



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



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News of our Late Spring Re-union held 9th June

Although this event was not so well attended it was nice to be able to relax and talk with old friends and colleagues. Among those attending for the first time were Orion Young, Bryan Holman and Brian Pace who were warmly welcomed. The reduced attendance did not however result in a financial loss, mainly due to the additional donations we received and vol-



Meakin, Orion Young, Knocker White and Chris Arrowsmith looking relaxed. Ivan and Adrian are with Brian Pace, Ken Voysey and John Slack, and Don

Meakin again (holding the floor) appears



untary payments over the quoted prices sent to us by some of our colleagues. We do not want to embarrass them by publishing their names but to let them know their generosity has been much appreciated. A number of photographs taken at the event appear on our website but for those who have left computer technology well behind them here are three examples. Our pictures show Ken Hoad, Don

with Roger Fiddy, Colin Game, Dave Dowdell and Bryan Holman.

We should like to continue with some kind of mid-year event because although Christmas is an appropriate time for a re-union it may clash, for some members, with other festivities. But if you can....**BE THERE ON 15 DECEMBER!**

Retirements

The unexpected early retirements of Dave Lockley, Pete Bayly and Roy Woolgar resulted in a good attendance at a combined celebration at the Three Crowns. As the retirees were all long serving members, colleagues both old and not so old came along. Some photos of this event appear on the website, but regrettably we missed Peter Bayly.

As we prepare this issue **Roger Phillips** retired having served his full term. No remission for Roger!

BE THERE ON 15 DECEMBER!



Sad News

Since our last newsletter we were informed of the death of **Freddie Parkman** at the age of 82; a founder member of WSTG. Our website has a detailed obituary. Thereon is also reported the passing of Jim Gudgeon another one time WSTG member.

Our Christmas Event 2005

This will be held at Alexandra Bowling Club on Thursday 15 December from 11.30am. There will be the usual quality Buffet to share with old friends. Everyone is invited.

See our fly-sheet enclosed

Visit to HMS Collingwood Museum

Those of you who expressed an interest in our proposed visit may be wondering what has happened. You have not been forgotten. We could actually do with a little more support before we finalise arrangements. A visit will probably take place soon because we have a number of items on offer to the Museum. If you have not done so, let us know if you want to come along.



Freddie Parkman in early days

Early Days in WSTG as recalled by Trevor Mitchell

Editorial Introduction: Some months ago we asked Trevor to write about his career which spanned the many years when WSTG made a significant contribution to the major ship weapons programmes. Trevor's entry into the MOD(N) is somewhat unique in that he started as a "locally entered boy labourer" in Trincomalee Dockyard where his father



Trevor Mitchell (right) with Roy Pook

had been posted in 1952. His chargeman was a Mr B A R (Bob) Wade whom he was to later meet up with again in WSTG. Having left Gosport County Grammar School to join his father Trevor continued his education in Ceylon before starting work.

He became a Dockyard Apprentice at Trincomalee in May 1953 and transferred to Portsmouth at the end of his father's tour of duty. Trevor

spent 4 years in the Upper School of the Portsmouth Dockyard Technical College and completed his apprenticeship in September 1958.

Trevor's excellent memory for detail and the names of WSTG personalities is well demonstrated in this extract of his recollections which can be read in its entirety on our website. We start here with his time in No 2 Electrical Workshop adjacent to the last Portsmouth Office for WSTG.

Having spent a year or so in No 2 Electrical Workshop, largely testing Flyplane 5 Gunnery equipment with Don Elwell as my Inspector, who also much later joined WSTG, I discovered that the minimum age of a Diagnostician in the Dockyard was 26 years and hence I started looking at the vacancy notices that appeared and applied for two of them, one in Mauritius and one for WSTG which resulted in an interview at Ensligh with Cdr Geoffrey St Muir Mills.

Subsequently on the 9th May 1960 I reported for duty as an Acting Diagnostician (T.G.111) at the WSTG Office at Fraser Gunnery Range, Eastney, where I was introduced to the oic namely Jack Wilden and his stalwart assistant Freddie Elwell, Don's father.

Social history note: at the age of 22 a T.G. 111 received £746 per annum.

The office was in fact just half of a Nissen hut with a pot bellied stove for heating, a few desks and a couple of telephones. We all knew when Jack was talking to the Captain on the telephone by the way he stood to attention at his desk with the telephone to his ear. However this was the first formal WSTG office in Portsmouth. Until this time everybody worked from home, the Grade "B" team leader called up the team that he required, made out their railway warrants, and off they went to the shipyard. Prior to this in the days of Jack Wedge (who ran "Wedge's Circus") the Portsmouth Office was the Bass House in Surrey Street just outside the Town Station

Although this was the first Portsmouth office there were several small cells around the country, the Radar and the Communications Groups with people like Ken Rust and Cyril Butler were at ASWE Portsmouth. The main Sonar, or in those day still the Asdic Group with people like Norman Gouch and Mickey Lawson were at AUWE Portland. Most shipyard areas had a small office attached to the Naval Overseers section. Glasgow, which had six shipyards without including Greenock and Aberdeen, was based at Crown Hill and run by Cecil Merrett. It had such stalwarts as Adam Harris, John Dunbar, Ray Cundy and Ray Williamson. Barrow which included the shipyards at Birkenhead and Belfast was run by John

