



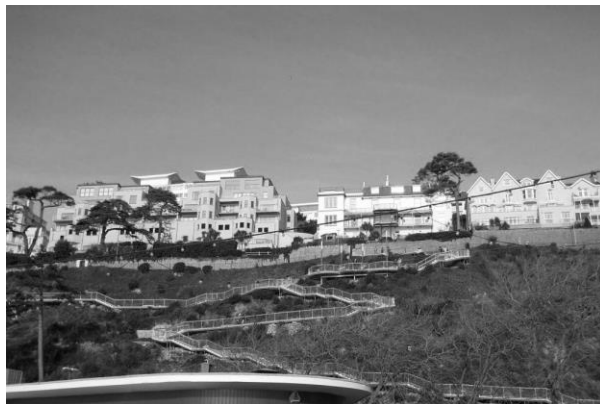
Newsletter – Volume 3 - No 9 – Spring 2011.

**Opening comment:** - Well Barbara and I managed to survive that awful winter; not that here in Hampshire we suffered as badly as some of you! Lately we have enjoyed a few very nice spring days and hope for many more, but you never know!

However, what we in this country suffered amounted to nothing compared to what happened to the many friends and relatives on the other side of the world, namely those terrible floods in Australia and the earthquakes in New Zealand. Viewing the published pictures and videos was most moving; the ongoing affect of these tragedies is hard to imagine!

In February, we went to Torquay for the St Vincent ‘West Country Boys’ get-together and had a great time. On the Saturday, *a really lovely day*, we decided that we would attempt the new ‘Rock-Walk’ that Torquay has built on their repaired cliff face. For a few years now this cliff which overlooks the bay and promenade, has undergone a massive regeneration due to the fact that it had become very dangerous. We made our way up Croft Road, where on the right-hand side, we found a pathway that ran along just below the line of hotels sited at the top of the cliff; the views from up there were fantastic! We walked right along, but instead of taking the ‘new’ steps down to the promenade; we decided to climb even higher and made our way through a residential area, where we noted some very interesting old buildings; both business and private. Then it was on towards Abbey Road and the shopping area of Union Street.

For those possibly able to undertake this walk, we thoroughly recommend it.



Looking forward to seeing those of you attending in Torquay at the end of April!

*Terry.*

### Chairman's Corner: -

Over two months of the year has already passed and by the time this newsletter reaches you, the reunion will not be too far away; I m sure that those booked will have an enjoyable time. It is unfortunate that the Royal Wedding was timed to take place on the first day of our event, meaning those travelling that day will be unable to watch the ceremony on the television; there will be the 'highlights' on TV later that day however!

The committee met at Portsmouth on the 24<sup>th</sup> February, finalising arrangements made, except the planned Saturday coach trip.

We have unfortunately lost more of our shipmates; please note the obituaries section.

I sent a letter of condolence to Mrs Janet Sanders, to which she replied in a very nice manner, also to Mrs Ila Wilson in New Zealand, expecting daily to hear in reply.

I have often mentioned in the past the subject of our shrinking navy, it now seems to be getting even worse! One wonders how the RN will manage without 'carriers' until such time as the two new monsters are in service; air power is essential for surface protection, bear in mind the catastrophe of the Prince of Wales and Repulse whose sinking were directly attributable to the fact that no air cover was forthcoming.

I recall an occasion in RNB Portsmouth during the mid '50's when Lord Louis Mountbatten addressed a 'cleared lower deck' on the subject of 'The Navy'. I do not remember very much about his talk, except the part when he mentioned the cost of aircraft, stressing that aircraft no longer cost £3,000 but £30,000; I doubt that we could put up the plan for an aircraft for that kind of money today!

Last December saw the last 'Swiftsure' class sub come to end of 32 years service and she cost £32 million, with 'Splendid' the fifth of the class costing £97 million. However, compare that to the cost of the new 'Astute' boats, which come at billions. The new Darings take some thinking about, especially when we hear them called destroyers and compare them to destroyers as we knew them. A Daring comes in at over 7,000 tonnes, beam 70', length 500', draught 24', with a ship's company of not much over one hundred; Ceylon came in at over 8,000 tons and at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> commission a ship's company of well over 800! 'Captains of the Top' had more manpower available though!

Here's to our next reunion in Torquay; see you there.

*Yours aye,*

*John.*

### Secretary's Piece: -

2011 Reunion in Torquay: - due to insufficient support, the Saturday coach trip which I had hoped to arrange, unfortunately had to be cancelled. All those who sent in payment for this, will be "cash refunded" at the end of the AGM on Sunday morning (1<sup>st</sup> May). As subs for 2011 are now due, these can be paid to Angela at same time, and at still only £5 a year must rate as a real bargain; I don't know of any association that charges as little as this!

The 'name-badge' draw for a bottle of scotch will take place on Sunday after 'Up-Spirits'. These badges have been 'up-dated', but do please hand them in on the Sunday morning, so the draw can take place, but more importantly so that they can be used again at future functions.

Use of the dining room - there will be no seating plan, *but* anyone who has a mobility problem, is asked to please inform me as soon as possible. This is so that arrangements can be made with the hotel manager who will reserve tables near the dining-room entrance, which is adjacent to the lift.

By popular request, John & Rosemary Wyeth's quiz will take place at 1400 on the Sunday afternoon. It has been already suggested that Andrea, our treasurer, is banned; not sure that is fair though?

As for our reunion next year in 2012, the venue and other aspects of this weekend will be fully discussed at this year's AGM.

