



Newsletter – Volume 3 - No 4 – December 2009.

**Opening Comment:** - It really does not seem to be all those weeks ago that I sent out the last newsletter! But then again I think this is probably down to aging in general? Time when you are young does seem to pass at a slower pace, such as I recall when I was a bit of a sprog back in 1950. Leaving Portsmouth for the last time on my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and coming home some 2½ years later, there were times when I thought I was never ever going to see England again! Nowadays, that same period of time seems to go by in the space of a long weekend! As a cousin of mine domiciled in the States put it, “*The older I get, the faster I get older!*”

However, for now I would like on behalf of the committee and Barbara, wish each and every one of you a Happy Festive Season and the best of luck; but more importantly, ‘*A Healthy New Year!*’

*yours aye, Terry.*

**Reunion 2010:** - This event is looming by the day, so this is a timely reminder to those who have not yet booked their place, to get on and do so. This year we were unable to find an hotel that included entertainment, etc, with the ‘per person’ cost, just ‘room and board’ only! Entertainment, etc has been arranged by your committee, *no mean feat*, with your secretary Tony putting in a lot of time on the phone and writing letters! With the venue in 2010 being somewhat further north than of latter years, we are hoping to welcome a few extra people from the more northern regions.

**Chairman’s Corner:** - Hello Shipmates,

Did anyone notice my mistake in September’s newsletter? I stated that the ‘Daring’ was the first of a class of seven new destroyers; in fact there are to be six, Daring, Duncan, Defender, Dragon, Diamond and Dauntless.

By the time you read this, December will be with us and to me this is something of a relief, as my association activities will have eased off. It has been non-stop since the 6<sup>th</sup> September, which was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earl Mountbatten’s assassination by the IRA. Some of us have attended this service in Romsey Abbey for twenty years now.

Next it was October 3<sup>rd</sup> at Whale Island for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the loss of the Royal Oak at Scapa Flow. This was at the kind invitation of Ken Toop, the secretary of the Royal Oak Association, who is also a Ceylon member, when once again I had the honour of ‘piping’ during the ceremony in St Barbara’s Church. Nearly all the 120 people attending the service were related to the Royal Oak’s company. It was pleasing to see two Ceylon members there, Alan and Diana Hadley; Diana also lost a close relative that fateful night.

The 10<sup>th</sup> saw me at St Vincent’s AGM held in Gosport, while on the 15<sup>th</sup> we went to nearby Alton to cheer troops recently returned from Afghanistan on their march through the streets. On the 18<sup>th</sup> I attended the usual Trafalgar Parade, hosted by the RNA at Waterlooville, while Winchester RNA celebrated Trafalgar Day with a lunch party at a local hotel on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

November saw three ‘Acts of Remembrance’ occasions held in Winchester: on the 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Garden of Remembrance, the 8<sup>th</sup> a church service and the 11<sup>th</sup> observation of the 1100 ‘two-minute’ silence at the Guildhall.

Recently on 10<sup>th</sup> November, Ceylon’s committee met in Portsmouth; this turned out to be a very successful meeting with many of the details regarding the next reunion being thrashed out. In respect of

this, any member who has not previously attended a reunion, they might like to come along, hopefully with their wife and/or partner, where they would find themselves most welcome; it is all about meeting up with one another once more and enjoying oneself.

I will finish by saying does anyone have a little story to tell, which could be put in the newsletter; for instance: - 'On joining the Ceylon early in 1950 fresh from 'Boy's Training', we called everybody 'Sir'! Very junior ratings thought it all rather strange and laughed at the use of such a title; it is all very different from today! Recently my phone rang and the caller identified himself as Commodore Adrian Nance and my immediate reply was, "Good morning, Sir." He then said, "It's Adrian please."

By the way, Commodore Nance is the tallest man in the navy!

For now, Rosemary and I would like to extend our very best wishes and season's greetings to you all.

*Yours aye, John.*

**Reminder from Treasurer:** - There are yet a number of people who have not renewed their subs this year, which commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> May this year. I feel sure that this is just an oversight on the part of these members, so a little red dot appears next to this message as a gentle reminder for these few!

*Regards, Andrea.*

*On a reunion theme, Vice-chairman Cliff Pell, sent in this little write-up from way back about the 1994 reunion. A VCR tape was made at this event and it is wondered how many still have a copy?*

**HMS Ceylon Reunion – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1994:** - Nearly 150 shipmates and wives attended our 5<sup>th</sup> reunion held in the [CPO's Mess](#), HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. A very enjoyable and nostalgic evening started at 1830 with a glass of brandy punch. While old acquaintances were renewed, there was much nautical chattering and reminiscing before the dinner.

