



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



May 2009

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Christmas 2008 with WSTG

On Thursday 11 December over 60 WSTG colleagues met at the Alexandra Bowling Club for the fifth consecutive year. It was disappointing that some of our regular supporters were unable to get there, but there is always the next reunion already planned for 4 June 2009!

We were very pleased to see Fred Guy though after a long absence. Fred has recovered from extensive (and repetitive) orthopaedic surgery and was back in good form once more. Two of our most senior supporters, George and Eileen Scutt came along for a second consecutive



Another high quality photograph by Dick Barton

Although our newsletters and invitations have a circulation of some 120 colleagues and associates, every year we see fewer newcomers, but still manage one or two at each event. Bill Hole, a member of the Sonar section in the early 1960s came along this time, but with the exception Ted Arnold and Bert Norris, he probably realised that very few underwater specialists of that time regularly support these parties.



Fred Guy chats with Ken Bevis

Christmas; they were both surprised and pleased to see Bill Legg, a guest visitor and the curator of the HMS Collingwood Museum. Bill had arranged a memorable day out for George last summer at the museum.

As always there were our regular supporters from the West and North of the country. One of them, Dick Hughes, now well used to retirement, is heavily into woodwork, and a sideboard is currently in production for a family member!

Our party also coincided with Ray Hayhoe's 80th birthday. This occasion, we celebrated hopefully without embarrassment, by raising both voices and glasses to him - although there was a time when such an event

would have been an excuse for many, many more pints. We are however all much older, wiser and above all, a lot less fit for such antics!

In Party Mood: Rod Howes,



Dave Sherris, Ron White & Trevor Mitchell

This particular function did, nevertheless, seem to have more of a party atmosphere than our previous reunions. More people were pulling Christmas crackers and wearing party hats, and our excellent buffet lunch

appeared to be very much enjoyed and consumed with relish. There was such a run on the desserts that those preoccupied at the bar and others slowly working there

way through separate fish and meat courses were left with a dearth puddings. We sincerely apologise to those who missed out on the more "exotic sweets".

The committee were quick to note this shortcoming and adjustments will be made at our next reunion. **And the solution will not be smaller pudding dishes!**

Although it is to some extent

WSTG VISITS

a financial risk the committee are continuing to plan two or three visits a year. We try to think of places to go that you may not consider visiting by yourselves but might find of interest, and we are getting new supporters for each visit.

As we get older we do seem to have an affinity with museums, but it does, at least, give us something else to talk about (other than our problems) at the reunions. Why not consider joining us in the Autumn. Rarely does someone send

A PHOTO FOR THE ARCHIVES



us an old photo for our collection, so thank you to Steve Tooke. This one was taken in Milldam House Clerical Office circa 1982. Steve (right) retired from the Naval Base a few years ago and lives in the area.

Regrettably we believe Freda Bailey died in April 2008.

And the whereabouts of Neil Sivyer? Please let us know.

The Nearly Spring Visit to the Imperial War Museum London

Despite doubts that we may have set the date rather too early in the year a party of 25 WSTG and associate members set off by coach on 10 March on this *nearly Spring* visit. And despite the traffic congestion and a stop at Guildford for coffee, etc, we arrived at about 11am ready to embark on what was to be, for some, a fairly exhausting visit, both physically and emotionally.

Although our party did not quite fill our coach to capacity we were pleased to have, beside our regular stalwart supporters 5 people who have not been on our any of the previous WSTG visits. Perhaps on a future visit, with the support of everyone we could be in a position to hire a larger and more comfortable coach.

So how do you tackle such a large number of museum exhibits and so much information? Well, as Ken Bevis so succinctly put it: "if you stop to read all the words you're not going to get very far!"



Polaris in the main gallery

I set myself the task of trying to get "a feel" for the permanent galleries and exhibitions. And so, after a bewildering start in the large ground floor exhibition gallery I decided that, with such an early breakfast, lunch was

required before the café became as busy as the museum galleries. However, one does not have to concentrate too hard to get the point of the main gallery: it is a unique collection of vehicles (land, air and water borne), weapons (static and mobile) used in WWI onwards to almost the present day. There is, maybe, nowhere else in the world where one could stand and look first at a WWI Tank ("tank" being a code name for this new secret weapon) and then at a Polaris missile! Or indeed see the smallest craft to assist in the evacuation from Dunkirk.



The Wurzburg 'A' Radar

The good news was, you were allowed to take photographs of all this. The bad news was you had great difficulty isolating your chosen target exhibit from others adjacent to it, and of course the many visitors.

After lunch it was up to the first floor where you had a better view of the main gallery, more heavy calibre gunnery and an interesting towable German Wurzburg Radar used for AA gun laying. It had a folding 3m dish and a surprising date of origin - 1939.

On this floor I was first drawn to the Secret War Exhibition and its technology. This was the

world of special forces, SOE, MI5 and MI6. (Needed to stop reading all the words if I was to see the other galleries, but noted the date that military intelligence, as we know it, started was about 1909.)

