



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



November 2010

www.wstg.co.uk

“A Little Bit Special?”

On 3 June we met up once again for the regular WSTG mid-year reunion. We have frequently said this meeting is nothing special, just a regular cold buffet, a few drinks, a chat and a chance for those who do not make our Christmas event to catch up on the gossip and well-being or otherwise of our colleagues. But this time it was, perhaps, a little bit special in a number of ways.

To the surprise of a number of his old colleagues Alf Huntley, who was over from Spain to celebrate his 65th birthday with his family, came along and with a few others contributed to the Bar profits well into the afternoon!



Alf Huntley with Ted Arnold and Ron White

Neil Buchanan also took advantage of a visit to his family living in the South to meet up with old colleagues and friends once again. Neil, who still lives in Dumbarton had recently made contact with us after discovering the WSTG website. He was originally

one of the Clyde WSTG staff, working on Comms.

Another newcomer to this event was John Davis. He had learnt about our reunions from Roger Phillips when they met up at a local indoor bowling club. After leaving WSTG John continued service with the MoD in various locations, but now lives locally. He was pleased to renew old acquaintances.

Many of our regular supporters are wives/partners of members who are sadly now deceased but still maintain the WSTG-link. The late Gerry Green's daughter – Caroline further extended that link whilst on a visit to see her mother,

June. It has been said before, but Gerry was one of the most well known and colourful WSTG members and we were delighted to meet another family member.

Another surprise was to see Orien Young back on our social scene. With Orien and

several others who had moved from WSTG to the Ranges Group there were probably a larger proportion of ranges colleagues attending than we have had for sometime.

It was a coincidence too that Carol Smith brought along a number of photograph she



Some faces (old and new) enjoying the 2010 Spring Reunion

had been given as “ a few reminders”. They comprised group pictures of the Ranges staff of which a number of ex-WSTG members were included. To the surprise of Evelyn Bowditch there was a picture of her partner, the late Jimmy Johnson and amongst others – another of the rather debonair Colin Parr! A Christmas party group included Dave Sherris Gordon Bone and the late John Brook.

Copies of two retirement articles with photographs were included in this collection featuring Ray Callaghan and Orien Young. As always neither of them had ever been forwarded copies! And furthermore they still have not received them despite Ken W's promises to reproduce them!!

There is an advantage to regular get-togethers however, as it does encourage and remind people to keep promises. So come along to the Christmas “do” to see and maybe take away some of the photos and “copy” of past memorable events.

WANTED

In our November 2009 Newsletter we produced a write up on a major project WSTG was involved with, viz, Seaslug on the County Class Destroyers.

We should like to produce some articles on other major systems for which WSTG was the Setting to Work Authority before, not to be too morbid about it, we all run out steam!

The aim is not to get too profound but to describe the history of the system from WSTG's first involvement and recall the personalities who were concerned with it.

As far as Surface Systems are concerned, Sea-dart, Seawolf and AIO would be good follow-ups to Seaslug. The reunion committee are probably capable of putting together a skeleton piece on most systems—**what is wanted is some help with the detail.** If you feel you can help, **talk to us at the reunion or email us.**

Journey from Gibraltar

If you were a Dockyard Apprentice in the late 1940s or 50s you probably remember those days as working with a large group of local lads. That, however, would not be quite true. Such was the high regard for the dockyard practical training and education given by the Royal Dockyard School that several fellow apprentices would have come from different parts of the country and perhaps one or two from Malta or Gibraltar. Our own Louis Figueras was one of the latter. This is his story.

Louis was born in Gibraltar on December 28th 1937.

He was evacuated to England at the beginning of the Second World War and returned to Gibraltar after the war ended. The picture shows Louis in uniform, at the age of four, in London helping in the



war effort, with his gasmask on his shoulder!

Louis started his career with the MOD as an electrical/mechanical employee at H.M. Dockyard Gibraltar in 1954 as, what they used to call then, a 'yard boy'. He worked for the Naval Armament Department on general duties in the stores and in the foreman's office. Successful at apprentice entry examination, he was allowed to join as an electrical apprentice in September 1955. He worked in the Training Centre learning the necessary basics on electrics, shop work and drawing office procedures.

In August 1957, he accepted the offer from MOD to be transferred from Gibraltar HM Dockyard to Chatham HM Dockyard in Kent under a system that was also applicable to Malta, called 'The Equal Opportunity Scheme' which allowed Dockyard apprentices that showed some promise in trade work and academically, an opportunity to further their studies and career in the UK.

