



WSTG Reunion Newsletter



June 2006

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OUR 2005 CHRISTMAS PARTY HELD ON 14 DECEMBER

Our second Christmas party was held once again at Alexandra Bowling and Social Club Portsmouth. Over 60 people attended and, although numbers were slightly down on last year's event it was another memorable social gathering. We were pleased to see Derrick Middleton back on the social scene following his recovery from a period of ill health. Derrick was the oldest attending member.

early. Other regulars who travel from the west and north of the country to support our functions were warmly welcomed once again. As at previous functions we tried to provide a small display of nostalgia. This year it was a selection of photographs taken from WSTG passes when we all had much more hair that



Marion Stoodley receives her present

wasn't so grey! There were also photos of Messrs Lindley and Hawkins as young soccer players that had appeared in *The News* - the local paper. For the really old members we also provided a couple of items on the type 262 radar - an equipment of 1942 vintage! To show we try to stay up to date with technology we also provided a laptop computer that continuously displayed the Norman Dibley Photographic Collection of Ships. The excellent bar and festive buffet (with those delicious sweets) together with our Christmas raffle and free draw for our lady's Christmas Present contributed to the party mood. A few went home with festive prizes whilst the winner of the Xmas "pressy" was Marion Stoodley. What was it? Everything of quality that you need for afternoon tea!

and others who have not managed to get to the reunions; also all the old stalwarts who always make it to most WSTG gatherings regardless of the distance.



Adrian came equipped with his presentation tankard and a rather saucy framed cartoon - that may provide another story? After a short "thank you speech" from our retiree, the drinks, reminiscing and a jolly good buffet continued into the



Prim & Roger Eves with Brian & Glennis Pace

As with other functions we usually have one or two old friends of WSTG who come along and this time we welcomed Mr and Mrs J Erskine. Jimmy worked as a Ship Weapons System Engineer at Portsdown and Yarrows at Glasgow and formed a close association with WSTG during the Type 22 ships' programmes. We were also very pleased to see June Green and Trudie Strange for the first time. It is a pity they had to leave

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Adrian Wright Retires

As many colleagues already know, given the large numbers that turned up at the Three Crowns on 15 March 2006, Adrian has retired early. Colleagues and friends, both retired and still working,



afternoon. I am sure all who attended would wish me to extend their thanks once again for Adrian's hospitality and wish him a long and happy retirement. Adrian, although taking early retirement, must be the longest serving member of WSTG and its successor organisation. Most of that time has been spent on communications and associated work. Ivan will probably tease out the details of Adrian's long and successful career for later publication.



Messrs Lindley, White & Perkins



came from near and far. Many of us were pleased to see Bill Merewood Mike Hogan, Simon Fiddian, Peter Spreadbury, Rod Waldron

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A Good Day Out — HMS Collingwood Museum

The WSTG reunion committee had been trying to arrange a trip to the HMS Collingwood Museum for some months. On the 13th March 2006 the event actually took place; nine ex-WSTG members assembled at the entrance to Collingwood. Dick Barton set a suitable tone by appearing with his 42 year old Daimler Dart with Tony Morris in the passenger seat.



A Mercury Arc Rectifier housed in a display frame

we saw, suffice to say it included Radar equipment off the Graf Spee, B28s, B40s, complete WT sets off HMS Resource of 1930s vintage, early sonars and the 271 radar which helped win the battle of the Atlantic and much more.



Flyplane 5—an equipment familiar to our older members



Type 271: an early radar widely fitted in small ships



An Aladdin's Cave of gear from times past.

Our host Bill Legg met us at the gate and escorted us to the museum. Bill, a retired naval officer, has been looking after the museum for many years with much enthusiasm and has added a great deal of material and

documentation during his stewardship. As equipment has become obsolete he has ensured that the museum gets a copy of the handbook and where possible a piece of hardware.

In spite of some initial reluctance he has also collected, usually by donation, some domestic items. Bill and his volunteers try to demonstrate items in working order, not always possible because too much restoration devalues the worth of the equipment as an archive item.

The most obvious item, outside the museum, is an AKE 1 [965] aerial, from the RAF at Salisbury so not one STW by Norman Dibley.

The museum is sited in four buildings and on entering the largest, one is met by an Aladdin's cave of electronics going back nearly a hundred years. Our host gave us a guided tour and explained much about the hardware and how he had obtained it, without of course any budget.

It is impossible to detail all

The IKARA missile sat in the corner reminded us of Sid Porter and Frank Moore who spent time in Australia and the USA on STW this unusual missile.

We were then led into the next building, which held much test equipment and some equipment from our wartime enemies. The Japanese equipment which came with handbook included instructions on how to mount it on a camel - who did they intend to invade next? The well-engineered German U boat equipment came from the loft of an engineer who had tested it post war. It and much more German equipment was found on his death.

