RFAA SOLENT BRANCH NEWSLETTER No 36 **Early Spring 2014**

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

First-off this year, let me express commiserations to any of you affected by the winds and floods this winter; I was rather pleased not to be going to sea (or sending for tugs to keep alongside!). Weather notwithstanding, your committee (and we welcome Steve Talbot aboard it) has been beavering away to bring you, we hope, a programme for 2014 which will shed a ray of much-needed sunshine into all our lives.

To round-off 2013, we enjoyed a splendid Christmas Lunch at the Royal Maritime Club and an excellent opener for 2014 at the Ship Anson in January; both these Portsmouth events attracted many members and guests and both venues will feature in our future programme. We have also welcomed some new faces at these events (our thanks to Andy August in his recruiter role!) and we hope to widen our appeal ever further. If you know of someone, please spread the word that a warm welcome awaits at any of our social gatherings.

That said, it is probably worth mentioning at this point how we envisage our events working out. Usually you will be invited to make menu choices in advance. This is important for the venue if 30 or 40 extra are to descend on them who want to eat more or less together, so please do respond to Alan & Maureen in good time if you want to attend (but late-comers can often be accommodated). We encourage you to bring a raffle prize (up to about £5 worth) and then buy some tickets to win it back again! In this way we raise funds to support the Branch (mailings, printing, etc) and the surplus goes up the road to support the RFAA itself (I hope you have received your new Yearbooks and AGM & Reunion14 info -- that mailshot alone costs the RFAA some £800 +). The raffle often generates much mirth as Alan juggles the Solent rules to ensure a fair, if opaque, outcome for all. Don't ask! Finally, **please don't forget to pay for your food before leaving.** By remembering to do this you can avoid embarrassing telephone requests / demands for dosh. So its preferable if you settle accounts on arrival.

This leads me rather neatly to the programme itself. We normally agree the outline at our AGM but now it has been fleshed out a bit and looks a lot like this:

12th Mar Social Lunch. Maypole. Hayling Island. Menu already circulated.
` 17th May RFA Reunion and RFAA AGM, Durham.
9th July BBQ Banyan - Chez Peter and Anne Fry in Alverstoke.
20th Aug Chichester Canal Boat Trip.
10th Sept Solent Branch AGM – Ship Anson with Social Lunch.
15th Oct Social Lunch. Sir Walter Tyrell. New Forest.
9th Nov Remembrance Sunday. Wreath-laying at Marchwood.
10th Dec Christmas Lunch. RMC Portsmouth.

Regulars will spot we are re-visiting venues where we have been welcomed before and where we hope to have another enjoyable session. If it works…don't try to fix it! Full details IDC.

…..And finally, my usual plea to please let us know if you know of someone we ought to be contacting. We aren't social workers but sometimes a friendly call is welcome. In this regard, please spare a thought for John and Anne Coombs who are facing some difficult headwinds with health issues. They have both been stalwart supporters over many years and we miss them at our gatherings. And a thought too for Mary Wright and her family who lost Jim (SWO Sir Geraint 1982) our Solent bagpiper, at Christmas.

Hoping to see you at some or all of our coming gatherings

With best wishes to all, Aye, Brian