

## 70th Birthday trip to Poole

Medusa, then ML1387, was built by R A Newman whose yard was just below Poole bridge, and launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1943. Each 10th anniversary we have tried to go back to celebrate her birthday in Poole but the last attempt was foiled by the weather. This time we brought the trip forward a couple of weeks to avoid the gales that always seem to happen around mid October.



*HDML on the slip at Newman's with Poole bridge in the background.*

The plan was to sail from Haslar on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October and spend the night at the Royal Lymington Yacht club and then choose the better weather day from Thursday or Friday to go on to Poole. By Wednesday lunchtime four of the eight crew had cried off with a variety of ailments, however the weather was calm and it was only a short passage so we set off. Fortunately there was a berthing party on the jetty at Lymington and Barry Ford did a sterling job running the main-deck on his own so all went well. In the evening we had a wardroom party for the officers of the Royal Lymington, hosted by Alan Watson and Rodger Woodhams. It is hopefully the start of a closer link between the ship and the club.



*Medusa alongside at Poole*

Thursday morning the weather did not look very nice and we still had only four crew. The forecast for Friday looked grim so we decided to go with the addition of an extra crew member shanghaied from the party the night before. Press ganging still works!

The forecast was SE 5, just off the port quarter, but it came up to a good 7 and Medusa corkscrewed happily in the way that HDMLs do. The approach channel to Poole was particularly tricky as it put us nearly beam on to quite a big sea. I think everyone was quite pleased to pass the chain ferry into calm water. I had been looking forward to an easy alongside on Poole Quay but the harbour control told us we would be uncomfortable there and suggested going into the marina. This meant turning and backing Medusa into the marina and down between very expensive boats and the pontoon.

I did it with no little trepidation but it all worked out fine.

We had the rest of Thursday to clean and tidy the ship after which she looked resplendent. We attracted quite a crowd on the quayside and lots of visitors on board. Friday morning started early with a live broadcast on BBC Radio Solent at 0730 complete with some clips from broadcasts made on D Day. This attracted even more interest and we were busy showing people round all day. To add to the coverage the Echo ran a couple of articles.



Saturday mercifully dawned bright and clear with little wind. Spot on 1030 the Mayor and Mayoress arrived and came aboard. Sam hoisted the Port Admiral's flag as they stepped on the ship and we sailed almost immediately. The Mayor was very friendly and soon it was more a case of him entertaining us than the other way round; we all learnt a great deal about Poole past and present. The plan was to go as far as the chain ferry but it was flat calm out side the harbour so we ended up going as far as Harry Rocks before turning back. On the way back we went up as far as Poole bridge and put the bow as close to the slip where Medusa was born as the row of moored Sunseeker boats would allow. Another tricky manoeuvre into the marina this time with a lot of tide running went well, to my relief.



*Barry, The Mayor, Sam, Brian, Alan, the Mayoress, Carole and Ed.*

Once alongside a table was set up on the foredeck and the dinghy converted to a bar and we all assembled there. I said a few words including reading out a note of congratulations sent by Admiral Roger Morris, her last Royal Navy captain. The cake was duly cut and a toast drunk to Medusa.



*It tasted good too!*

Everyone had been eyeing up a mysterious and heavy box that was by the Mayor. There was some surprise when out came a beautiful bell, an exact replica of her commissioning bell with “HDML1387, 1943” engraved on it. The Mayor duly presented this and I accepted it on behalf of the ship and crew.



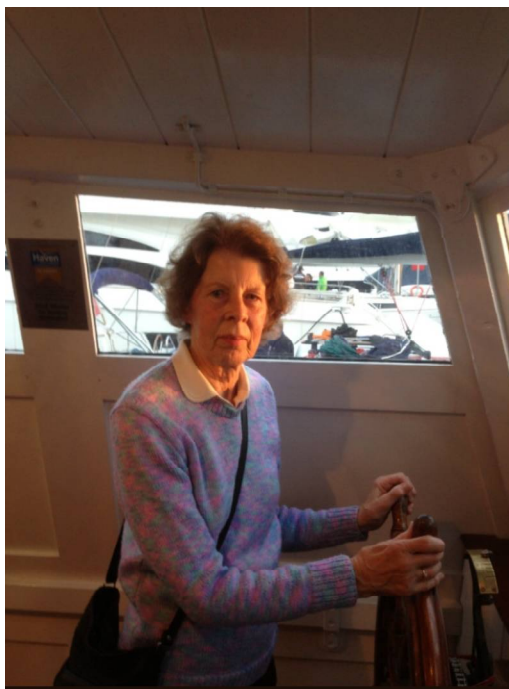
*Alan receives the new bell.*



Shortly after the Mayor departed, and we were again amazed by the number of people who came aboard including a couple who had just got married and wished to be photographed. It's probably the first time the forward Oerlikon had been manned by someone in a wedding dress!

*Start as you mean to go on!*

The last surprise of the day was a visit from Tony and Barbara Cripps. Barbara's maiden name was Newman and her father had owned the yard where Medusa was built.



*Mrs Barbara Cripps (nee Newman) and Mr Newman (wearing the hat)*

It was quite a day and after we had done sunset, we did “up spirits” and watched a stunning sunset.



*Sunset over Poole*

The following morning we set off back for Haslar in sunny and flat calm weather, this time with a crew of 10. We were back alongside for 1530, put the ship to bed and went our separate ways with a sense of a job well done. My thanks to all for four days of tremendous effort and a big thank you to Pam Boyce who did all the organisation with the Poole Mayor’s office.