



# WSTG Reunion Newsletter



November 2009

www.wstg.co.uk

## A Significant Date?

Back in May 1959 when the "Brits" still called Sonar by the acronym "Asdic", and the equivalent of a DCI was an Admiralty Fleet Order (AFO), one such order, No 1205, stated WSTG would come into being on **1<sup>st</sup> June 1959**. Now, for most of those who read this Newsletter (or even chuck it straight in the bin) that date was vital.

For better or worse the formation of WSTG probably had the greatest impact in determining the paths of our careers in the MOD - because WSTG was different to other departments. The work that was to be undertaken in every shipyard and dockyard in the country and abroad, and in other extraordinary places, was "hands on" for both junior and more senior Technical Grades. Expertise had to be acquired from project teams and contractors, and more time than ever before was

invested in technical and equipment training. All this obviously entailed a lot of travelling and time away from home for all concerned.

As a consequence the later, well established WSTG organisation was made up of those who had devoted many years of their working lives to it and those who did not stay quite so long!

Our website, including Trevor Mitchell's page, contains some of the history of WSTG. Essentially it started with the Group's early staff comprising the mobile team previously known as the Outside Erection Party, a team responsible for maintaining equipment on ships in reserve, staff from the Production Pool test team and some out-station equipment maintainers. To acquire more staff for the large ship weapons programmes an early

recruitment drive also took place in the Royal Dockyards.

Prominent names in the management team who had the task of integrating the various teams to form WSTG were Capt Jack Noel RN, Bill Middlemas, and Les Marks.

The other difference between WSTG and most other MOD organisations is that we still stay in contact! We shall mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year since it all began at our Christmas Party this December.

## Spring Reunion 2009



On Thursday 4 June over 40 colleagues and friends attended the Spring gathering. There is nothing special about these meetings, just the usual drinks and a buffet lunch, but it does pick up those who are often engaged in other festive activities in December. They too can then meet with old colleagues, although perhaps not quite so many as at our Christmas events.

This year Simon Fiddian was joined by Mike Lovelady and Mike Fittal, all travelling up from the West. It was great to see them after so many years, and there was no doubt that they enjoyed making contact again.



**George, Adrian and Kelvin having a natter**

Another surprise visitor was Carol Smith who made a fleeting visit from work. Even Joyce Baker was not double booked on this occasion, which she often is for our Christmas events!

Ken W took very few "candid camera shots" this time, but Dick Barton once again coaxed everyone to muster for a group photograph.

Don't forget your return slip for the Christmas Party on 10/12, in this the 50<sup>th</sup> year since WSTG was set up!

## What happened to Our Autumn Visit?

We intended to visit the Fleet Air Arm Museum - see page 4 column 4 to read why we abandoned it.



**Cairo Mill Oldham. An unusual detached duty venue - but not for WSTG!**

## WSTG and the Seaslug Missile Guided Weapons System



Girdle Ness fitted out for Seaslug trials.

WSTG came into being in 1959 to cater for the perceived problems arising from the new weapons coming on line in the fleet.

These moved away from individual weapons to more complex systems which involved linking with sensors & action information organisation (AIO) throughout the ship.

One of the first tests for the newly formed WSTG was the Seaslug anti-aircraft system mounted on the new County class DLGs. [Destroyer Leader, Guided missile]



Missile Handling

The first of the DLGs was HMS Devonshire built at Cammell Lairds and launched in 1960. A radical weapon system, COSAG [combined steam and gas turbines], 992P or later 992Q radar, 184 sonar and a hangar for a Wessex helicopter made for a really new and handsome warship.

The design of these 6,800 ton ships was centred on the Seaslug missile system. This first generation anti-aircraft missile was a beam rider with its wrap-around boosters, designed by Armstrong Whitworth, and using a large over engineered [not our words] stainless steel launcher. Because of the missile design and size, it was necessary to provide a passage through the ship for the missile from the forward magazine past check out points to the launcher.

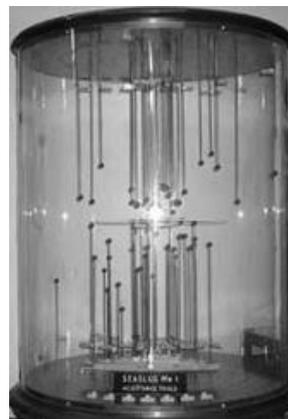
The photograph (left) shows a missile travelling (being handled) on a rail system towards the aft end launcher. It was an environment of hydraulic rams, flash doors and safety interlocks. One can understand the (in some cases) insurmountable shipbuilding and engineering problems getting everything in line. HMS Fife, a batch 2 ship, at Fairfield's being a good example of this when she slipped from lead ship for GWS 2 to second place, the project team transferring to HMS Glamorgan.

