

Christmas 2013 with WSTG

Our Christmas event was held on 12 December at our usual venue. Some who attended remarked that our numbers were slightly less this year, but were in fact at 57 the same as for 2012.

Several regulars did not make it, however, and perhaps this was the reason for the comments.

We sincerely hope everyone will try to make the next event which will mark 10 years of our twice yearly reunions.

Janet Barton's photographs clearly show the mood of the Reunions and snaps that do not appear here can be viewed on our website.

Our caterer Sally Gissing



Simon Fiddian depicting the mood of the event!

usually 'pulls all the stops out' for the Christmas buffet and most certainly did so this year, as our photograph shows. Sally has been providing our buffets from our first event held at the Bowling Club on 31st March 2004.



'Decisions, decisions, decisions.'

For Bob Lindsay, but not Geoff White.



Messrs Davis Sherris and Wingate in 'party mode'.

I was talking to a friend at a Lee on the Solent Art



Peter Horrocks oversees Trudy Strange and June H' as they get their raffle tickets ready to go in the box



Dennis Butler (right) halfway through his 89th year with one of Santa's tallest 'little helpers' - Clive Sutton

VOLUNTEERING AT EXPLOSION MUSEUM

By Barry Robertson

Group meeting when he casually asked if I knew anything about Torpedoes as I was interested in the Royal Navy. He was an ex. RN 'schooly' who was a volunteer at the Explosion Museum in Priddys Hard. I replied that I did my apprenticeship with SASO Superintendent Armament Supply Officer (SASO) in the Armament Depot, Frater, and worked on the maintenance and repair of Mk. 23, Mk.30 Electric Torpedoes and much later on the Mk.46 Torpedoes and so I was asked if I could help. On the 12st January 2006 I started as a volunteer at my old hunting ground, 30 years after leaving Frater on promotion to Woolston as a Weapon Overseer.

As you probably know, Explosion is the Museum of Naval Firepower based in and around the Grand Magazine of 1777 built on the Western shore of

Portsmouth harbour. It has recently been incorporated into the National Museum of the Royal Navy Portsmouth and HMS Victory joining the Submarine Museum, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Royal Marines Museum, M33, HMS Unicorn, HMS Caroline, HMS Trincomalee and the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust.

Generally the volunteers attend on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays. I personally help on Thursdays. I joined a team of five others working on guns ranging from 18th century cannons through 19th century 3lb Hotchkiss to 1950's 4.5" Mk 6. The latest gun we are working on is a unique 2 pounder Pom Pom bow chaser originally fitted to Hunt Class Destroyers that patrolled the East Coast during the 2nd World War. It was given to a school in Dover after the war, and

recently 'swopped' by the Museum with a 40mm Bofors. We are at present stripping it down with difficulty as it is so corroded. The only other of this type is in a Museum in Canada who have supplied us with photographs of their exhibit.

Luckily two of our team were gunnery RN Chief Petty Officers with a good working knowledge of guns. The only

represented by two ex-Armourers who refurbish bombs and missiles. And so a wide range of armaments are being worked upon behind the scene at the Museum. Recent additions to the reserve collection that will require refurbishment are a 4.5" Mk 8 turret and magazine hoist from the Type 42 Liverpool and a Seawolf launcher with the Firing consoles. There is, therefore, plenty of work

in the pipeline for the volunteers of which there is always a shortage. ♦

Since Barry wrote this article the WSTG visit to 'Explosion' provided an opportunity for some of us to become better acquainted with the weapons described above.

Below we continue Colin's personal view and experiences as a local agency worker.

Agency Workers and Health and Safety in Ship Building and Repair By Colin Parr MBE

In the years between 1970's to the 90's the Dockyard, with a reducing work force, demolished a lot of unusable buildings, including dockside toilets and tarmacked the vacant spaces over for car parks. Spaces became a premium with the influx of the shipbuilders and their Agency workers. The Repair Yard works 5 day per week: 0730 till 1615 and 1245 Friday, whilst the Ship building Yard works a 4 day week Monday to Thursday 0630 till 1600. The times were offset to stagger the movement of staff during in/out muster times. Although the start time is 0630, if an employee is

not parked by 0615 they have to park a long way from where they work. I turned in at 0600 and even then the car parks weren't empty. EU law and the 48 hour week apparently prevented clocking before 0620. If you are not out of the Yard by 1610 then you were in a massive traffic jam of builders, repairers and ships staff.

With a ship afloat and compartments reaching a good standard, cleanliness became important and a local cleaning firm that employed mainly Polish girls moved their staff on-board. They put any previous cleaning firm to shame! They did a fantastic cleaning job bringing each compartment up to a perfect standard. Working a five day week they were extremely well turned out and had a working grasp of the English language.