Donnelly and employed John Bowles, Ray Walton and Les Thomas. Newcastle which had three shipyards was run by Bill God-

dard and included Ray Rawlinson. Southampton and Woolston which looked after Cowes was run by George Leeson. The main part of this office was in The Southwestern Hotel - the pre-war Cunard Hotel. Devonport, because it was the second southern Dockyard, where ships completed their trials, was manned by Ivor Taylor, Eric Tarpley, Bill Searle, Don Warren and Bert Henry who was a gunnery radar chap whose main claims to fame was that he came from New Zealand and was inclined to travel to the various shipyards in his own private aeroplane!

Having spent my first couple of days at Fraser I was sent to meet Phil Pollard at King's Stairs. "You can't miss him he has ginger hair and wears a trilby hat". We were to catch the 0730 PAS Boat to join HMS Lincoln at sea. She was last of the Type 12's to enter service and, for a few days, we had to look after the GDS 2*system at sea. This was the start of my WSTG career in the Gunnery and Surface Weapons section.

During these early years of WSTG, beside the Captain and Commander at the Bath headquarters we also had several EA's with Lt Bert Luck as their leader. It was never quite clear, to me, whether they were there to assist or for training. Names that spring to mind are Ted Fisher, Gerry Ralph, and Sam Gray, although there were a few others.

My next move, two or three weeks later was to GDS 5. Percy Turner who had completed the introduction into service courses suddenly decided to resign leaving

Eric Tarpley as the only other person in the Group who had actually seen the equipment! Work away included fits on the Tribal Class frigates Ashanti, Eskimo, Zulu, Mohawk and Tarter, the first of the Leander frigates, the first batch of the County Class Destroyers Devonshire, Hampshire, London and Kent, all for the RN and a selection of other ships for India (Trica, Talwar and Betwa); an ex UK aircraft carrier renamed "Vikarent" for Pakistan; Presidents Steyn and Kruger, and Pretoria for South Africa; and for the New Zealand Navy: Wikato, Otargo and Taranaki - followed later by Canterbury, and I think some ships for Australia.

The Flyplane 5 (Fly5 as it was called) Gunnery System consisted of a Director made by Vickers Crayford, a Gyro Rate Unit "GRU" made by either Vickers Crayford or S.G.Brown, a Surface Mode electromechanical calculator "Box 10" made by Laurence Scott, the AA predictor/tracker made by Ferranti and the Gun mounting made by Vickers Barrow or Vickers Armstrong. The first time that the equipment came together as a system was when it was fitted on a ship and quite clearly all sorts of problems arose with all of the contractors involved. With the advent of MRS 3 the decision was made to integrate the systems on a shore test site - a novel idea in those days.

During this period GWS20/Seacat arrived on the scene, further widening horizons. Seacat was fitted in the two Assault Ships, Fearless and Intrepid, and

even more interesting in four of the old Battle Class Destroyers, Aisne, Agincourt, Barossa and Conma, in each of UK Dockyards. WSTG was responsible for these fits because its remit was setting to work the first of each system in a Dockyard. These ships were fitted with GWS21, which included the old CRBF Directors complete with Type 262 tracker radars.

Yet further widening of my horizons came when I was loaned out to the Submarine Group for TCSS 9 as fitted on Oportune at Birkenhead, and a marvellous feat of electro mechanical engineering called a Submarine Attack Teacher fitted in HMS Maidstone.

Eventually WSTG became more formal and, in late 1960, the office moved to No 4 The Parade in the Dockyard where for the first time a small administration section was formed. Walter Crispen was transferred from Bath for this purpose. Time sheets were introduced, but time in lieu was given for any overtime worked as payment was not made at this time.

I well remember poring over Mod Man 4 to find out what furniture and carpets the office was entitled to purely by Grade: TG111's were entitled to a desk and a mat but no office space!! The Parade office consisted of two rooms and a small kitchen on the ground floor of QHM's Residence. One room

was used by Jack Wilden, Freddie Elwall, Charlie Myles and the admin section and the other one on the other side of the passage way for everybody else. Desks were shared! However with the explosion in the Shipbuilding Programme in the 60s the size of the group increased and our next move was to The Staff Officers Mess just inside the Dockyard Main Gate.

In the days of Fraser and the early time in the Parade, names of people were bandied about, but they were rarely seen; quite a few of them, Roy Pook, Ernie Brimecombe, Alf Hounslow, a serving Lt Ordnance Officer who subsequently joined WSTG as a civilian, and Louis Peretz were working on HMS Tiger the last of the last Cruisers in the RN, the other two being Lion and Blake. From the stories told around the office the major problem on these Ships was the automatic loading system for the guns, an electro-mechanical system that relied heavily on micro-switches. In theory it was possible to empty the complete magazines in one seven minute burst of firing, but tales of twenty four hours work per round fired were quite common! WSTG had a reputation for accelerated promotions and in 1964 I became an Inspector of Electrical Fitters by qualifying at the 1964 Inspectors Examination and after being successful at the 1966 exam I was promoted to Foreman of Electrical Branch TG 1.