A large rolling platform at Aberporth was first used for tests and then the Seaslug system was extensively put through trials in the Med on HMS Girdle Ness, 1959/61,

see top photo. Here the missile launcher was a three "barrelled" affair and fitted on the for'deck.

These trials proved to be very successful with all available target aircraft destroyed.

The photograph below shows a model of miss distances for all missiles fired - with a kill probability of over 90% [from Collingwood museum].



Miss Distance Model  
An HMS Collingwood  
exhibit

The photograph below shows HMS Antrim with the two missile launcher and director aft of the rear funnel.



HMS Antrim - last of the batch 2  
County Class

This GW System required information from various radars: 278 provided target height finding ; 992 medium range; 965 long range. The large and complicated, narrowly focussed 901 radar provided target tracking, together with gathering and beam riding guidance for the missile.

All of these radars were set to work by WSTG but the main task, the Seaslug GW system with its ASWE designed 901, required a dedicated team of WSTG expertise. This was established with Jon Burrows as team leader, a man who led from the front and set up his office on which ever ship was being worked up on.

Members of his team included Bob Rea, Ray Hayhoe, Jim Latty, Malcolm Eastcott, Len Daubney and later Andy Andrews-901 radar, with Sid Porter and Dave Burnett on the 901 director.

The Batch 1 ships did not have an ADA central computer system - these were early days - but among those in the Ops Room was Joe Cleall on the Missile Direction System (MDSI).

Fred Isted looked after telemetry and data recording and dealt with much of missile handling electrical work. Ken Wingate was one of the Dockyard "diags" who joined the team on loan to gain experience in preparation for the first County Class refit, working on HMS Hampshire at John Brown's, Glasgow; HMS London at Swan Hunter's, Wallsend, and at HMS Collingwood.

employed, involving courses and work with the project team. The WSTG staff assisted them on HMS Devonshire (first of class) and then, in line with WSTG's terms of reference, HMS Hampshire became their sole responsibility.

As stated above HMS Hampshire was at Glasgow completing her fitting out in 1963. The WSTG team therefore found themselves travelling in the worst weather experienced for centuries with lowest

relied on fairly complicated analogue computing which formed part of the 901 radar. They also had the double bedstead 965 radar and ADA (DAB). Do you remember those displays where letters and numbers were built using Lissajous figures?

HMS Norfolk was one of the second batch ordered under the 1961-64 estimates and Ken has recently found a photo of the ship he took in Valetta harbour, Malta in 1973 during her final sea trials in the Med.

Besides Portsmouth dockyard, Chatham also assembled a team to cover refits of HMS Kent and Fife. Our own Dick Barton being a member of the STW team, that included, amongst others, Jack Hawkins (team leader) and Don Davenport.

practice target and sunk, HMS London went to Pakistan, HMS Hampshire was broken up and four other ships were purchased by Chile. HMS Kent was to be seen for some time as a training ship off Whale Island.

The 901 director fitted at the eastern end of the ASWE Portsdown site was a landmark for many years. A photo in the archives shows the closing down of the 901 radar assembly with many scientists, engineers, technicians and service personnel who had worked on the system over the years gathered on and below the director, among them Ken Wingate and Sid Porter.

The day was presided over by retired SPSO, Bill Mallinson, then in his eighties, who had led the project team for some years.



### HMS Norfolk on trials in MALTA

By the time the batch 2 ships were being set to work, Ken together with Bob Blofield and Bob Lasseter had completed a couple of Dockyard refits and rejoined WSTG on a permanent basis. Bob Rea was by then leading the team. He was later replaced by Andy Andrews when he was promoted to "Grade A". Throughout setting to work of all eight DLGs other members of WSTG were often diverted from their areas of work to assist the Seaslug team. Among those involved were Eric Shoemsmith, John Farmer and Ivan Winter.

The usual initial WSTG training format was

temperatures recorded in Renfrew - just across the Clyde!

The technology was then still thermionic valves - these being hard wired onto flat chassis that were fitted into large temperature controlled cabinets in the TSO, in the case of 901 radar. This gave a high degree of reliability.

Although the first four ships had, in addition to the conventional AA mode, a crude surface mode which involved destroying a missile over an intended target, the last four ships had the Seaslug Mk 2 missile with an improved surface "up and over" capability, and a better facility to deal with low flying targets. Control



### Closing Down of the GWSI/2 Project

Although batch 2 DLGs provided a surface capability, the concept of beam riding with its ability to track only one /two missiles to one aircraft target proved to be its Achilles heel and the ships had a relatively short life. One idea envisaged using the ships for mine laying, the missile tunnel being used as storage, but eventually HMS Devonshire was used as a

During the Falklands conflict the missile was used in anger, missing an aircraft target but it was more effective against Argentinean surface targets.

