

*Cachalot Phil Messinger is an 'OW' and attended a big reunion in June where, he says, "a load of 70+ year-old old farts spent a lot of time reminiscing! - It was wonderful!"*



## **"Worcester Memories"**

Fourteen years old, a new life starts.  
You're shaking - scared as hell!  
Make no mistake, you're nothing here.  
You know it - just as well.

You walk onto a polished deck,  
the brasswork shining bright.  
Goodbye to parents, swallow hard,  
and dread the coming night.

Unpack and stow your worldly goods,  
smile tentatively too.  
And hope the boy you're looking at  
is just as scared as you.

A whistle blows - a bosun's call  
you'll know to call it soon.  
A shout to gather - quickly now!  
The caller calls the tune.

"Now listen here - you're very young.  
The bottom of the heap!  
But worry not - all will come clear.  
Now go and get some sleep."

First night away from home, and all  
that ever you held dear.  
A sleepless mix of tears and noise  
- unusual to your ear.

The dawn comes up at last,  
and daily orders rule your days.  
And so it starts - and carries on  
and moulds you to its ways.

Sixty years on we gather here.  
The time just flew away!  
The fear has gone - the memories though  
of that enormous day  
are with us still, as we recall  
that watershed of life.  
And how it changed us, boys to men,  
And shaped our future life.

Phillip Messinger '63  
*Written on the train going home from Greenwich, 2018*

*Phil's previous contributions include "Under the Sun", a poem he composed while cruising on the 'Arcadia' in 2013. It can be found in Cachalot 60, June 2016.*