

# THE E-IN-C/DME REUNION DINNER JUBILEE

BY

A. P. MARTIN, CENG, MIMECHE, FIMARE, RCNC  
(*Civilian Management (Specialists)*)

1992 marked the Golden Jubilee of the Engineer-in-Chief/Director of Marine Engineering department annual dinner. It is fitting at this point to record the history of an event which has come to be an eagerly awaited landmark in the Foxhill social calendar.

The origins of this dinner, which now boasts an annual turn-out of some 200 diners, can be traced to London in 1934 and began as a small gathering of civilian drawing office grades from the Engineer-in-Chief's Department, Admiralty, then accommodated in Whitehall. The exact origins cannot now be recalled but the idea appears to have emanated from a group discussion amongst the senior civilian staff of the day. The inaugural dinner was held in the Chantecler Restaurant Soho on 9th March 1934 and some 50 diners attended on this first occasion. A copy of the menu for this first dinner has survived (FIG. 1). No record exists of the price paid for this feast but from the memory of one of the first diners the cost was of the order of 7s/6d—38 pence in today's currency, a not inconsiderable sum in those pre-war days. The success of this first event was such that it was decided that it should be repeated annually and the dinners of 1935 through to 1939 continued to be held at various venues in central London.

In 1939 as part of the dispersal of Government departments from London to escape the effects of London Blitz the Admiralty were evacuated to 'destination AA27' which turned out to be the city of Bath. The dinner was held that year in the Old Red House restaurant in Bath but in the following year became a casualty of the war years due mainly to the effects of rationing.

The idea was resurrected on the cessation of hostilities and, despite the continuation of rationing, the first post-war event was held in 1949 when the by then much enlarged drawing office was able to assemble some 150 diners in the Forttes Banqueting Hall in Milsom Street, Bath, now sadly closed. The dinner which by now had gathered strength was also used, as it is to this day, as an opportunity to entertain friends and colleagues at all levels from industry. The format has remained much the same over the years with a topical theme adopted for one of the speeches and a reply from one of the guests from industry. A chairman for the evening is drawn from the civilian mechanical specialization.

ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF'S DEPT.  
ADMIRALTY (CIVIL STAFF)



*First*

*Annual Dinner*

*Friday, 9th March, 1934*

THE CHANTECLER  
RESTAURANT  
FRITH STREET  
SOHO



FIG. 1—THE COVER OF THE MENU  
FOR THE FIRST (1934)  
DINNER

courtesy of W. H. Sampson



FIG. 2—THE COVER OF THE 50TH MENU (1992). AT THE SAME SCALE AS FIG. 1

In 1958 the formation of the Ship Department saw the demise of the Engineer-in-Chief's Department, the majority of the staff of the mechanical specialization forming the Directorate of Marine Engineering (DME). To

reflect this new development, the title of the dinner was changed but at the same time it was fitting that the origins were acknowledged. Thus the event has since that time been referred to as 'The E-in-C/DME Reunion Dinner' notwithstanding the fact that the title of the department has once again been changed, this time to DGME. Whilst the dinner had its origins in amongst civilian members of the Mechanical Drawing Office, organizational changes have had an effect on those attending although those of the mechanical specialization predominate.

On the closure of Forttes restaurant in 1977 the organizing committee were unable to locate an establishment of sufficient capacity to accommodate the usual number of diners and thus no dinner was held in 1978, with the event being held as a buffet in the Guildhall Bath in 1979. Completion of Beaufort Hotel Bath (since renamed The Hilton National) in 1980 facilitated the return to the traditional format and successive dinners have been held at this venue, culminating in the 50th held in February 1992. The menu for this event is shown in FIG. 2. To mark the occasion those present were presented with a specially produced tie (FIG 3).

Management and organization of the dinner is undertaken by a small band of enthusiastic volunteers from the department and much credit must go to those who have contributed over the years in keeping this event buoyant. In addition to good food and wine the event has provided some memorable evenings over the years and boasted some excellent entertainment by talented members of the department.

As a final footnote it is worth noting that one of the founder members Mr W. H. Sampson, who retired in 1971, has the enviable record of having attended all of the 50 dinners held to date. We look forward to many more dinners and to his continued presence at what from humble beginnings has become an established part of the Bath scene.

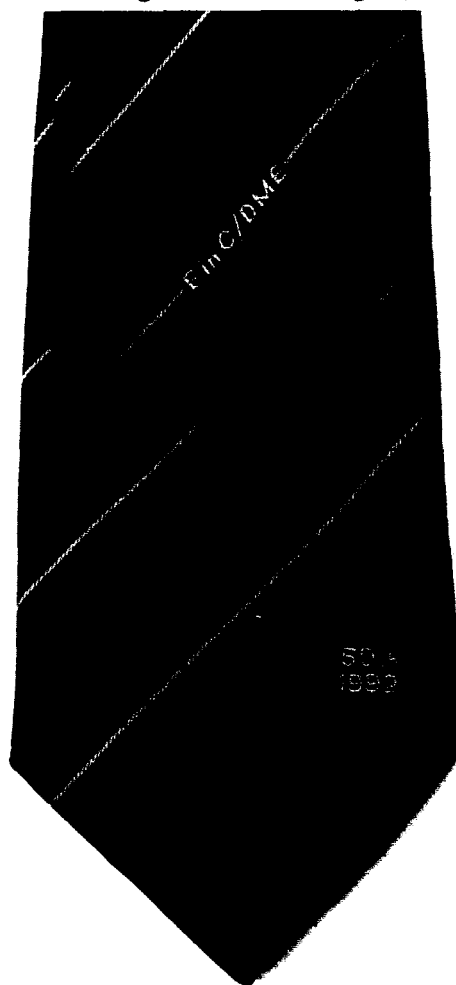


FIG. 3—THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY TIE  
(GOLD ON DARK BLUE)