



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



November 2012

www.wstg.co.uk

We have waited and waited and waited.....

Despite our pleas in the last issue and our efforts in chatting up prospective subscribers to this NL we have waited in vain for just a few lines from a different pen or a fresh keyboard!

It would, indeed, help the committee and give the 'little grey cells' some exercise if a few readers wrote just briefly on their experiences with WSTG, or any subject of interest to our group.

What we do still have however is support for our meetings: on 7th June forty of us met once again for our 17th reunion at the Alexandra Bowling Club.



One of our younger colleagues chats with an older one!

In March 2004 on the occasion of our first reunion at the Bowling Club there were almost 50 attendees. Several of them had retired as long ago as the early 1980s, and some of those are no longer with us. A few, nevertheless, still regularly come along to our reunions. Others have difficulty in travelling about and it is to those that through this newsletter we can provided the remaining

contact with their working life. So if you have any news about old

colleagues that you wish share with those we do not see regularly this newsletter is one way to get it circulated!

Talking of early events, Ivan found some pictures from WSTG's 21st Birthday (1980) celebrations, As yours-truly is the only surviving organiser of this event I can say our future social events could only get better!

The problem then was finding a venue that would cater for 170 WSTG members and partners, was at a convenient location in Portsmouth, and was reasonably priced. This was essential as a number of attendees were coming from all parts of the country, and staying over at least one night.

In the end we settled for a deal with Portsmouth Polytechnic who had all the facilities required at the onetime NAAFI club at Cambridge Junction, Old Portsmouth. They could also provide over-night accommodation elsewhere in the city.

On that evening of the Dinner and Dance all was going well until we were seated for dinner. Although it was a very basic meal we soon realised that not only was there insufficient waiting staff there was also insufficient kitchen staff doing the job. A relatively long wait ensued!

The outcome was a totally unbalanced event with a very long dinner some long speeches and only a



Some of our colleagues at the WSTG's 21st Birthday Lunch. Group includes the late Liz Mckenzie and Geoff Anders

short time for dancing. The dance band had a very easy evening while the pianist hired to play during dinner went home with ivory tinkler's cramps! I was absolutely mortified but as always WSTG stalwarts made the best of a pretty disastrous evening!

We soon improved our skills though, starting with several successful D&D's at the Curzon Rooms, Waterlooville.

Moreover, from its original purpose as the HQ of the Royal Engineers (sea defences) to its current role as the Register Office for Portsmouth that Georgian edifice, Milldam House, has never seen more lively and popular social events than when WSTG was there! ♦ *KW*



Letting of steam after a very long dinner are Margaret Wade and Derek Bloomer!

The following day there was a further celebration by way of a buffet lunch at the same place. This event was much more successful and made up for the evening debacle!

The evolution of the Leanders

There is a saying about aircraft and ships; if it looks right then it usually is right. This certainly was true of the Leander class of escort frigates who provided a continuous workload for WSTG from 1961 to 1984. Many considered this class to be the best looking and most effective escort vessels of any navy post WWII, this being confirmed by their long life, India decommissioned its last Leander in 2012 and six navies operated them.

The very successful hull shape first appeared in the six Whitby class Frigates in the early 1950s and continued with the Leopard, Salisbury and Rothesay classes. All of these classes were de-

signed to have specialised tasks and to operate in a group but the way ahead pointed to a general purpose design with the new concept of a helicopter stowed on board, providing a long range anti-submarine capability.

signed to have specialised tasks and to operate in a group but the way ahead pointed to a general purpose design with the new concept of a helicopter stowed on board, providing a long range anti-submarine capability.

I first saw a Leander in 1961 when visiting Harland and Wolff in Belfast where the ship yard had HMS Kent and HMS Leander in build. This ship had started life as a Rothesay class; HMS Weymouth which was cancelled in 1960, the yard then finished her as the first Leander. Ajax [ex Fowey] and Dido [Hastings] also be-

gan life as Rothesay class. At about £6 million these first Leanders were good value. The important thing for WSTG was the sensor and weapon fit. The radar fit included types 965, 994, IFF and the navigational set 974, later 978.

The sonar team had the echo sounder, 162, 184 and 199 to STW.

The weapons fit included a twin 4.5 Mk 6 gun mounting with a MRS 3 director and 903 radar, 1 ASW Limbo mortar and Seacat.

ICS 1 and Gyros also kept WSTG busy. Initially the helicopter carried was the Westland Wasp this was later changed to the familiar Lynx both being part of



First of class: HMS LEANDER

the Match system.

This list does not include the many minor items which make up the complete weapon systems.

Sixteen of this first batch were ordered from a dozen different yards many now long gone such as Scotts, Stephens, Hawthorn Leslie and Whites on the Isle of White. Portsmouth

and Devonport Dockyards were also given orders in the first batch and later one each of the Broad beam.

The success of this initial batch prompted the Admiralty to order a further ten in the late sixties. To provide more fuel stowage and room for new systems two feet was added to the beam and they became known as the broad beam Leanders. This aspect of ship design, the ability to be able to update with new systems, in this case sonar 2016 and sea wolf was lacking in its successor the type 21.