The initial costing to get Seaslug to an operational state was £1.5 million, final cost was £40 million. We must still be using the same accountants!  
Ivan & Ken

## Sad News

We regret that since our last News Letter we have lost two more colleagues who had spent a considerable part of their careers in WSTG. Ray Walton died at his flat in Portsmouth from pneumonia and Gerry O’Gorman sadly became another victim of cancer.

### Raymond Walton 1930 - 2009



Ray pictured in  
Spring 2004

Ray Walton was a long serving member of WSTG who joined the group in the early 1960s. He spent many years at Cammell Lairds Shipbuilders, Birkenhead as a sonar equipments specialist working in both submarines and surface ships. Ray was confirmed as a PTO 3 (ex electrical fitter) in 1966.

With the re-organisation of WSTG into Co-ordination (C) and Specialist (S) sections he was recruited, and promoted into “C Group”. Much of his work was in Scotland during the late 1970s, and in particular at Scotts at Greenock. Ray was a dedicated co-ordinator who spent a major part of his time in shipyards to the detriment of his domestic life and to some extent his health. Latterly, he suffered reoccurring problems with an earlier leg injury. Although Ray was from the

Liverpool area he was posted to Portsmouth at the time of his separation and divorce where he eventually transferred back to the “S Group”. He was retired on medical grounds in the mid-1980s.

Ray died at his home in Portsmouth on 15 July 2009. He was 79 years old. Ray was taken back to his roots for his funeral at Warrington Crematorium, which took place on 7 August 2009. Ray came to our first reunion at the Alexandra Bowling Club and is pictured far left in the group photograph taken at that time.

### Gerald Arthur Ernest O’Gorman 1944 – 2009



Gerry pictured  
Christmas 2006

Gerry O’Gorman was a resourceful, practical guy with a capacity for hard work and using initiative. In truth Gerry was ideally qualified to join a mobile organisation such as WSTG at the peak of its large programme of work.

Gerry was first introduced to WSTG when he went to Gibraltar in the late 1960s on secondment from Devonport Dockyard. There, he assisted Ted Arnold and Co with the setting to work of a Type 177M Sonar Equipment – a first fitting in that dockyard.

Gerry, who had received his technical training in the RAF, was soon recognised as a

good worker, as the setting to work, harbour and sea trials progressed. By the end of the job he appeared quite keen on a post in WSTG. Ted suggested that if he was interested in joining the group he should contact the Devonport office.

Gerry became a member of the Sonar Section and transferred to Portsmouth in the early 1970s. Much more happened to Gerry around this time: he married nursing sister Ann (with Ted as best man); bought his first house, which he almost rebuilt and invited John Mills to lodge with him until John had found a place of his own - such was Gerry’s generosity.

Gerry worked with the Sonar Section for many years and once again made extensive alterations to his present house to meet the needs of a growing family. In the late 1980s he transferred to the Trials and Sea Ranges Group where he took over the Self Noise Trials, a job where his qualities were all too often needed.

Gerry will be remembered for liking a brandy (or two) after work and, in keeping with many of his generation, a few cigarettes. Gerry took advantage of an early retirement package offered in 1995 and continued to enjoy family life in Gosport. Gerry did re-established contact with WSTG colleagues when he attended the 2006 Reunions although he had regrettable suffered a stroke back in 2001.

Gerry died at home on 20 August 2009 after a short illness. He was 65.

A service of thanksgiving for

his life was held at Portchester Crematorium on 28 August. Gerry’s daughter Zoe read her moving but up-beat tribute at the service led by the Rev. Sue West.

Among the several WSTG colleagues present were Ted Arnold, Cliff Grainger and Dave Sherris.

Our sympathy is extended to Gerry’s wife Ann and the whole family.

### *Continued from page 1:*

Those colleagues who usually join us on our visits, may have wondered why we have failed to make contact about our trip to Yeovilton. We had, indeed planned the trip, and had “a flyer” prepared showing 20 October as our day out! We had changed our coach company for a better deal, and perhaps a better coach! However, on receiving the company’s terms and conditions we noted that a cancellation charge of 60% of the cost of coach hire was payable if we cancelled a month or less prior to the date of the trip. This presented a much higher financial risk, given the short time we had allowed for organising the trip. Our first attempt to avoid abandoning the visit was to shift the planned date. This turned out not to be such a good idea as we were told by our contact at Yeovilton that they would then be on “winter routine”, which had quite a lot of disadvantages. In view of the difficulties encountered we have decided to leave our visit until next Spring, but we shall need to think about the planning well in advance of the chosen date. Moreover, we shall need your firm bookings and cheques over a month before we actually go!