In Chatham Dockyard, he continued as an electrical fitter apprentice training in workshop and afloat work procedures. In 1961, he finished his apprenticeship and reached the dizzy heights of 'Electrical Fitter'. He became a leading hand of the department responsible for maintenance of Dockyard electrical services that included electrical and

electronic welding equipment. It was while in Chatham that he met his English Rose and he married her in Rochester on March 1963. They are "still going strong". He lived with his in-laws as a temporary arrangement.

To further his career (and to get independence from the in-laws), he applied for a job as a Draughtsman. In September 1963, having been accepted as a suitable candidate, he transferred to Foxhill in Bath, Somerset, where his daughter was born in



Louis with Dave Taylor and John Mills—Sonar Section colleagues

March 1965, and is now living nearby in Fareham. In Foxhill, he was involved in the production of the drawings for the Polaris School power installation; also the weapons equipment and associated electrical power services for the Polaris Submarine. A few years later in 1966, he joined WSTG in another career move to Portsmouth where his son was born in January 1967, now living in the USA. His daughter provided him with two male grandchildren, both born in Portsmouth, and his son provided another boy and a girl, both born in USA.

It was in Portsmouth Naval Base where he started working on Radio Communications on HM Naval ships with WSTG. He joined the mobile team

responsible for the setting to work and trouble shooting of HF/MF and direction finding equipment, and carrying out trials (HATS and SATS) on mainly new-built Naval ships. Changes occurred in November 1972 and although he was happy in his job, because of family pressure, he was given the opportunity to work, still with WSTG, on Satellite Communications at DRA Portsdown. This allowed him less travelling away from home. The main work he was involved with was Skynet V and the inauguration of SCOT.

It was during his post at DRA on Portsdown Hill that he had the opportunity to obtain his BA degree in Technology. However, another move within WSTG was to take place because of the faltering relationship with a team member of a higher grade. Louis decided it was



The Graduate

best they parted company and asked for a transfer to the Sonar Section to learn something new.

Because of his career moves within WSTG he worked on equipments from very high frequencies to very low frequencies

Googling instead of Doodling

gaining more expertise on different equipments at every move. The several moves within WSTG also gave him the opportunity to make many friends and as far as he was concerned the moves were very rewarding. He also met numerous interesting old WSTG individuals, all with their unique characters, that made them stand out from the crowd. In his opinion, without them and due to adverse changes in working practices, WSTG was to eventually lose its attractive appeal.

After about 18 years with WSTG and to be more at home with his family, in 1984 he transferred to Portsdown Hill on procurement of ships' communications equipment and finally on TEMPEST. Some of his work at Portsdown continued the liaison with WSTG and thus, he never lost touch with the 'old comrades'.

Louis retired from MOD in 1996 when the procurement workforce at Portsdown Hill was due for transfer to Abbey Wood in Bristol. Happier days were to come on his retirement when he found out that money only (though it helps) was not the essential ingredient to a happy life!

Contact Information:

Ken Wingate:
ken@thewingates.wanado.co.uk

Ivan Winter:
Ivanwinter1@ntlworld.com

Adrian Wright:
Adrian@tgef.demon.co.uk

Some colleagues who read the WSTG newsletters also look at our website where the same articles are generally more detailed and comprise more photographs. Here, we are not limited to 4 pages of A4 paper size and a circulation of some 120 ex-WSTG employees and friends. It is available to anyone who has computer access, and inputs "WSTG" or any reference within the website—for example, "HMS Roebuck" into their chosen search engine, most probably Google nowadays.

We know many who receive the newsletter left "computery" behind when they retired; that was, in our view, a big mistake, given the advantages of the Internet, email communication and on-line shopping. So who, other than our WSTG (computer aware) colleagues, would look at the website? Firstly it is discovered by those "surfing the 'net'". This is another way of looking for inspiration or anything of interest - or perhaps just daydreaming! Before all these grand technological innovations came about, for some of us, doodling served a similar purpose.

Secondly there are those who are looking for specific information; they are usually researchers, writers and the like, seriously "Googling" instead of "Doodling"!!

We know this is happening because we do get the occasional feedback. As stated elsewhere in this

newsletter, Neil Buchanan re-established contact by discovering the website. More recently we have heard from Keith Parke who returned to Australia following retirement from HMS Dryad's maintenance group in 2007. He now lives near some of his family in the Snowy Mountains, but can still keep in touch with us by email.

Another ex-WSTG employee who has made contact after finding our website is Diane Dibley. Diane, as a very young lady in the late 1970's, was a clerical assistant with "C group".

She now lives in Blackpool but travels widely in Europe with her job as a

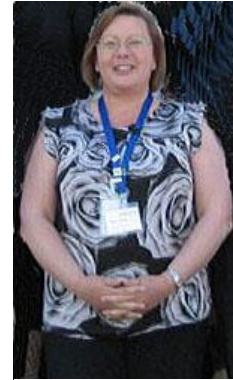


Diane at a WSTG Dance in the early 1980s

Business Improvement Consultant.

