

# Mercia Friendship Club

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 4. February 2007

### A TALL YARN by *Tony Grey*

Having left school at fourteen, I started work at the post office delivering Telegrams on a bicycle. I then progressed to start a six and a half year Apprenticeship in Electrical Engineering at Technical College, one day a week and two nights. In this time I managed to gain four City & Guilds certificates including a Full Tech cert. On completing my apprenticeship at twenty one, my deferment of National Service expired, I was 'called up' two days after my birthday. The service I wanted was the Royal Navy. and was 'called up' to H.M.S. Collingwood a training establishment in Fareham, Hants, where we were given an intelligence and trade test which for me was 'a doddle' having only just finished college. I was then fast tracked and went on a 'Killicks Course'. This was at H.M.S. Defiance a 'proper ship' and I encountered a 'Hammock' for the first time What a laugh! Firstly you put one foot in and the sides close in gripping your leg, trying to get your other foot in then your body is impossible 'Down You Go on the Deck' at this stage I gave up and laid the hammock on the deck nursing my bruises. The next day I traded half my tot of rum to an Old Salt to discover the secrets of the infernal which is more comfortable than a bed. On completion of this course I was Drafted (sent) to HMS Maidstone a submarine depot ship. On board one of my duties was to man the ten ton crane on the quarter deck, which was senior rates only. On one occasion we had a new Petty Officer on board who was on duty and he had to man the crane sick rating on to a launch to be transferred to hospital. He panicked and I was called to the quarter deck by the Officer of the Watch only to find the patient (strapped to a stretcher) in the water very wet. In the Forces you are warned never to volunteer for anything, but I committed the major crime by requesting to see what it was like to go to sea on a submarine? I got my wish and duly set sail on 'HMS SIRDAR' on exercise off Portland. On the surface it was rough (like a cork) just down a bit at 'snort depth' a bit better but down deep on Batteries it was like standing in your living room, no movement. This was ideal until we hit a sandbank and we had to wait stuck until the tide turned before we could release the bows and return to port. This was when I resolved my submarine days were over, or so I thought. The following week I was summoned to the Electrical Office and informed that as I had experience of submarines at sea I would be replacing an absent Electrical rating on H.M.S. 'Thermopolea'. Ignoring my protests, I once more found myself 'at sea' on a submarine. This time it was even worse. A water leak in one of the compressor motors caused a ballast tank to blow up. Having the spare parts on board we repaired the damage and arrive back at port six hours late. I determined this was my last outing on a submarine. I AM NO HERO. Nor want to be. So I requested a Draft (move of ship) and after a Captain's Request (and with a fiddle) this was granted. Then I found myself on an operational Minesweeper HMS Rattlesnake. This was very interesting with the different types of mines we were sweeping (acoustic contact and magnetic). It was while sweeping the latter, magnetic, that this was to turn out my Waterloo! We had a magnetic sweep, quarter of a mile of buoyant cable trailing behind us, which meant with couldn't stop or turn quickly when we were ramped amidships, causing a lot of damage and resulted in me being hospitalized for six months and invalided out of the Navy as 'unfit for further service'.



**JOLLY JACK TAR.**



## MAKING NEW FRIENDS.

*A Message from Fr. Tom.*

As we progress through the New Year 2007, I reflect on the fact that I have now been in the Parish of Christ the King for one whole year.

It is a wonderful parish with great traditions. It touches the lives of many people of different ages. When I arrived I was so pleased to hear about the good work of the Mercia Friendship Club and have enjoyed my visits to their meetings and some

various events. There is a wonderful atmosphere of support and care, as well as lots of fun!

In the parish we hope to develop stronger links with our seniors and see the Mercia Club as an important help with this. We are lucky if we can get out and about and mix with people but we know many don't. Some because they find it difficult for all sorts of reasons. Many are lonely and I hope we can reach out to them.

The 'Mercia Friendship Club' can help people to see how fulfilling our lives can be and how we can help each other and make new friends.

God Bless You and a Happy 2007.

Fr. Tom.

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### SHARE YOUR STORY.

There must be a wealth of interesting stories and unusual experiences to be told among our membership. Would you like to share one of your episodes with other members? through your own Newsletter? If so, please sit down and put pen to paper and let a member of the committee, or myself, have your story, (no more than one page please.) to include in a future edition of the 'Newsletter'.

Happy Writing! Len. (Ed.)

### February Programme

- 2 Quiz
  - 9 Bingo / Line Dancing
  - 16 NO MEETING
  - 23 Talk (TBC)
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