The use for one piece of kit could not be established. A large wooden box with keyboard, which appeared to select numbers. An early version of ERNIE?

We were struck by the overall quality of all of the items, which were engineered to last. In some cases it would seem that the designer set out to get as much brass into his kit as possible. One item

which Ken and I found interesting was an Air Ministry Receiver Type 1155A, labelled as being fitted into wartime bombers. This is the same as the Rx given to us by Win Dibley for which we hope to find a good home, possibly at Tangmere now that we have established it's use. Norman had used it as a domestic receiver for many years post war, when they could be bought as ex W/D.

After a view of the valve collection - remember all those CV numbers - we had a very pleasant and leisurely lunch in the wardroom.

All agreed that we'd had a good day out and thanked Bill for his time and trouble.

Grape vine: A note from John Henson shows he is still keeping his end up - he is cruising the Med in June.

Malcolm Eastcott phoned: he is well, plays some golf and sends his regards to his old colleagues.



The prototype B40 Receiver

Win Dibley's Loft

The WSTG committee has got used to, and welcome being the focal point for occasional phone calls passing on news such as retirements and sadly bereavements. However last summer (2005) we had a call, which proved to be a bit different.

Win Dibley, who has been a keen supporter of our Christmas parties usually turning up with a raffle prize (or two) gave Ken a call to say she had discovered some more of Norman's documentation and some equipment in the loft while preparing to have work carried out on the central heating.

Now all who remember the late Norman Dibley will be aware of his enthusiasm for keeping meticulous notes on his work, writing up his diary and maintaining his collection of new-build ship photos signed by the first commanding officers. Win had already passed over to us the diaries and the photo collection, but there was more. Could we vet it and help her to dispose of it? When Ken and Ivan arrived at Win's house a week later they found her living room full of boxes and some equipment!

"I think there is still more up there" she declared and dashed off (yes, really, dashed off) quickly brushing aside Ivan and heading up the loft ladder. Much too dangerous for an old chap like Ivan to climb up there Win must have thought as she, with some agility, disappeared into her loft!

We departed sometime later with a carload of documents

from 1950 onwards some with a security classification but most in Norman's familiar neat hand and two units of old hardware. We soon decided which documents were archive-worthy and what could be destroyed.

Of the equipment we discovered, following our visit to HMS Collingwood Museum, that Norman's Type I 155A Air Ministry Receiver (pictured here) was fitted in Lancaster Bombers in WWII.



However with its power pack the Dibley family confirmed Norman had the receiver working at home for sometime. Another piece of equipment defied identification initially. It was indeed electrical with an American plug and made by a US gun company. Putting this information together with Norman's interest in early fire-arms we deduced that it was a small electrical furnace for melting lead to make bullets.

Readers by now may be curious to know what we have done with all the items obtain from Win Dibley over the past months. Well the diaries are in our archives; the photographic collection together with some presentation notes we have compiled has been copied to CD. Copies were given to Win, HMS Collingwood Museum, and placed in our own archives.

More importantly all original photographs and our CD were gifted to the Royal Naval Museum HM Naval Base Portsmouth on 28 Feb 2006.

The museum was delighted to receive them as it is planning a Falklands War memorial project for the 25 anniversary (2007) and possibly a modern naval history venture.

Much of the documentation in Norman's loft, about setting to work various naval equipments from the fifties onwards and old course notes, has been accepted by the Collingwood Museum. The bullet making electric furnace has been gifted to Amberley Museum where both Ivan and Pat Cross are volunteer workers. Tangmere Aviation Trust were very pleased to give Norman's Type I 155A Receiver and

power pack a good home and that was delivered to the old airfield on 22 March 2006 by Ken and Ivan who then spent a couple hours viewing their remarkable collection.

It has been very rewarding for us to make sure that most of Norman Dibley's items kept by Win now have a good permanent home in four local museums.

Postscript: Ken and Ivan were so impressed with Tangmere that the idea of another good day out soon evolved. A group visit will certainly attract a discount. And a lunch could be arranged.

Give one of us a ring if you are interested and we will do the rest!

Some Sad News

We were saddened to hear that **Brian Ford** had died in January of this year having been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the previous autumn. His daughter, Lorraine valiantly nursed her father through his terminal illness as her mother is in residential care. This is truly a very tragic story and our sympathy and admiration is extended to Lorraine. Brian was one of that small group in WSTG that specialised in alignment tasks and mechanical aspects. The others comprising this unique band were the late Alfie Hounslow David Stoodley and Tony (Robbie) Robinson. Brian was based at Devonport, but travelled widely with those from Portsmouth sharing the adventures and humorous episodes of WSTG life.