Given their unpronounceable names (to the English language speakers!) they each adopted an anglicised version. The company had a 'no touch' rule and this was strictly adhered to. Loyalty however, they did not have; when the cleaning company on the next ship offered higher rates they moved 'en bloc' - but they all returned when the wage differential was reset.

The Multinational Company took over the whole commercial part of the Yard in 2010 and except for the company logo being displayed everywhere only minor changes took place - at first. For us at the back end, a morning roll call was initiated on board every day at 0630 in which the day's major events and dangers were highlighted. A roll call and work area clean-up were

also held at 1530. A weekly 'tool box' team brief was introduced in which the UK wide events of the Multinational's week were read out.

Occasionally a 'town square' brief was held in the Yards garages for all ship builders to attend, to hear the way ahead from the Multinational's senior shipbuilding hierarchy. They always got my respect because most of those fielded had been on their tools in shipbuilding at some time or other.

In 2011 work in Shipbuilding in Scotland was in hiatus and the Multinational' brought Scotsmen of all trades and specialisations into the Yard in managerial posts and they brought many changes with them. They just have a different way of working and both ways get the job done - but we were not in Scotland. It was of amusement to us to point out that the fore end hull plates on the Type 45 (Portsmouth built) were far less buckled than the hull plates on the after half (Scottish built); again a different way of working. (The Arabs call warped plates the 'hungry camel look' and don't like them.)

The destruction of the many toilet blocks throughout the Yard 'came back to bite'. The ship with about 300 workers on board spent most of the fitting out time alongside one of the old Leander complexes built between two docks. Later on, the second ship fitting out, also with about 300 on board, was tied up on the other side of the complex. The complex's



2lb Pom Pom Bow Chaser
Circa 1940

experience that I have was overseeing the installation of the 4.5 Mk 8's on Type 42's at Woolston.

Since joining the volunteers in 2006 I haven't touched a torpedo!

The team that I work with is unofficially known as 'The Black Gang' as we are usually seen walking around in dirty overalls and with dirty hands. It is interesting work and these strip down jobs are on guns that are in the reserve collection, which is only seen by the public by special request. We also look after the exhibits in the main Museum, which only require cosmetic repairs, or freshening up after the public have visited.

There are tasks that don't require overalls, a small team keep documents, handbooks and photographs. The Fleet Air Arm are

junior rates heads were fitted with 8 cubicles, 12 wash basins. Quite a legal ratio it seems. The reasonably sized cubicles allowed the occupants to throw their overalls, helmets, coats etc. against the bottom of the door, not too hygienic, whilst they settled in. Outside the queue grew, we complained about the lack of cubicles to no avail. One Monday all the cubicle doors had the gap at the bottom raised to 0.5m and the top lowered to chest level. All were painted black; the graffiti is nasty and personal these days, the poets are long gone! Those who ordered the modifications had not done their homework; the afloat workers are issued with white paint pens for marking out! The threat to put ultra violet lights in the toilets were never pursued (drugs). Portacabins fitted out as toilets were sited around the ship but they are so small, perpetually wet and smelly, Houdini would have had difficulty in using them in the winter; Most of us took to walking to the other complex.

In early 2012 I returned after an extended holiday and reported to Unicorn Gate for the Agencies rep to go through standard joining routine. A half day of form filling and health and safety indoctrination, usually in batches of about 10, with the meeting old friends and making of new ones. Horrors! The procedure had been changed: we were also required to do a one and half day trade test. In an effort to standardise the installation of equipment

throughout the ships, the Multinational wanted all skilled trades in the Yard to carry out a trade test starting with us. We duly carried out the trade test in the training centre, overseen by personnel with whom I worked alongside afloat for the last 3 years. My quip that the infirm and rubbish were usually found jobs ashore was taken in the manner that it had been given!

Back into the engine rooms nothing seems to have been changed. The ship, we found, was due to sail at the end of the week and within 4 days we were told that it was all a mistake and we were to be laid off. But wait! As the ship returns in 2 months we might do a runner so we were transferred to the next ship in construction until then. The next ship 'was dead'. The temperature of the engine room structure in spite of hot air fans was just above zero. Laying or sitting on the metalwork was near impossible, extra clothes were being worn all the time; they reduced movement and I was concerned that they would hinder my agility in case of escape and in the use of those portacabin toilets! I left.

The final part of this article will appear in our next news letter, but you can read the whole piece on www.wstg.co.uk.

Sheila May Day 1922-2014

I was saddened to read in our local paper of the death of Sheila Day who presided over the 'Clerical-Office' through the 1970s after WSTG moved into Milldam House. Although most of our younger members were in awe of the



**A Visit from Top Management,
Adml. Sir Richard Clayton**

Sheila is pictured here 2nd from the right

'mature ladies' in the Clerical Office, it must be said that so too were some of the older ones—mainly because Sheila had also been on the staff of the EEMD Personnel Office, and was known to many of us long before WSTG was formed.