There were some brave and tragic stories of both British and foreign nationals together with examples of weapons particularly designed and suited for operations behind enemy lines. Then there were the aids used by those engaged in gathering and passing on intelligence: from the early days when invisible ink was a prime accessory for clandestine operations, to the portable communications equipment. There were novel inventions to assist those not too accomplished at Morse code and the more recent bugs (the listening type) and detectors. The most popular camera for secretly copying documents was another exhibit.

I concluded this section with the items developed in the inter-war years for coding and code breaking intelligence and that Enigma box that looks like a mediaeval lap-top!



Enigma Unit with Rotors

Then onto the Medal Gallery. Another unique collection of so many Victoria Crosses, first awarded in the 1850s, and George Crosses, the 20th century top class bravery award. The medals all look the same of course, but there is a distinguished array

of recipients and citations to absorb.

Finally a quick look at the Merchant Navy's survival at sea. This deserved more attention than I was able to give it, but an open boat in which brave souls survived some 70 days is a significant and poignant exhibit.



**Dockyard, Portsmouth 1918
John Duncan Fergusson**

"Onwards and upwards" to the second floor: as I enjoy pictures, I headed for the gallery of works by well known and less well known war-artists. I pass two enormous photographs of Harry Patch (110) and Henry Allingham (even older) that are part of the remembrance display and start on the artists' war scenes. No gentle impressionist water-colours here, but stark oil on canvas atmospheric scenes; also pencil and pen and ink drawings, and some prints. All aspects of war are depicted together with the civilian war effort: from munitions factory scenes to ship construction. There are works by Spencer, Nash, Wyndam-Lewis and many other very British artists. And not to be missed is the famous picture by the American portrait painter Singer Sargent: "Gassed", which shows the horrors of mustard gas. (I did however miss the important collection of cartoons.)

I then diverted from my plan to look only at the permanent exhibitions: "Unspeakable" is a short-term exhibition of work by artists who had escaped death against great odds and witnessed the Holocaust atrocities.

They are traumatic pictures of the artists' interpretation of actual unforgettable incidents. In this exhibition you are compelled to read some of the horrific descriptions that accompany these pictures. Not for the feint hearted or children!

Head for the 3rd floor and start the Holocaust Exhibition: I start by listening to the arguments for racism at its very worst, but cannot understand why there was no credible opposition to such mad men infecting perfectly normal people with their potty ideology. Absolutely stunned to see callipers and a vernier scale for determining Aryan characteristics!

If you are of a certain age you will have read and seen quite a lot of film coverage of the implementation of "the final solution"; however, the detail in that part of the exhibition is phenomenal. I found the "Auschwitz in Snow" model a moving sight and could not finish reading the full "processing" description. I exit through the war crimes "trials and retribution" area pondering on what has been learned from the Holocaust. Racism and genocide continues as it has done throughout history!



Adrian Wright and Ken Bevis at 'War in the Air'

Time was passing quickly, and I had to see at least some of the lower ground floor displays. Head for the WWI permanent displays. I find out the origins of this war are a little complicated to understand, especially when time is pressing! I go for the "Trench Experience" with some very realistic tableaux and accompanying audio effects.



WWI Tableau

Cross over to the WW2 displays. Again if you are of a certain age much of it is familiar as modern history, or indeed in childhood memories. The displays here are brilliant and unique. They certainly brought back some memories from my childhood: such as the relative tranquillity of Cowplain thrown into turmoil by the preparations for D-day; vehicles, water carrier and guns parked on grass verges; Brenn-gun carriers – like infant size tanks clanking up the road. I could not find one of these on display, but well remember getting a ride in one so many years ago!

Other displays depicting "the Blitz" prompted memories of my return to Portsmouth, much too soon incidentally, because

V1s and V2s were still wreaking havoc. I was suddenly reminded of stories of children being injured by collapsing structures whilst playing on bombsites and a tragic drowning in a static water tank.

Sorry Monty (Master of the Battlefield), I have to miss you on this visit because I must see the displays on conflicts post 1945! Begin with Malaya and the insurgency containment that saw many National Servicemen killed and injured. With the likelihood of being a National Serviceman myself, unless I could keep on being deferred for "further education", I had a keen interest in such conflicts and well remember reading Leslie Thomas' "The Virgin Soldier" born out of this conflict.

Quickly go through displays recalling Aden, Korea, and then the Suez Crisis that occurred around the end of my apprenticeship. Luckily I was still deferred from N.S then!

I did not escape National Service, however, and spent too much time in the National Service, Cold War and Berlin display areas. A N.S. man's kit layout prompted a few memories. It included blanched webbing, "bulled" boots (pimples removed and highly polished) and something I had never seen in a kit layout, a tin of boot polish and one of Brasso with all the paint removed and the metal highly burnished!

The building of the Berlin wall brought back memories too as I was in the Western Sector around the Whitsuntide when the "altercation" started to get seriously out of hand. I was also due out of the Royal Corps of Signals, hopefully in

the following September (1961)!