The WSTG Honours Boards

The demise of WSTG and possibly its successor organisation has raised the question of what will happen to the past WSTG heads and Honours boards. Well, they are not destined likewise for the scrapheap. HMS Collingwood Museum has agreed to take them where they are likely to be included in a new museum plan. The transfer of the boards will soon be put in hand.

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A Career Profile of probable the best known management figure in the history of WSTG

Leslie Drydan Marks

Constructor RCNC, C.Eng.FIERE, FBIM was born on the 17th March 1921, and, like many others within the technical departments of the Ministry of Defence, began his career as an apprentice at H.M. Dockyard, Devonport from September 1937 until 1942. The first four years of this period included time spent at the Dockyard Upper School.



WW 2 at this time affected his career. University was not an option and so he entered the Drawing Office at Devonport as a Temporary Draughtsman.

In 1942, he volunteered for, and was accepted by, the RAF Volunteer Reserve. He was due to take up flying training in Canada when the scheme was deferred by the Essential Manpower Coding then in operation. With his plans to serve in uniform thwarted he promptly volunteered for the RNVR and was commissioned as a Sub. Lt. with the Special Branch. He was now an acting First Class Draughtsman.

From 1943, as a Sub. Lt. RNVR, he served on the staff of Vice Admiral (Q), British Pacific Fleet, Melbourne, Australia, and also at H.M. Naval Base, Woolloomooloo, near Sydney. With the end of the War in the Far East in 1945, he volunteered to continue his RNVR service and took charge of the Drawing Office in the Naval Base at Hong Kong. Following the departure of the Japanese forces, his major tasks included work on the design of such buildings as the Hong Kong War Memorial Hospital and the new Electrical Workshop, Battery Shop and Generating Station, with a modern A.C electrical scheme in the Naval Base. He described this period as "the busiest and the most varied chapter in his Drawing Office experience".

Towards the end of this period in Hong Kong (late 1947) he gave up his uniform and returned to being a civilian draughtsman with the Admiralty, and for the last two years, from 1946 to 1948, on a more domestic level, he was Mess Secretary of the Dockyard Technical Officers Mess.

He returned home in 1948 to take up duties in the Drawing Office at Devonport as a Confirmed Draughtsman. In 1949 he passed, the Inspector of Electrical Fitters Examination. A year later, in 1950, he took a Radar Conversion Course (No.30) at H.M.S Collingwood which prepared him for a new job at the Radio Stores Centre, Risley, in charge of the Major Assemblies Proving team.

In the latter part of 1950 he advanced his academic career by becoming an Associate Member of the IRE and in early 1951 joined the D.E.E. Outside Erection Party with promotion to PTO2. This party was the forerunner of both The Systems Tuning Liaison Group and W.S.T.G.

In the nine years that followed, up to 1960, he was attached to projects at AWE on A/S Mk.10. and 170B & C and various surface weapons systems. He again achieved promotion, to Technical Officer Grade B, which brought him the additional responsibility of forming and leading the first Naval Missile Team to cover "Firestreak" and the leadership of teams formed to prepare for acceptance of weapons systems in major vessels such as "Victorious" and "Hermes".

At this stage in his career he also spent some time at ASWE, Portsdown, attached to the GWS1 Project team, i.e. "Seaslug". Further promotion, this time to Electrical Engineer, occurred in 1960, and with it, the leadership of the Surface Section of what had by now become the Weapons Systems Tuning Group, (W.S.T.G) replacing Jack Wedge, E.E. who retired at about that time. He also took up the position of Deputy Head of W.S.T.G.

Under his leadership for the next 15 years, the Surface Section was engaged in the preparation for acceptance, in shipyards around the British Isles, of such systems as FPS, CDS-5, and the formation of further teams to work on "Seacat" and

"Seaslug" missile systems in new ships.

In 1975, a major re-organisation came about within W.S.T.G, the most outstanding feature of which was the formation of the Ship Administration and Co-ordination Group, or "C" Group as it became known - in which Leslie Marks played a major part, in planning its formation and as its Head until he retired on the 16th of March 1981.

During this final part of his career, he received Fellowships of the I.E.R.E. and the B.I.M. His technical career spanned a time of many outstanding developments both in Naval weapons systems and electronics in general. During a career consisting for the major part of getting R.N. ships into service with their weapons systems operating at their specified levels of performance Les Marks was proud to claim he had not lost any time through ill-health.

Pleasures and pastimes included soccer in his younger days, and latterly, swimming and playing skittles. The maintenance of his three quarter acre garden at his home in Wiltshire had always been a pleasurable pastime and doubtless received even more care and attention in the years following his retirement. He died as a result of a heart condition in September 1996.

The Last Words: Have you any information, stories or photos for the Newsletter?

Please send any contributions to the Reunion Committee.