Just after the move to The

Parade Jack Wilden retired and his place was taken by Charlie Myles who was replaced on his retirement by a RN Commander. At about this time a move was made to The Staff Officers Mess where successive Commanders appeared, each with their own idea of how the department should operate. One example that I remember was from a Cdr Peter Martin who held very strong views that being specialists, as we all were, was a not a very good or productive idea and we should all become capable of doing any system on the ship! Several interesting months followed with Norman Hickey, Jack Banfield and Freddie Parkman, the Mortar Mk 10 team wrestling with Gunnery systems and John Mills and his Sonar team doing Radar. The Chinese curse: "may you live in interesting times", was so appropriate. Needless to say that idea was quite short lived. Another one had ideas about network scheduling, which initially caused considerable consternation as did the start of the "C" or Co-ordination Group within WSTG.

The mid 60s produced rapid changes in all aspects of weapon systems, the transistor largely replaced the thermionic valve and the electro-mechanical analogue fire control computers were replaced by digital computers. The net result was a lengthy period of retraining. I was dispatched to HMS Collingwood for a 9 months course on the DAB System that was being fitted to the 2nd batch of the County Class Destroyers, Fife, Glamorgan, Antrim and

Norfolk. The DLG batch 2 programme, although only 4 Ships, seemed to continue for 6 or 7 years what with modifications and refits. Ferranti, who made the DAB systems at Cairo Mill Oldham, "borrowed" WSTG's expertise to do the Factory Testing of their final system which meant most of the team spent a lot of time in Oldham during the 1972 "winter of discontent" with the three day week. Unfortunately for us Ferranti worked Monday, Wednesday and Friday! That was a long time to be away from the main office and during that time the office moved to Milldam Barracks and then into Milldam House. The

DAB cell was housed in Portcabins at Block 3, and finally Block 5 at ASWE Portsdown. We were largely separated from the main part of WSTG.

Before the end of the DLG's the Type 42 and Type 21 programmes started, which meant more long training courses, in my case for DAC systems on the Type 42s. This entailed trips to Ferranti's at Bracknell and Plessey at Adlestone and then off to Barrow for work in HMS Sheffield.



HMS Sheffield, the first of the Type 42s

A Letter from "The Critical Path" ... Below is some "correspondence" to a news sheet edited by the late Norman Hickey. Can you remember when it was published? Has anyone kept copies?

Sir,

As an 'umble T.G. 3 from the North I observed (I had little option) the following incident during a visit to that mighty sea terminal, Southampton.

I was standing in one of our many branch offices, maintained throughout the country by Bass, Worthington and Mitchell Ltd. I was idly debating with myself the merits and de-merits of glasses with handles and glasses without handles. All was still. That is, except the juke box, this had not yet caught fire. The gentleman inside the box was screaming "Release Me", but nobody paid any attention. I had reached the conclusion that glasses with handles had lost the argument on two counts, a) they were too heavy, b) they were also over-functional. It was yet early evening.

Suddenly all hell broke loose just outside the swing doors. I was convinced that the Mafia and/or the Society of Friends were outside and were bent on entering to commence the destruction of the Boozer, and all therein. Seconds later a very large gentleman (from whose subsequent language I ascertained, between four, seven and eight letter words, was of Irish extraction) burst in on the scene and rushed drunkenly but determinedly up to the bar, where, to put it mildly, he accosted the landlord.

The Irish gentleman dwelt verbally at great length on the dubious ancestry of the landlord, and then proceeded to upbraid the landlord for refusing to serve him, the Irish gentleman, with further refreshment. In vain did the landlord protest that he had never

clapped eyes on him before. All to little avail.

The Irish gentleman's diatribe had reached its crescendo when suddenly he put the landlord down, seized the bar rail, straightened up, glared wildly around, and with further blasphemy belted extremely loudly, "By Jaisus, I'm in the wrong Boozer". Upon which he staggered forward, fell through the swing doors, leaving a very shaken landlord, not to mention the customers.

There is really no moral and very little point to the incident described except perhaps to illustrate to the chair-borne, the non travellers, and those rich enough to use the saloon bar, the incidental hazards of life outside of those normal ones encountered during our hours of normal duty. After all, the large Irish gentleman could

have mistaken me in the dim (I'm not all that ugly?) light for his mother-in-law, and assaulted me with the Juke box (Yes, Norman, he was big enough to thump me with it).

What I am really leading up to is that there should be an alive -at-the-end-of-the-year bonus (non-taxable) for people like myself, who have passed their thirty-ninth year. We should establish a fighting fund to try to gain this end.

Diagonalstician, Scotland
(J. Dunbar)

Editorial Comment: we remember Johnnie Dunbar as one of WSTG's philosophers—with a peculiar taste in footwear.

And one final word: why not write something for this Newsletter or our website which is soon to be expanded.

Keep up to date. Look at www.tgef.demon.co.uk