Another interesting display commemorated the last train to Berlin run by the Royal Corps of Transport circa 1991. This memorabilia included a commemorative plate and a bottle of the wine served to mark the occasion. My own recollection of this journey was the need to submit your I.D. card for examination prior to going on this train whether on duty or on leave. I.D. cards had to be absolutely flawless for the Eastern Sector scrutiny.

All that is in the past now; with the collapse of Communism (again well illustrated here) you can get the regular train from Cologne to Berlin where the tragedies and painful memories of the Wall, are not forgotten. You can buy a postcard at the Brandenburg gate with a fragment of the Wall encapsulated on it!

Well that was it for me. Time had run out. I missed the Cyprus conflict where some of my army colleagues had had some scary times and the Falklands War exhibits, but it was time to meet the coach, which Dave our driver had managed to park near the entrance.



Dave Metherell and Dick Barton pose for a final picture before departure

The end of another WSTG visit, and at only £15 per person cheaper by 4 quid than any other firm - my boy!
Ken W.

SAD NEWS



**Don Warren
1926-2008**

It was a poignant moment for many of us as we returned home from the WSTG Christmas Party to learn from the local newspaper or a telephone call from a colleague, who had seen the notice that, sadly, Don Warren had died suddenly on 3 December at the age of 82 years.

Don began his career as an electrical fitter apprentice in Devonport Dockyard and although we know little of the time he spent at his home dockyard Don was recruited into WSTG as a founder member in 1958/59 and worked at Devonport as a TG 1 (PTO 2).

In the early 1960s Don was posted to Portsmouth where on promotion to Tech. Officer Grade B he managed the Sonar section for sometime. In the same decade Don was given the job of managing the Portsmouth office, which in those early days included the administration, documentation and stores. He continued to do this job effectively until the Portsmouth WSTG organisation became more structured and the Senior Technical Grades A & B were replaced by the PTO 1 grade (SPTO). Even after these changes Don remained one of the "main stays" of the non-mobile staff and as such was well

known to everyone within WSTG.

Don Warren retired early from his post at Milldam House in March 1983.

Don's interests were very much his home and garden, his motorcar, and collection of crested china. Although he did not usually attend WSTG social functions, we were pleased that he came to our first reunion at Alexandra Bowling Club in March 2004. For many of us this was our last meeting with Don. See photo below.



Don at the 2004 WSTG Reunion

Don's wife, Beryl, predeceased him by almost 5 years and we learned that in his final years he suffered from severe depression. A funeral service was held in the afternoon of 17 December at St Wilfred's Church Cowplain. Ted Arnold, a member of Don's sonar team in those early days, Ivan Winter and Ken Wingate were among the group of family and friends who attended this service.

We extend our sympathy to Don's family and close friends.

Staff in Confidence

Our trip to Chatham dockyard on 30th September last year produced an added bonus for me as an ex - Chatham Dockyard

Apprentice.

Following the trip, Dick Barton informed me that he had made it to the first floor of the dockyard museum. There he had spoken to a member of the Chatham Dockyard Historical Society [CDHS] who was able to show and print off some records of Dick's apprentice time at the yard. He also showed Dick some records appertaining to me [Ivan Winter] but due to the data protection act he could not copy them.

Dick E-mailed me with some relevant addresses and advice which I quickly followed up. (Many thanks Dick.)

I started with an E-mail to CDHS which was passed on to Chris Scott the Librarian who replied with a request for some confirming details of my pre-apprentice days. Shortly after that I received a few of my records from the apprentice entry exam of Oct 1953 and the final reports of my 4th year upper in the Dockyard College. Chris also informed me that unfortunately some records had been lost in a flood and many more were waiting to be archived.

He also informed me that the MoD held more records and under the freedom of information act I could access these personal records. He provided the address of DSDA at Llanelli. A bit of correspondence got me to the "PPPA SAR" team who hold the records on us all. Why, I am unsure, I shall not be seeking re-employment!

In late Feb I received an envelope in plain wrapping, containing three fat files: STAFF REPORTS, PERSONNEL FILE and SUPERANNUATION FILE. The latter was interesting in

that it included some letters on the validity of my foreign marriage. I get to 70 and find I have a *get out clause*? Well, not really. The agreement that it was valid could be important!

The staff reports file included details on promotion boards and the results. One board found it pertinent that I was well dressed and balding, I rest my case! The personnel file included much data on vacancy notice promotion boards, normal promotion boards and career interviews and the superannuation file contents are self evident.

Was it worth the effort, well I thought so: more for the family archives? The conflicting opinions of some of the boards were interesting: **fear** was misread as disinterest, and there was a remark that "**I was dismissive of modern management techniques**". What a sauce, a weekend bonding with the typing pool in a paint ball battle in local woods is a powerful management tool!

Much of the information on me was as I would expect. I had forgotten how many VNs I had gone for, with one close to success which would have taken my career on a very different path. If you are interested, the addresses needed are: for Chatham dockyard apprentices Chris Scott of the historical society [cscott@chdt.org.uk] For everyone. Peoples, Pay and Pensions Agency data protection office at: PPPA SAR Team Room 39, Bldg 2 PO Box 38 STOCKPORT SK8 7NU

Ivan Winter