*Tony.*

**C30 Surfers:** - Hi all,

Some of you will already have the information I received from a contact via the website, regarding an organization that is looking for anyone with wartime stories to relate. They are to be recorded onto video and put on their website. They will arrange to come to you to do the recording at your home, and you get a free copy of the DVD.

There are some already on their site, I did send out some updates but I suspect that a member may have not wanted them and had pressed the bit that asks if you want to stop getting them so I had to re-sign myself in again.

The site address if interested is at - [www.legasee.org.uk](http://www.legasee.org.uk) -.

It will be nice when the warmer stuff gets here!

***Ron Boniface.***

**Crossed The Bar:** -

1. It is my sad duty to inform you of the passing of a special friend of mine, Keith Wilson an A/B from the 1<sup>st</sup> commission, who was a member of the 'Kiwi' contingent that served in Ceylon; he suffered a massive stroke on the 20<sup>th</sup> February from which he never recovered. Keith had rather more than his fair share of ill-health in his latter years, but stoically clung on in there! His funeral, which was followed by a private cremation on the 24<sup>th</sup>, was held in the town of Taupiri in the Waikato, near where he had lived most of his life before his recent relocation to the home of his daughter & son-in-law in Hamilton. The dairy farm near Taupiri in the Waikato had been the 'family home' since his grandfather's settling days and a place where he lived out what can only be described as a 'full retirement'.

Keith is fondly remembered by the few remaining members of his commission, especially for being a keen all-round sportsman, who particularly liked swimming and was most adept at high-board diving. The pool at the Galle Face Hotel in Ceylon being a favourite haunt, whenever the ship was in the Colombo area, as Dave Evans particularly remembers. I am sure that you will all join me in sending sincere condolences to Ila and her family. So passes a legend and friend.

2. Jim Mumford, CPO (Mech) 1958/60 Commission, died quite suddenly at the age of 73 in Gloucestershire Hospital on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February where he had been admitted for investigations. Unfortunately complications set in causing his very sudden end.

3. Colin Sanders, L/Tel, 2<sup>nd</sup> commission, contracted the terrible scourge of Mesothelioma to which he succumbed recently. In response to the chairman's letter of condolence, Mrs Janet Sanders said that Colin always enjoyed his reunions with us and she is appreciative of the fact that his contemporaries are still around. Apparently his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was spent in the ship and went on to say that his 'action-station' was in bombardment control; (***from this we assume he was the communication rating in the 6" T.S.***) He remembered clearly the asbestos dust coming down from the deckhead in the forward messdecks when the turrets fired, however Janet is amazed at the time lapse for the Mesothelioma to manifest itself. She and Colin met in 1949 and corresponded throughout the commission before finally marrying in 1956. She remembers well the occasion they attended the 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration anniversary of the 1953 Korean Truce at Stirling Castle, when Colin was the sole representative of the R N.

**Whaley's Tank:** - I feel sure that many of you who like me underwent training at HMS Excellent, will recall the WW1 tank that for many years sat on a plinth outside the guardroom overlooking the parade! I recently 'googled' some very interesting information on the life and times of this 'vehicle'.

Tank Mark 1V (male), number 2324, a focal point for many years at Whale Island and now sited at the Tank Museum at Bovington, Dorset, was according to the plaque attached to this tank -

“Presented by Tank Corp Training Centre to HMS Excellent, Whale Island in recognition and appreciation of the great assistance given in training and gunnery (6 pounder) 136 officers, 2413 other ranks of the Tank Corps, World War One.”

Thus it was named Excellent.

Tank No 2324 was built by the Metropolitan Carriage & Finance Co of Birmingham in 1917 and used from 1917 to 1919 on training duties in Dorset. These tanks were designated ‘*male*’ or ‘*female*’, the male version being fitted with a 6pdr gun and the female with a Maxim m/gun. Due to the fact that naval gunnery was a more suitable science for moving tanks, it was decided to build a platform at Whale Island, which could roll and pitch; and that is how the training of these soldiers came to be undertaken by Excellent.

Fast forward to the beginning of WW2, at a time when the country was under serious threat of invasion by Germany and with Britain in desperate need of *any* form of defence weaponry, it was even used by the Navy as part of the defence force set up around Portsmouth for a period of time. Apparently in 1940, a Subaltern of the RASC with a small detachment of soldiers came to Whale Island searching for this tank and on discovering it, convinced Captain Brind, Excellent’s C O, that he could get the tank back into working order! He and his team set to and achieved the impossible, being able to rebuild the engine by cannibalising a similar tank which had also been a War Memorial on Southsea Common.

Eventually, after much hard work, it was brought into full fighting order by equipping it with two 6pdr guns and two Lewis guns. Manned by RN personnel, flying the White Ensign and belching much black smoke, it was driven daily to Southsea Common and back. (*What the residents of Stanley Road, as well as the many other citizens of Portsmouth, made of this spectacle really stretches the imagination!*)

However, with more suitable armaments becoming available, it was finally decided to retire the tank back to her plinth, where she remained for many years. Until that is, on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1975 when she was ceremoniously handed over by Captain M C N Mansergh, Excellent’s CO, to Brigadier R M F Redgrave, Commandant of the R A C Centre.

Today Excellent still holds pride of place at Bovington Tank Museum.

*(Collated from information gained courtesy of Lt/Cdr Brian Witts MBE, Museum Curator, HMS Excellent).*



That’s all everyone; hope everything meets with your approval.....

**Terry.**

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