And so to the research aspect: Adrian, our website manager, was recently contacted (emailed, of course) by "a researcher" who wanted to interview the person who had served on HMS Roebuck in connection

with a book he was writing. Sadly that was not possible, because our reference to the ship comes from our write-up on Derrick Middleton BEM who died on 2 December 2006.



A recent picture of Diane Dibley

Finally, we are unsure where the reader of Ted's Page (Ted Arnold's write-up on his experiences with the Underwater Section 1964-1970) stands - whether a "surfer" or "researcher". He kindly emailed Adrian the Type

Number of the underwater telephone fit on HMS Naiad that had been omitted in this piece, At the time of writing Ted could not remember it!

John Alan Brook

Following our report on the sad demise of John, Gordon Bone very kindly sent us an Appreciation of John that was published in the Parish Magazine of St Margaret's Church Eastney. This article told us more about John after he retired.

John was always a "people person", and we now know that he was a Liberal Councillor in Dorset prior to his posting to Portsmouth. In retirement he also served on the Parochial Church Council. When we update our obituary section of the website we shall include more on this remarkable guy.

MUSEUM UPDATE

In our May 2008 Newsletter an item described the work some ex-members of WSTG were doing in a couple of museums as volunteers. Despite their increasing maturity as CS pensioners they are still "reporting for duty".

Read on!

HMS Collingwood:

Ivan and Pat continue with their task of producing a database of all items held in the Museum. They estimated it might take a year but had forgotten that Collingwood like other museums has many items not on display, but hidden under benches or in areas not open to visitors.

Adrian and Neville continue with their efforts to breathe life into some of the exhibits. A Kelvin Hughes navigation radar is at present receiving attention. The diverse voltages needed to get the aerial turning and PPI working has produced the occasional excitement. Recently, a bank of diodes decided they were not man enough for their job resulting in more sparks and smoke than volts! The pair of volunteers now have the aerial motor running, but with the transmitter inoperative of course.

The database has now reached 1460 items and the intention when completed is to add it to the Collingwood Museum website. Although the

museum has five locations many delays have occurred through items



not being exhibited but packed away. Some of these items are so interesting that a long discussion may follow before being logged and photographed. For example, there is the Russian bathythermograph, (pictured) - where did that come from?

Other non-exhibits were a pair of nicely packed Barr and Stroud portable pre war Range finders. Nerves of steel required to stand and read off the range of an approaching hostile target using these!

A JDA display with a radiation warning on it, was puzzling but after discussion and some "Googling" the consensus



was the CRT, if broken, might be the offender.

Ivan and Pat are now down to the last 100 items still to be catalogued and photographed, One item that stands out is outfit FV5 made by Standard Telephone and Cables in 1944, and which was an important piece of equipment in the

Atlantic battles. This large item was apparently found in a garage! Larger still is a complete 965 radar. The aerial stands outside the main museum.

The National Museum of the Royal Navy was launched last September. This brings all of the Navy museums under one organisation that includes HMS Victory, the Submarine museum, the Fleet Air Arm museum and HMS Collingwood. They are MoD funded so we hope no cuts to the £6.5M are made in the future.

Amberly Museum SOS:

The first project Ivan and Pat had undertaken 10 years ago was to rewire and get working the 1930s control equipment, from Havant station, for the then new electrification system on Southern railway. In April a phone call told them that it was now totally dead— nothing worked,

The system is controlled by two, Master and Slave,

large and heavy circular switches driven electro-magnetically, switching the voltage to the required section of the track. After a day of pouring over the drawings and checking

the 70 year old relays they decided that a fault is often simple!

A visual inspection of the two switches showed they were out of step and could never get in line. The problem had been caused by another volunteer (not from WSTG) who had decided that all of the copper connections should be shiny bright so had taken both switches apart, polished the connections and then reassembled them incorrectly. To be fair to him there were no lining up points or keys to ensure correct alignment on the spline, but he should have marked them. Correct alignment soon had the system working again, much to John, the curator's relief.

The equipment is a bit of a crowd pleaser as it makes a lot of noise and there are loads of lights and bells!

LOOKING BACK: This photo was taken at the turning point of three careers. Ron White, Roger Phillips and Norman Dibley were about to leave WSTG. Ron and Roger were off to join Ferranti and Norman was to be re-employed at RNAD Gosport. The other guy is Alan Reader. (Milldam House 1984.)





Gordon Bone and D Sherris with the late J Brook and other Trials and Ranges Colleagues