It was also at this time that one yard, Yarrows, got most of the new build work. ♦ \$ R W

Kelvin Neale Retires

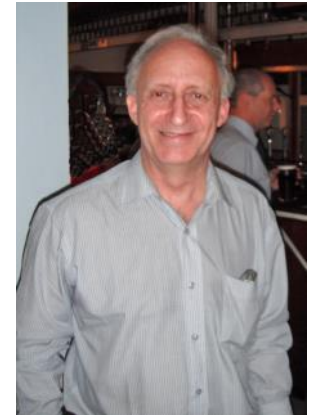
Kelvin's retirement celebration was held at the Fleet Club Queen's Street Portsmouth, on the 28th June 2012. Many of his ex-colleagues from WSTG joined him with others also retiring from MCTA (Maritime Commissioning Trials and Assessment).

Kelvin entered HM Dockyard Portsmouth as an Electrical Fitter Apprentice in 1968, after his first year he was transferred to the then new Technician Ap-



Last of class: HMS ARIADNE

prentice scheme. On completing his 4 years he took up an appointment at Foxhill Bath working on the low and high power electrical distribution systems for the Type 23 Frigates. In 1974 he applied for a job in WSTG and being successful, transferred back to Portsmouth starting at Milldam House to work on the



Kelvin: 'WSTG's last man standing?'

909 Radar and the Seadart system. Kelvin also worked on ADAWS, Navigation systems and was a pioneer on the Electronic Tilt Measurement System used for tilt testing.

His years in WSTG spanned from 1974 to its closure in 2002, then from 2002 to 2012 with the succeeding Commissioning Group, part of MCTA. He continued setting to work and broadened his experience with some radio communications work on RFA's.

His future plans will see him taking a more active part in his family's haulage business, so no rest just yet. We would all like to wish him luck for the future and hope he will keep in touch with all his ex-colleagues in WSTG. ♦ AW

Museum on a Knife Edge

Who would have thought that the financial tsunami that has swept around the world would include the Collingwood museum as a possible victim?

Earlier this year as the seven museum volunteers went about their tasks the curator Lt Cdr Bill Legge RN Rtd returned from a meeting near lunch time with the crushing news that the museum was no longer to be funded due to defence cuts. It was to be closed!

The MoD had decided that it could now only afford to fund three of the larger museums and that the maintenance and rent of the Collingwood Museum could not be supported.

The unkindest cut of all was that the data base of the museum's artefacts, which Pat and Ivan had spent four years putting together, was to be used to decide the fate of these items: 'bin it', 'flog it' or store it.

Despondency is a mild word to describe the feelings of Bill Legge and the team of volunteers, Bill Legge has devoted over fifty years to the collection [see the museum website].

It was obvious that many items regardless of historical value would go. How do you store a complete 965 radar and AKE aerial?

A positive outcome was that the museum was visited by several decision makers who probably would not normally have done so. One of them with a weapons electrical background came up with a museum saving solution; not everything could be saved, but things looked brighter.

A couple of weeks ago we all went with Bill Legg to Marlborough building in Collingwood to view a possible new home. A large well lit room with a first floor gallery, an office for the curator and a separate room to house the printed archives, and with a working space for the volunteers.

Changes will have to be made; the collection of commercial radios is to be sold; also the extensive valve collection. Decisions on what to keep of duplicate items will also have to be made.

The volunteers have sprung into action: Adrian has produced a catalogue of the commercial radios using the database and Fred has used his fund of knowledge to price them [see the Collingwood website].

Test equipment is being checked out for serviceability by Pat and Neville.

Ted Robinson, the latest recruit, and Ivan are producing another data base of the museum's many photo archives.

Some interesting photos have come to light. An album of photos shows the world cruise of



HMS Hood with other ships visiting nearly every country south of the equator in 1923/4. (Our photo shows HMS Hood & Repulse at Government Docks Victoria.)

Another collection of photos shows the Russian Royal family being rescued by HMS Marl-

borough at Sebastopol in 1919. One old dowager insisted on being taken aboard from her vast estate, many miles from Sebastopol. Her last hurrah I suspect as most arrived penniless. (Our photo shows Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievich on board HMS Marlborough.)

A project has now been established from the



education budget within and led by HMS Collingwood staff to drive forward the major task of preparing the new location and moving the many delicate or heavy items. There is even a rumour that the 965 aerial AKE, now outside of the old main museum, will be relocated.

The seven volunteers

continue to thin out items Collingwood have decided will not be moved, and made additions to the catalogues of items for disposal.

I find it surprising how many people around the country dedicate their time and cash to building up collections of mili-

tary electronic equipment. I suppose a few old displays in the lounge could be called conversation pieces but I don't think that I would get that one past my wife! ♦ 5 R W

News of a colleague

A few weeks ago I learned from John Davis the disturbing news that Alf Huntley was very ill. You will appreciate the seriousness of the situation from the time he has been under intensive care, which was 43 days.

As most readers will know Alf lives with his wife Rita in Spain. In a previous newsletter he contributed a very comprehensive and interesting article on moving to and living in Spain.

I am not sure whether being in Spain has made his situation more difficult, but it has been a most stressful time for Rita who had not been home for several days at one stage.

I understand Alf is now out of intensive care, although that did not happen without further complications. Moreover, it appears, as in the UK, Spanish hospitals are not without their bugs and infection

Hopefully Alf is now on the road to recovery and I am sure that I speak for everyone who worked with him or knew him in WSTG when I say: our thoughts are with both Alf and his wife Rita, and we hope he makes a strong and steady recovery. ♦ 5 R W



Alf Huntley (centre) with Ted Arnold and Ron White