



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



May 2012

www.wstg.co.uk

Christmas 2011

On Thursday 11th December we met once again for our eighth consecutive WSTG Christmas Reunion. The committee still finds it remarkable that colleagues support two meetings each year. Our Christmas events usually attract more than 60 applicants, and although there are one or two who do not arrive there is always a good crowd of ex-WSTG employees, several partners and old friends.

This seasonal event also attracts more colleagues from outside the local area. This year Roger Eves from Barrow in Furness came along once again, as did our regulars who migrated to the West of the country.

Our reunions never fail to bring surprises and often some sadness but rarely are they so closely associated as they were with this event.

Many of us knew that for quite a while Ray Hayhoe had not enjoyed good health. Indeed we had not seen Ray and his wife Gwenda at these functions for sometime. This time, however, they duly arrived, and old working colleagues were pleased to see that both of them were in quite good form, although Ray (like many of us) had some difficulty remembering a few names and faces.

Having enjoyed their company once again we were saddened to hear that Gwenda had died suddenly only a few

days after this seasonal get together. Our

sympathy and condolences were, of course, extended to Ray.

Like all our events the party was kept going by the well stocked bar and the buffet. We did run a bit low on puddings, but most were happy with the event and many went home with one of our seasonal raffle prizes. Our ladies' free draw was won by Eileen Scutt who took away some Belgian chocolate biscuits.

Reunions usually run themselves. The committee only needs to arrange an appropriate venue and ensure there is good food and plenty of drink; attendees then "catch up" on what has happened since they last met. Some engage in serious discussion.....

And some certainly don't.....

But in the end our reunions are about colleagues, who shared many working experiences together over the years, keeping in touch.

Talking of shared working experiences, no one can have failed to notice that it is the 30th anniversary of the Falklands war, as so much has been written



Bob Lasseter and Knocker White

and broadcast recently. This conflict obviously had some impact on WSTG



Dave Sherris with John Davis

and there must be a few stories related to this action that still need to be told by old WSTG employees.

So, if you have a Falklands story let us



Simon Fiddian, Clive Sutton and John Couper

have it before our next Newsletter is due it will save the committee some time thinking what the hell we can write about!

Recently UK postal charges escalated to 50 pence for a second class letter and 60 pence for a first class letter. These are now some of the highest charges among EU countries and will increase the expenses for our Reunions –eventually! But we have invested

some money in postage stamps at the old price to delay the rising costs. Moreover, we have already cut postage costs by sending our Invitation Flyers and Newsletters by email to those who have agreed to receive them in this manner.

KEEPING DOWN OUR COSTS

If you have an email address please help us to lower our running costs still further by requesting our correspondence by this method.

Details are on the WSTG website (wstg.co.uk) if you have not already taken up this option.

And do not forget to inform us of any change of email address.

WSTG and the Falklands Conflict

With the hope of getting some of our ex WSTG colleagues to put pen to paper (or fingers on the keyboard) and tell us about their experiences during the preparation and support of the Falklands War, here is a very modest offering.

The WSTG Radar Section, which I had managed for a few years by then, were very much concerned with the GWS 25 (Seawolf) surveillance and target indication radars Type 967 and 968 and of course the standard radar equipment fitted to all ships. We were fairly busy at this time, regardless of the war, having finished work on the type 22 frigate HMS Brilliant and with work in progress on Battleaxe then at Devonport and Brazen in Glasgow. There was also work on the Batch 3 (Seawolf conversion) Leader Frigates and Radar 967 and 968 at Fraser Gunnery Range.

Although WSTG was the setting to work authority a greater part of the expertise was provided by Marconi, the prime contractor, we did have our hands-on team including Derek Bloomer, Norman Dibley, Ken Voysey, Allan Reader and Keith Parke, to name only a few who readily come to mind.

Our team worked closely, if not always harmoniously, with the Marconi engineers who were concerned about losing the work, notwithstanding the extensive ship programme.

During our visits to the shipyards and Royal Dockyard we obviously watched with interest the conversion work on *Canberra* and in particular the preparation of

Atlantic Conveyor which was close by HM ships *Andromeda* and *Battleaxe* on which we were working at Devonport.

If my memories are accurate *Atlantic Conveyor* received the attention of the media, and the ship's Captain was "dubbed" Capt'n Birdseye. However, on Saturday 24th of April 1982 Norman Dibley wrote in his diary that this vessel having loaded stores for the last few days sailed that evening.