Admiral Thring, CBE DSO and Captain Lloyd-Davies, both in their nineties were with us as usual and it was nice that they were still able to and desirous of attending these reunions.

After a pleasant dinner, there followed toasts and speeches by our President Admiral Thring and Chairman Terry Randall, then it became time for the grand draw. With this over, many happy prize-winners and their friends settled back to their drinks. The next item on the agenda was dancing and sing-song time; all done to disco music and I think fitting in well with our age groups and all most enjoyable.

It appeared to the observer that everyone on the floor was still in their 20's! The majority of shipmates at the reunion were from the 1950-'52 commission, with some from the later '50s, while many were from the first commission, some fifty years previously.

*Cliff Pell.*

**Sick List:** - It is with regret that I have to pass the information that the health of Stan Schaufler from the second commission has recently very rapidly deteriorated. Mesothelioma, that dreaded scourge mainly associated with engine room people, has laid him extra low of late. He has always been very keen to attend our reunions, but his problem has not allowed this for some time now.

*Terry.*

**Crossed The Bar:** - We had but very scant details and the news came quite late to us, but it is with regret that we pass on the information that Jim Proctor, A/B '58/59 commission, of Leeds died on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept last.

**New Members:** -

1. Mr Arnold Gibson, '52/54 commission Boy Seaman.
2. Mr David Edwards, David is the son of the late Henry Edwards who was on the first commission, '42/45, and is heartily welcomed aboard.
3. Mr Arthur Murphy. A/B 1950-52 commission
4. Mr Frank Moore. Boy/O-Seaman (Bugler) 1950/52.

**Surfer's Section:** - It has been fairly quiet these last couple of months, but I have had a couple of enquiries via the website for membership and these have now been dealt with.

It is nice to see the way we have sometimes successfully dealt with enquiries received via our website; I find this most gratifying.

I hope you all survived if you lived near the bad flooding we have had recently and it only leaves me now to say, "Have a good Christmas this year" and wish you all the best. **Regards Ron.**

**A Story From The W.Indies:** - I recently came across a little anecdote that had been submitted back by Alan Pryor in January 1996, with this bringing a wide smile to my face, making me think I should share it out again!

It is entitled "HMS Ceylon - West Indies, late 1950's".

'A young Lieutenant, full of the joys of spring and in 'shore-going mood', was returning to the ship with some of his fellow officer friends in the ship's motor-boat. Passing an anchored yacht, he noticed an elderly sailor sitting in the cockpit holding a sextant in his hand and when close by, he shouted out to him, "You are in Kingston Harbour, old chap!" This brought forth great peals of laughter from the motorboat.

On reaching the Ceylon, the 'O of the W' stopped the Lieutenant and told him to report immediately to the Captain, from whom he received a severe verbal reprimand for the remarks he had made to the elderly sailor. This gentleman was in fact a retired R N Admiral who had complained bitterly to the Captain over the radio, about the 'unbecoming behaviour of the officer'!

We never know who we may be addressing at times do we; Is there anyone among our membership who can recall this incident; surely we must all be now wondering just who this young Lt was and what became of him – perhaps he has even replaced the retired RN Admiral in that yacht?

**A Memory of September 1939:** - The recent 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of WW2, encouraged me to get on and do something I have wished to do for some considerable time now, write my recollections of that momentous weekend; I hope these words of mine do not bore you.

I was 8 years old at this time and I had not been at all keen on evacuation and had said so to my parents, but they had stated that it must be! The evacuation programme called for children to be sent off as groups from their school and as I was at Northam Boys School, I and my two younger brothers were to go on the morning of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September from the school. On that fateful morning I remember getting up very early, having breakfast, saying goodbye to my father before he went to work, then quietly sliding off out of the house and staying out of sight for the whole day! What I did, where I went and what I ate, I do not remember!

Apprehensively arriving home around 'tea-time', I was greeted by my mother who said, "because of you, none of you could go on the evacuation – ***just you wait until your father comes home***"! I was quite fearful at this, knowing that I had indeed been very naughty, but to my utter amazement all he said was, "Well, he just didn't want to go did he!"

I really did think I had gotten away with it – ***little did I realise!*** Mum & Dad must have had deep discussion later before coming up with a solution.

The next morning, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, I awoke to a bright sunny day and marvelled at the sight of a large number of 'barrage balloons' which had 'miraculously' appeared overnight; obviously an overnight war-exercise had been carried out in the early morning.

Mother said we had a busy day ahead of us as we were all to go to St Marys (***our local shopping area***) via great-grandfather Elliot's home, where mum wanted to leave some things for him. Charles Elliot – who at this time was in his mid eighties - was my mother's maternal grandfather and he lived at 32 Compton Walk, a street off St Mary's Road, quite close to the fire station.

