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WSTG Honours Board From Conception to Resurrection



The year 1980 was a busy period for the WSTG Social Committee. Senior management was very keen to have some sort of celebration for the 'coming of age' of WSTG. Moreover, they had the problem of what to do with a substantial monetary gift from a long standing retired senior staff member who had not only served in the DEE 'Outside Erection Party', but for another 20 years in WSTG. Curiously, everyone had heard of the donor: Bill Gerrish, who kept 'the administrative wheels lubricated' at Enleigh Bath, but few had met him. However, he wished to leave his mark with something of value such as an award or something that the Group might appreciate or even compete for! Could the social

committee sort it? Proposals for the 21st Birthday celebrations were straight forward, but how to spend BG's gift took a little longer to work out. Finally, the proposal to provide an honours board for staff members who had served 21 years in the Group evolved, as long serving staff were often referred to as 'founder members'. It would be non-controversial and almost irrefutable. The design and specification for the Board was very much home-grown. The plaque was to depict the late Jim Stephens' neck-tie motif and a suitable Latin motto devised by the Portsmouth Grammar School Latin teacher where Paul Wingate was one of his students. There was no competitive tendering!! Reg Boyce, then based in Barrow persuaded Vickers to undertake the entire

project. Vickers delivered a very impressive product completely to spec', which included the first batch of names (the founder members) and an engraved brass tally

appended to give Bill Gerrish enduring credit for his generosity. As those involved with the proposal for the Honours Board were so very pleased with the result, it took very little effort to persuade the senior management

to allow it to be mounted prominently at Milldam House (WSTG's Portsmouth Offices at that time), and to have an unveiling ceremony as part of the WSTG Birthday Celebration. The planning for the day of the unveiling was done with some enthusiasm with the late Norman Dibley offering to lay on an exhibition of 'antique edged weapons' together with other weapons and artifacts, which somewhat complemented the weapons dealt with by WSTG! The 'News', Portsmouth's local newspaper and the Dockyard newspaper, the 'Trident' were also to attend. In final preparation the Honours Board had been flanked with *boarding pikes* and covered with a curtain. The *first unveiling* on Friday 5th September 1980 was a great success

with our Director at the time Cdre G S Coumbes RN DSWS performing the unveiling and our head, Captain Higginbottom hosting a sherry reception. The buffet lunch that followed the previous day's Dinner and Dance saw many legendary characters attend who had long retired.

The Honours Board, over the years, had been conscientiously updated, which was much appreciated by both '21 year qualifiers' and those responsible for its conception; such were the numbers of long serving members, however, that extension boards were added.

Over the years WSTG had transferred from the prestigious Grade 2 listed Milldam House (now the Portsmouth Register Office) to COB2, HM Naval Base, and was eventually wound up in the 'early-noughties'. At this time there was concern that the Boards could be scrapped. Their survival must be attributed to Adrian Wright, and Lt Cdr Bill Legg RN Rtd the then curator of the HMS Collingwood Museum. Bill had agreed that WSTG's Boards could join the Museum's collection of 'historic' honours boards; they remained there for 10 years, although there were concerns they could be recycled during reorganization of the Museum. However, a stroke of good fortune gave the items a new life. MCTA, (Maritime Capability Trials and Assessment) were looking for relevant items/boards to mount in

their office complex, to provide a sense of history, and perhaps to reduce the area of bare wall. As WSTG was one of a forerunner group now encompassed by MCTA, the WSTG boards met the requirement. During the summer the Honours Boards together with that depicting the past Heads of WSTG

Thus the WSTG Honours Board(s) continues its unusual life from a chance conception to reinstatement in the Victory Building. For this we are indebted to a number of people: Captain Mike Magan RN (MCTA – Captain); Neville Quick (MCTA Capability Assurance Group) Lt Christopher McCaughan



The 2nd Unveiling 23rd September 2016

Capt Mike Magan RN - MCTA (far right) with L-R Dick Barton, Ken Wingate and Adrian Wright

were returned to the Naval Base and mounted in Victory Building where MCTA are accommodated. With the Boards reinstated MCTA invited the WSTG Reunion and Archive Committee to an informal '2nd unveiling'. We were chaperoned by an ex WSTG member Neville Quick (Lt Cdr Rtd and ex WSTG) and after coffee and some reminiscing with Capt. Mike Magan RN (MCTA – Captain) the Honours Boards were unveiled. Those present were Captain Magan who performed the unveiling, Neville Quick, Paul Bunyan ex- WSTG, Adrian Wright and Dick Barton who both appear on the Honours Board, and Ken Wingate who 'spec'd' the board all those years ago. The visit concluded with lunch at the Officer Mess HMS Nelson.

RN (Navy OP TRG-MWS WE BEMT RADAR) (Museum Liaison Officer) and the Officer Under Training who first noticed the Boards. -KW (Soc Sec 1980)

SAD NEWS

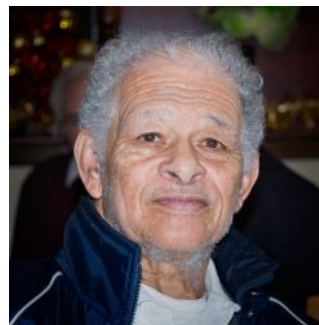
It is with great regret that we report the death of George Scutt on 9th April 2016 at the age of 94 years. George and Eileen have been loyal supporters of our reunion group for many years. 'George's Page' on our website tells the story of an extraordinary life particularly his time as a submariner during the war years. George continued a very active life in retirement almost until his final days. George's funeral was held on 6th May 2016 and was



George pictured at our 2015 Spring Reunion

attended by his family and many friends including those from his church, St Thomas', at Bedhampton. A small group of WSTG colleagues were also present.

We were also sorry to hear of the death on 30th September 2016 of Orien Young. He was aged 85 years and died after a short illness. Orien's funeral was held at the Oaks Crematorium, Havant at 12.15pm on Thursday 27th October.

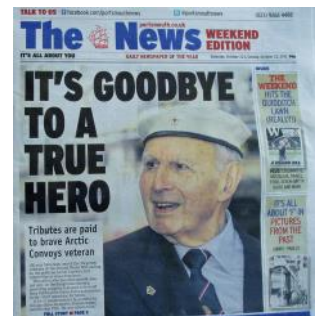


Orien pictured at our 2015 Christmas Reunion

Prior to the service, in recognition of his considerable contribution to local (and national) athletics, there was a short ceremony at the Mountbatten Trackside Portsmouth at 11.30am during which Orien 'took his last 100 metres'. After the funeral service, there was wake at the Mountbatten Centre. It

is sufficient to report here that very many people attended all three gatherings. An obituary will appear on our website later.

Our last piece of sad news is the death of Bert Norris. 'Bert's Page' on our website recounts another remarkable life as a Naval Artificer who survived 6 Arctic Convoys. He died on 9th October 2016 in Gloucester aged 96 years, but his funeral was held at Portchester Crematorium, on 28th October 2016. He was once again with his many friends from the area. Ted Arnold, who joined WSTG on the same day as Bert, Ken Wingate, Don Meakin and Bob Lasseter represented WSTG. The RNA provided a guard of honour.



Bert provides the front page story

See
www.wstg.co.uk
For photographs of last year's Reunion

