Standard Bearers, but also to Jan Harvey who stepped up at the AGM to assist Topsy when needed. With Topsy being downgraded P7R in June Jan was called in at short notice to cover standard bearer duties. In true MW tradition Sam and Jan lead the parade from the front. Jan also stepped in August sadly to give the standard its first outing at a funeral. Travelling with Sam who carried the Ton Class Standard from Cornwall they represented the associations at the funeral following the sudden death of a close friend of mine and long term member of the MWA Tony Bassett. Both Jan and Sam did the associations proud.

Throughout the year we have seen regular DIT sessions taking place either through the organise events in Portsmouth, impromptu gatherings around the country In Portsmouth we saw several visitors to our sessions, not least Nobby Clarke from New Zealand but also some of our more northern brethren. I had the proud occasion to be signed up into the Sea Defence Organisation and joining Jan, Sam and Topsy for a DIT session while holidaying in Cornwall earlier this year. I know several meeting s have been taken up by others especially through events such as the Army and Navy Rugby. Probably one of the most pleasing for me was the gathering of the Minewarfare clan in Newcastle in October. It was good to see guys up north coming together and we must look at ways through 2020 to better serve our members up north.

I cannot finish 2019 without wishing all of you that are suffering with health issues. You are all MW's so I know you will take these challenges head on and put up a fight. I am sure by now you are all aware that Dixie has stepped down as chairman due to his ill health and ongoing treatment. I met up with Dixie recently and he is certainly facing up to his fight head on. Dixie remains active in the background as sweep storeman and Project Vernon Rep and is determined to be active in the MWA going forward. I know several other members are currently undergoing similar treatment so I am sure you will joining me in wishing them all success in their treatment and a more stable 2020.

So going forward what does 2020 bring to the MWA? Lots of activity which should I hope provide more opportunities to get together

As well as the regular DIT Session which I encourage you all to attend near or far. This is not just a Pompey event if you are down this way we will always adapt dates to suit a

meeting. It was good to catch up with Steve Downey recently. Some Key events are listed below:

25 March 20. The first and one of the main events for us will be the unveiling of Project Vernon monument. As you should already be aware after a long period of fund raising of which the MWA have been actively fund raising and contributing towards is close to completion. We are now in a position to place the monument in what was Vernon Creek? Dixie is currently compiling a list of those who want to attend. Full details are on the website and Facebook page. He will shortly be closing the list for MWA attendance, so if you want to come and join us for the event please let us know soonest,

28 March 20. To coincide with this event and possibly make a good break for our members who will travel from afar we have timed our Annual Reunion to follow This will take place in HMS Excellent on the Saturday, but will of course be preceded by the gathering of the clan evening at the Maritime Club on the Friday night. The Annual AGM will be also take place on the Sat Morning. I hope as many of you as possible can join us for these events.

23 June 20 Always a good weekend and an opportunity to join our West Country members and taste the local cider! We have our standard on parade on the Sunday but the Sat also has lots of activities so make a weekend of it?

26 September 20. Keep the date clear. Yet to confirm details but working on a weekend MWA event details will be given at the AGM.

I am sure there will be other events that will materialise throughout the year but those are some key dates to fit into the diary.

Finally as I close this letter can I take the opportunity to thank all of you on the committee or who work in the background to keep the association ticking over? I do appreciate that this takes up a lot of your own time but without you the MWA would not function. At the next AGM there will be opportunities for more members to be involved with a broader spread of roles. Please take a look at how you can contribute no matter how small to support and take the MWA forward.

Have a great Christmas break wherever you are and I look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible in the New Year

Yours Aye

Taff Reader

Chairman

Minewarfare Association