Sheila never married, and for some years looked after her parents with whom she still lived. However, before

any of our readers start to get the wrong impression

Sheila had a very full social life: she played piano in a dance band/quartet, was an experienced ballroom dancer and liked a drink and cigarette.

At Milldam' one could rely on Sheila to get involved in the booking and running of our social events; she was also an invaluable ally at any 'technical gathering'.

The 1970s will be remembered for the 3-day week, power cuts and various other deprivations such as petrol and toilet rolls. Latterly, there was even a shortage of coffee! I well remember Sheila 'hunting down' a large tin of coffee for our visitors which included project staff, contractors and other MoD(N) staff who were at Milldam

House for our 'UAA1 Teach-in'.

Sheila was missed very much (not least by the social committee) when transferred to ASWE Portsdown. She retired from there as an Executive Officer.

Out of the Office Sheila was a tireless worker for the local hospital's League of Friends. Long after she retired from the MOD many colleagues, visiting Q.A. hospital would often see her on duty at the enquiry desk at the main entrance.

Sheila died two months short of her 92nd birthday on 28th February 2014 having spent some time in the care. Ken Wingate attended her funeral at Portchester Crematorium. Her birthday? Well, May Day of course! ♦ *KW*

Peter Joseph Cleall 1925-2014



We were saddened to hear of the passing of Joe Cleall on 28th June 2014. He was a long-serving member of WSTG and a staunch supporter of the WSTG reunions since our regular meeting started 2004.

Joe was born in March 1925 and left his home, in Portsmouth, at just 15 years old to join the Royal Navy. As a boy seaman Joe saw the effects of the war almost at once when his training base, HMS Ganges at Ipswich, came under attack from the Luftwaffe!

Although Joe was a 'reluctant raconteur' we know that his first ship was HMS King George V and that he was involved in the Artic Convoys. He also served on HMS Stork, a Bittern Class AA Sloop, which gained a reputation as a U-boat hunter. Her involvement in the North African Invasion resulted in considerable damage when she was torpedoed. Joe never confirmed this was where he sustained his leg injury, but we believed it was due to the blast and his subsequent fall during this action that his leg was seriously damaged. Following his time in HMS Stork Joe was sent on a radio and radar course. He expected to join the technical group of the Diplomatic Corps, but was retained to use his new-found skills in the Royal Navy.

Joe was eventually discharged (medically) from the RN and worked for a small radio business in Portsmouth. Following an Admiralty 'trawl' of local radio businesses he joined other Radio Mechanics in Portsmouth Dockyard. Their base was near No. 1 Electrical Shop and the chargin man was J.O.N. Burrows with whom Joe was to work later when, in the rank of Tech. Grade B, J.O.N. was running the Seaslug Team.

In 1954 there was an integration of sections in the new No.2 Electrical Shop and Joe worked first as a 'Special Mechanic' and then as a Tech. Grade 3, becoming one of the first to be confirmed as a 'T.G.3 Diagnostician'.

Joe was recruited by

WSTG in 1961 to work in the Seaslug team on the batch 1 County Class Destroyers. He specialised in the Digital Data Recording Equipment, the Missile Direction System (MDS1), other links and Operations Room equipment. In the batch 2 ships Joe was a member of the DAB computer team and then worked on Computer Assisted Action Information System (CAAIS) on many classes of ships. Joe, by now a PTO2, retired from WSTG in March 1985.

At his funeral on 18th July Joe's war medals were on display; they included the Artic Star and the related Russian medal. Joe, who we shall all remember as a cheerful and resourceful colleague, is sorely missed by both family and retired colleagues. ♦

Another 10 years of Reunions?

We just might fall short of another 10 year series of WSTG Reunions, but there is no reason why we should not celebrate a good start!!

On 5th June 2014 we tried to do this by repeating the Christmas Buffet with a few 'extras', subsidised by our cash reserve. We continued with a WSTG visit to the Explosion Museum on 19th June, but regret there is no space to report on this event. (See our website, it will have a report and photos included very soon.)

Janet Barton's record of the June 2014 reunion shows that most colleagues enjoyed this get-together. ♦

More Photos are posted on our Website



Tony Morriss, who we have not seen for sometime, is pictured chatting with Joyce



Pat Cross in relaxed mode.



Ray Callaghan in good form as always



Dick Barton with Ken Voysey up from Somerset



Old Missile Men! Bob Lasseter and George Durant



Lunch with the WSTG Ladies

Malcolm Eastcott

Some further sad news: Malcolm Eastcott, one the earliest members of WSTG, died at his home in Bath from a heart attack in late September. Malcolm joined the Seaslug team where he worked with the project team on the first of class DLG HMS Devonshire. Later, he was a member of the Computer team led by Ray Hayhoe. He left WSTG, returning to Devonport Dockyard in the early 1970s.