Although as yet, war had not been declared, we had all been issued with gas-masks and these were now to be carried at all times in a little box suspended on a piece of string around our necks.

We set off, mother pushing the pram containing my young sisters, Thelma almost 3 & Brenda 14months, and my younger brothers – Brian 6 and Donald 5 – who walked along each holding on to one of the prams handles. I trailed along carrying a paper carrier-bag in each hand, containing what I thought were items for Gt-grandfather, little realising that they actually contained our pathetic little bundles of belongings!

Leaving Guildford Street and turning into Britannia Road, we immediately turned left into Northam Road and crossed over the bridge of Northam Railway Station. On reaching the junction with Brintons Road, we turned right in the direction of St Mary's Road near to the fire station. Soon we reached Central School on our right and here we suddenly turned into the school yard; it was then that I realised we had been '***shanghaied!***' There was no getting out of there and realising fate was against me I had to accept the situation. I vaguely remember my mother explaining why we had missed our turn with our own school, and her being assured it would be alright for us to go with the girls.

So we were labelled and issued with a bag of 'goodies' containing snacks and a huge bar of chocolate, this latter being something of a sop to my feeling of desperation, then just sitting around for the 'off'!

Most of the girls walked crocodile fashion to the Central Railway Station, but some were taken by car including the brothers Randall and on reflection feel that this was probably a precaution against my taking off?

Parents were not allowed to go to the station to see us off, so our goodbyes were said in the school yard; I distinctly remember my mother saying, "You are the oldest, you're a big boy now and you must look after your brothers at all times"; *this was something of an order!*

I recall passing along Brunswick Place and peering through the car window at St Andrew's Park, (*the parks at that time still had iron railings*) and the aviary. I do not actually recall boarding the train at Southampton Central, but I do distinctly remember being somewhat discomfited by the fact that we were the only boys among so many girls; a whole train load! The only recollection of my thoughts during the tedious journey to our destination was one of 'this is taking a very long time!' I do recall hearing one of the accompanying grown-ups (*a teacher perhaps?*) saying that we were at Bournemouth Central Station and being most impressed by the seemingly huge glass roof of this place. I remember that on leaving the train, we were shepherded aboard a coach style bus and the three of us sitting on the back seat with me in the middle looking down the aisle of the vehicle. All the girls seemed to be paired off with either siblings or friends and I remember a feeling of 'being lost' as I sat there with my arms round Brian and Donald, who kept saying, "*can we go home now?*"

My recollection of the remainder of that day is that we seemed to tour the streets and occasionally stopping, when grown-ups, either singly or in pairs, would climb on the bus, look around at what was on offer, then say either "I'll take this one" or "we'll take these two". At long last with the bus nearly empty and it now being dusk - a kindly old couple said they would take two boys; on being informed that the only boys available were three brothers, they said alright and took us into their home.

This couple turned out to be Mr and Mrs Edwin Coombes, they lived in a very nice house in Bournemouth Road, Parkstone, they were retired and he had been a clockmaker in his day. It must have been one hell of a culture shock for these very kind people!

I don't think it was very long before we were put to bed and oh the joy of it; me in a bed of my own with Brian and Donald in a double bed.

**Snippets:** - a couple of one-liners!

Misers are no fun to live with, but great to have as ancestors.

Talk is cheap, unless you are conversing with your lawyer.

**A Christmas Story:** - Santa was very cross; it was Christmas Eve and *NOTHING* was going right! Mrs Claus had burned all the cookies: the elves were complaining about not getting paid for the overtime they had worked while making the toys: the reindeer had been drinking all afternoon and were dead drunk.

To make matters worse, they had taken the sleigh out for a spin earlier in the day and had crashed it into a tree. Santa was furious.

"I really can't believe it! I have to deliver millions of presents all over the world in just a few hours...all the reindeer are drunk, the elves are on strike and I don't even have a Christmas tree! I sent that stupid Little Angel out *HOURS* ago to find a tree and she isn't back yet! What am I going to do?"

Just then the Little Angel opened the front door and stepped in from a snowy night, dragging a Christmas tree. She says, "Yo there fat man! Where do you want me to stick the tree this year?"

And so it came to pass; ..... the tradition of angels atop the Christmas trees was begun.

That's it people; happy reading and all the best. Keep warm, keep happy and don't let them grind you down! Up Spirits – Cooks to the Galley – Hands to Make & Mend!

*Yours aye*

*Terry.*

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Written & Produced by Terry Randall ('50/'52)