On 25th May MV *Atlantic Conveyor* was sunk by two Exocet missiles with the loss of 12 men including Captain North DSC, the ship's captain. This was a most significant loss as the supplies she was carrying were crucial to the tactical plans of the campaign, which were subsequently markedly changed.

I believe that most WSTG members, who had watched *Atlantic Conveyor* being "prepared for war" were as much touched by her loss as we were with the loss of the warships - because the WSTG Radar Section and others had worked on **all** those ships during build and acceptance.

Looking through Norman Dibley's collection of photographs I note there is one of *Atlantic Conveyor*. It is not that historic ship of the Falklands battle zone but her replacement. She was launched in July 1984 by the Defence Minister's wife Mrs Heseltine at Swan Hunter's, Wallsend. In 1985 the Radar Section were working there as usual - and, those who knew Norman Dibley well, will have guessed my next sentence! Norman had acquired a photo of the replacement ship and had it signed by her first master, Captain John Cooper!

None of the Radar Section went to the Falkland Islands during the hostilities. We were, however, acquainted with the Mar-



M V Atlantic Conveyor - Captain Cooper

coni Engineers who did "go South" to ensure the Seawolf missile system lived up to the publicity it had attracted. Nevertheless we were called upon to answer a signal from HMS Brilliant whilst in the war zone.

Shortly after 0100hrs on 14th June 1982 I received a call from one of the GWS25 RN Applications Officers, Lt Cdr Mike Davis, for help with some queries just received from HMS Brilliant. They concerned aerial outfit AZT to which some changes had (officially) been made as a result of problems revealed when Norman Dibley had been working on the ship. I rang Norman, who fortunately was not on detached duty, and arranged to collect him from his home at Gosport. We arrived at Portsdown at about 0200hrs with the notes Norman had made on the difficulties we had had on that ship. By about 0400hrs a satisfactory reply to Brilliant's signal had been drafted and we left Portsdown for Gosport where I dropped off Norman and returned home. Puzzled why HMS Brilliant had not had updated information about the changes made, I anticipated that there may be questions asked of us!

Later that morning it was "business as usual" but there was an inquest on the previous night's work. Norman, accompanied by Orien Young (our man embedded with the Ship Weapons System Engineers), then went to Portsdown to go over the matter with the SWSE engineer in charge, and there, for WSTG, the matter ended. We had followed all the extant change procedures.

There were other problems, for example in HMS *Andromeda* on which WSTG had worked, as mentioned earlier, but these were investigated by a Marconi engineer who caught up with the ship at Ascension Island.

Continuing on the subject of the Falklands' losses, the first photograph in the "Dibley Collection" is that of HMS Sheffield on which WSTG had spent many weeks during its build at Vickers Barrow in the 1970s. (You will recall she was our first ship lost to an Exocet Missile.)

Norman Dibley's plan to get his ships' photographs signed by the first (or very early) commanding officers started with HMS Sheffield. It must, therefore have been a poignant and sad moment for the Naval Commander of the Falklands Task Force when he heard of Sheffield's loss— because the signature on the Dibley photograph is of Captain Sandy Woodward RN (February 1977). Although they did not participate in the hostilities, it is perhaps ironic that WSTG had also supported both the Argentine Type 42 Shef-

field Class Destroyers, mainly during sea acceptance trials (SATs). Moreover, on RN ships WSTG was the setting to work authority for the weapon that had inflicted damage and tragedy to our Falklands Task Force—the Exocet missile.

I well remember visiting the first “stretched” Type 42 and looking at the alignment of the

an and, as we always try to respond to our “hits”, he recently forwarded a message to me.

An engineer by the name of Philip Robinson had spotted that WSTG had been the setting to work authority for the Type 670 jammer. I had mentioned it in my write up of the section that set to work Sonar, EW and Submarine equipments.

Kongsberg processor for the 670 jammer.

Philip gave us some background information on the jammer. In the factory it's code name was Heather or STJ [Short Term Jammer] as it was to be replaced by Millpost. It was based on the commercial RCM2B jammer but incorporated the Kongsberg processor.

The 670 was introduced into service in 1983, post Falklands, to fill a gap produced by the delay in introducing the more expensive Millpost [675].

27 units of the equipment were fitted on 42s, 22s and batch three Leanders.

The 670 must have been one of the last contracts awarded to Racal before they acquired Thorn-EMI, moved on to the Crawley site (the MEL HQ in a more competitive era) and became responsible for Type 675.

Philip Robinson asked if it was true that there were problems with the setting to work of 670 which took longer than

anticipated to commission.

Unfortunately I was unable to answer his question, but if there is an EW expert out there (from WSTG or elsewhere) who can help, *do contact the committee.*



Jammer Type 670 console beside the ESM UAA console

We did have one bit of luck as we investigated the Collingwood Museums photographic archive: we found a series of photos showing the 670 equipment above and below decks, these we copied to Philip who expressed his thanks. ♦ IRW

Postscript: The Type 675 Jammer was fitted to major RN ships from the late 1980s onwards. By the turn of the century this jammer was, however being removed from RN service with no plans for its replacement. Essentially the nature of Naval operations were changing and greater emphasis was being placed on improved hard kill missile systems. Nevertheless, all aspects of electronic counter measures (ECM) are still being researched. ♦ KW



HMS Sheffield - Captain Woodward

Exocet launch containers: I found myself peering forward, at the ship's gunwale! It was “back to the drawing board” for the ship fitting authority! But this is a story best written by another of our colleagues!

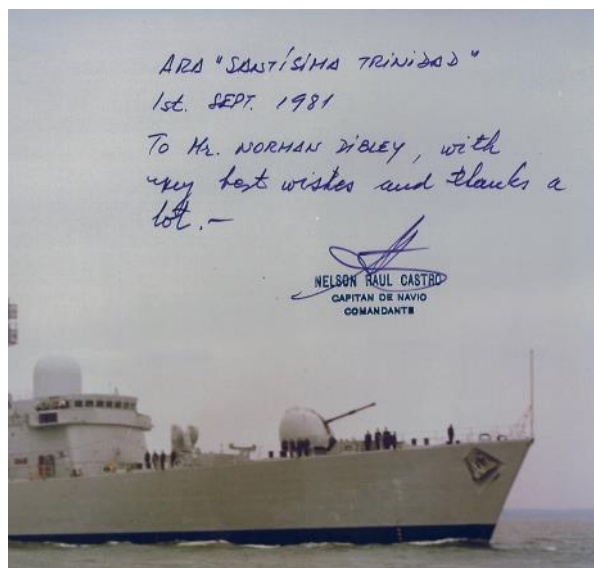
So, come on lads start “scribing” before all the best WSTG stories are forgotten. ♦ KW

A RECENT WSTG WEBSITE “HIT”

We occasionally get queries from people who have discovered our website, either because they have a connection with WSTG, or who recognize the equipment we mention on our pages.

As website manager any mail is received by Adri-

In 1978 Philip Robinson had been an engineer working for Decca Radar at Hershaw. His first task as a 24 year old inexperienced engineer [his words not mine] was design of the



An appreciative comment from the CO of the Argentine Type 42 **Santisima Trinidad** for work on the 965Radar



Type 670 Jammer Port Radome
below the Type 1022 Radar
fitted on a Type 42 Destroyer

Another gem from the **Museum of the Royal Navy**, (HMS Collingwood section), is offered with the accompanying photograph:

Adrian Wright and Neville Maton with Fred, "the surgeon", (no "Scrubs" but still wearing surgical "Marigolds") connect up components to replicate an early spark-gap transmitter.

Reasonable success *was* achieved finally.

But that was only after a **few** problems! They included Pat Cross and Ivan Winter short circuiting the 12volt battery power supply! This released a quite remarkable amount of energy in milliseconds and a cloud of acrid smoke from the connecting cables!

A forgotten lesson from the past: **always** carry out a wiring check schedule!

The burnt fingers have healed nicely thank you, so Fred's surgical expertise remains unchallenged!

HELP!

This is the 16th Newsletter that the Committee have circulated since we started the present series of WSTG Reunions in 2004. There is quite a lot that has happened since then and we hope quite a lot to look forward to. For example perhaps another WSTG outing or visit is in order despite the fact that some of us are now getting "a bit creaky"!

What is definitely required is some ideas and some contributors to future editions of this Newsletter.

We may be slowly running out of steam but we don't believe we are losing our organisation skills. All we need is a *little help*.

"Old Commissioning Engineers never retire they?"



Who says retirement can't be fun!

You will only receive our latest Flyer- invitation and accompanying Newsletter if we have your correct postal or email address.

Please forward changes to either:

- ◆ Adrian:
- ◆ Ivan:
- ◆ Ken: