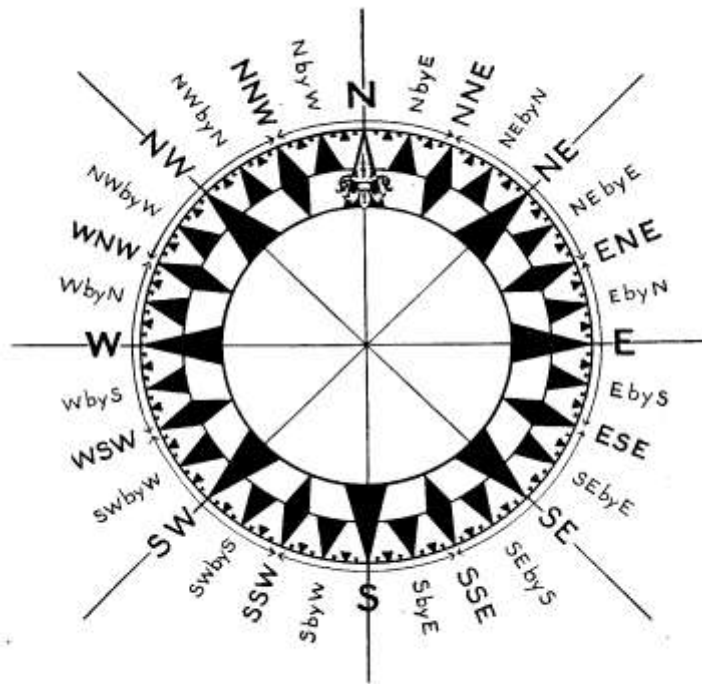




AUGUST 2007

ISSUE 51



SKIPPER/TREASURER:
SECRETARY/SOCIAL ORGANISER:
SUPPLY OFFICER:
ALMONER:
P.R.O.:
NEWSLETTER:
EMAIL:

TONY ILES 8523 1655
ANNE ILES 8523 1655
KEITH WITHEY 8278 7917
ANNE WITHEY 8278 7917
WINSTON KAY 8362 7027
MICK & JILL SURFIELD 8381 4500
surfield@adam.com.au

Editor's Note

At the July meeting we were joined by two new members Roy Hill and his wife Janet and Ken Dunlevey. We hope that they enjoyed our company and look forward to seeing them again in September.

On a sadder note, for those of you who may not know, Terry Stewart passed away 4th July 2007. Condolences were sent to Jean on behalf of the organisation.

The Vindicatrix Association of SA was represented by some of its members and their wives at the Sea Sunday celebration on 8th July. A late lunch was enjoyed after the service.

I visited Ray Howick who is unable to attend our meetings and gave him his Vindi 10 Year Anniversary trophy, he has a wonderful collection of books on ships.

Peter Moore is another member of the Vindi who is unable to be present at our meetings so I dropped in to give him his trophy.

Put your thinking caps on and let us have the odd snippet to publish in a future edition, if you can't remember ask the wife.

We are continuing Brian's saga so get yourself a comfy chair and a stiff drink.

Next Meeting Sunday 30th September 2007

Mick & Jill Surfield

Ships Log Sunday 29th July 2007

AGM held at the Seafarers Mission.
All offices were declared terminated and vacant.

Nominations:

Skipper/Treasurer:

Tony Iles Re-elected

New Committee:

Anne Iles Re-elected (Secretary/Social Organiser)
Winston Kay Re-elected (Public Relations)
Keith Withey Re-elected (Supplies)
Anne Withey ** New nomination (Almoner) accepted

Newsletter:

Mick & Jill Surfield

Web Master:

John Williams

Subscriptions Now Due \$25.00 for 2008

Tony Iles

Social Calender: 2007/2008

Thankyou to all of those generous people who have donated raffle prizes. We always need more so please continue to donate anything **NEW** you have rolling around in the cupboard that you no longer need.

Following the next meeting on September 30th there will be a lunchtime cruise on the MV Dolphin Explorer boarding at 1.30pm and returning by 4pm. Price \$12.00 includes cruise and main course lunch. Desserts, Tea and Coffee are extra.

So far 27 people have put their names down for the cruise. Please phone Anne on **0407101960** if you wish to join us.

November 25th Picnic in the Park as usual, details at September meeting.

January 20th 2008 The meeting will be held at Anne & Tony's house, 6 Panter Street, Willaston at 11 am Followed by a BBQ (\$5.00 per person).

Anne Iles

More of Mike Day's Memorabilia



**THE
MERCANTILE MARINE
BLAZER** "by PAISLEYS"

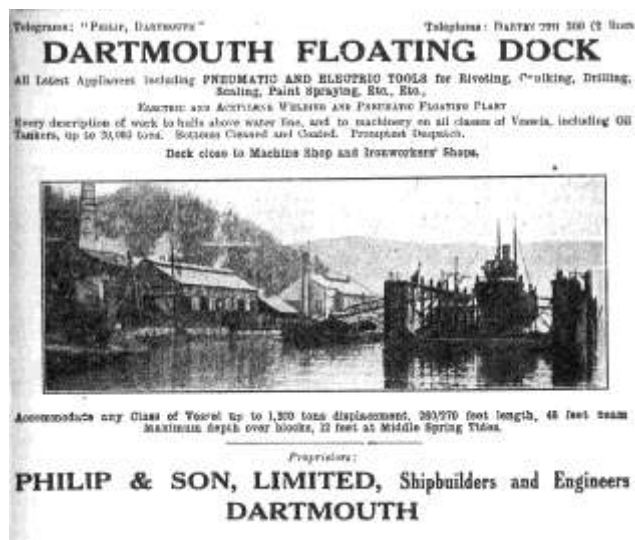
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National Archives

At the meeting on July 29th Keith Withey informed us of how we can obtain copies of documents relating to our time at sea that we may have lost over the years. If you are interested this is the address to contact:

The National Archives

Kew

Richmond

Surrey TW9 4DU

United Kingdom

Enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

On Saturday July 14th a contingent of Vindi boys and girls made their way to the Buckingham Arms for the annual dinner. The food was plentiful as it was a smorgasbord and many a trip was made to fill our plates. Mike Day had the right idea as he got his all in one go



Lots to say



Where do I start



Mesmerised



Concentration

A skinny little white guy goes into an elevator, looks up and sees this HUGE black guy standing next to him. The big guy sees the little guy staring at him, looks down and says, “7 feet tall, 350 pounds, 20 inch private parts, 3 pound testicles, Turner Brown.”

The white man falls to the floor.

The big guy kneels down and brings him to shaking him. The big guy says, “What’s wrong with you?”

In a weak voice the little guy says, “What EXACTLY did you say to me?”

The big dude says, “ I saw your curious look and figured I’d just give you the answers to the questions everyone always asks me.”

“I’m 7 feet tall, I weigh 350 pounds, I have 20 inch private parts, my testicles weigh 3 pounds each and my name is Turner Brown.

The small man says, “Turner Brown, thank God, I thought you said “turn around.

Merchant navy fleet sinks to less than 300

By Jasper Copping, Sunday Telegraph
Last Updated: 12:31am BST 08/07/2007

Britain's merchant navy may once have ruled the waves but concern is growing at the fast shrinking number of vessels sailing under its Red Ensign.

Since 1975, the number of UK-owned and registered vessels with a capacity of 500 gross tons or more has slumped from 1,600 to less than 300, while the number of British seamen serving on them has dropped from 90,000 to just 16,000.

Experts fear that the decline of the service, known as the "fourth arm" for its contribution to the defence of the nation, will weaken Britain strategically and economically, by forcing it to become dependent on foreign shipping and by reducing its ability to take part in overseas military operations, such as the Falklands War.

Meanwhile the average age of a British naval officer has risen by almost a decade in the past 25 years and the number of cadets in training is at "critical levels", prompting fears of a general skills shortage in Britain's £10 billion-a-year maritime industry.

In a new report, entitled Don't Forget the Fourth Arm, Nautilus UK, the maritime trade union, voices "profound concerns about the strategic implications of the serious decline in the country's maritime skills base and the size and composition of its merchant fleet". This week, it will write to the House of Commons Defence Select committee urging it to order an inquiry into the issue.

advertisement

Andrew Linington, a spokesman for Nautilus, said: "Britain is still an island nation, with 95 per cent of trade travelling by sea. If you allow that trade to be carried by other countries' ships and become dependent on them then there are implications, economically and strategically. The numbers of suitable vessels on the UK register are well below anticipated defence needs."

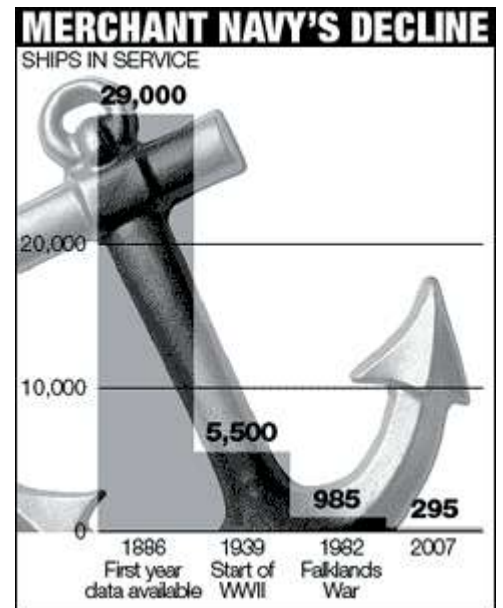
Until the First World War, the Merchant Service, as it was known until King George V renamed it in 1918, made up almost half the world's shipping tonnage.

Between 1939 and 1945, it played a crucial role in keeping Britain fed and supplied despite the constant threat posed by German U-boats and the deaths of 35,000 merchant seamen - a toll proportionately higher than in any of the Armed Forces.

The merchant navy has also performed the vital roles of transporting troops and supplies for the Royal Navy. In 1982, 52 merchant vessels, along with a further 22 civilian-crewed Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships, served in the Falklands War. Seventeen officers and ratings were killed in attacks and on the Atlantic Conveyor, which was sunk.

In more recent operations, however, the reduced number of merchant navy ships has posed problems, with delays in finding suitable vessels, foreign crews not wishing to serve and British forces relying on "unseaworthy" craft during both Gulf Wars. There have also been claims that, with a shortage of vessels, the Government has been "held to ransom" by foreign owners.

After the first Gulf War, the Public Accounts Committee reported an overspend of £38 million on foreign shipping, while many of the foreign ships used during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 were declared unseaworthy by coastguards.



The decline in the size of the merchant fleet has been caused by changes in shipping, such as the introduction of containers, which means vessels can now carry more material than before, as well as a UK tax regime which, until 2000, discouraged shippers from locating here.

The Chamber of Shipping believes the numbers of British sailors has fallen because a career at sea with its regimented lifestyle no longer appeals to young people.

Unions, however, blame the recruitment shortfall on shipping companies favouring cheaper, foreign-based staff.

In an effort to stem the losses, the tonnage tax, a system of taxing shipping companies on tonnage rather than profits, was introduced in 2000 and has led to the number of vessels on the UK register rising from 241 to 295.

A spokesman for the Department for Transport said: "Since the introduction of the tonnage tax, the number of ships on the UK register has increased. We are determined to support this industry and make a positive impact where we can."

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A blonde calls her boyfriend and says, "Please come over here and help me I have a killer jigsaw puzzle and I can't figure out how to get started."

Her boyfriend asks, "What is it supposed to be when it's finished?"

The blonde answers, "According to the picture on the box it's a rooster."

Her boyfriend decides to go over and help with the puzzle. She lets him in and shows him where she has the puzzle spread all over the table. He studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, then turns to her and says, "First of all no matter what we do we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster."

He takes her hand and says, "Second I want you to relax and go put the kettle on for a cup of tea."

Then he says with a deep sigh, "I'll put the cornflakes back in the box."

The Life of Brian - Cont...

To start this new episode of my life I had better make one thing clear, the next 4½ years I was on the outside, looking in, not vice-versa. I come from a long line of prison officers. My grandfather was a CPO at Parkhurst Prison; two uncles were CPOs at London Prison and also an aunt. I had just celebrated my 21st birthday at which I got severely Brahms and Liszt (same as you lot if you can still remember that far back). At breakfast time a few days later a newspaper cutting was put on my plate. HM Prison Service were looking for new recruits. They had just dropped the recruiting age down to 21. Then the nagging started, we only see you twice a year etc, etc and what about your girlfriend Pam, don't you want to settle down blah blah? This went on non stop for a week, so to keep the peace and buy more time before ringing Mr Esso once more I agreed to send off for the details. Two days later the forms arrived back informing me to report to Parkhurst Prison for an interview the following day at 0900 sharp. I was stuffed, no bloody escape; I was even chauffeured by Dad just to make sure that I arrived on time. By 10.00 am the interview was over and I was asked to go into another room to sit the Civil Service exam (no mucking about here). Having been told that I had passed, I was asked if I wanted to follow my trade, I said yes. They then informed me that I would have to learn the ways of the prison for the first year before reverting back to a tradesman. Leaving the prison feeling as though I had been shanghaied, I went back home to try and get my head around it. By the end of the week a travel warrant arrived with a letter advising me that a training course would start in ten days time at an old army camp just outside of Leeds. Urgent talks with my mates and girlfriend (lust always wins out over brains). I asked her thoughts about being married to a screw. After a few choice words and a kiss and cuddle the die was cast. I blew a whole month's wages on a diamond engagement ring, all £36 of it. She still wears it today, although we are no longer married.



Training finished, I had to report back to the IOW for a probationary period of three months at Camp Hill Prison, opposite Parkhurst. On completion, I was posted to Billy Butlin's Holiday Camp, better known as Lewis Prison in Sussex (a young person's prison for offenders from 14 to 21 years of age). The younger ones were sent from Borstal Schools when it was found they couldn't handle them. To this date I reckon if prisons were run on the lines of the Vindi and Lewis nick our prisons would be empty. One of the many famous and infamous people I met during my service at Lewis was Shirley Bassey. Her boyfriend was on remand for trying to shoot her.

Dr. Steven King came to a sticky end quite literally. I helped scrape him off the deck after he tried to fly off the third floor. The fall didn't kill him it was the sudden stop. His mother ran the Blue Gardenia Night Club in Brighton which was the meeting place for John Profumo, Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice Davis. Pam and I had been there once or twice as it was the in place to be (The club that is not the prison)!

After a year, for monetary reasons, I asked for a transfer to Brixton Prison. I still had thoughts about cooking but after seeing the kind of slop they were serving I stayed on the discipline side. Brixton nick was mainly a remand centre for all the London courts but also held short term prisoners. A system was in place where you were assigned to a landing and were responsible for up to 40 prisoners (what a joke). The landing was run by a red band trustee and a strong arm mate, any problem with prisoners not doing as they were told, being cheeky or insolent, all I had to do was whisper in the red band's ear and if they didn't sort out my problems they could be replaced with someone who could. Say no more. After six months you were put on court duty, transferring prisoners and being in court with them during their trial. If convicted you could spend half the night taking them to the assigned prison. Twice I had to go down to Dartmoor, getting back just in time to go on duty again. These were certainly exciting times for me.

My path crossed Profumo, Keeler and Rice Davis again sitting in on all the secret details of the case behind closed doors. I even saw the movies of Keeler and Rice Davis performing and very acrobatic and versatile they were too! They must have trained under some of the girls I met at sea. I also had the misfortune of coming into contact with the Kray brothers, the two most evil men I have ever met. God knows how they never hanged or got assassinated.

The great train robbers were there and I got to know them pretty well after they had been remanded to Brixton. A special court room was built for them in Aylesbury as the crime had been committed in Buckinghamshire. A bullet proof acrylic cage was built over the dock as the authorities were afraid that they might name names as they had spent big bikkies to be hidden, false passports, travel arrangements etc. We travelled in an armed convoy to and from the court every day from London. Probably one of the biggest, most expensive and security minded operations that the UK government had ever been involved in.

Upon reflection, of all my experiences with the criminal element, the most memorable was being a Junior Dock Officer at The Old Bailey when a man called Mad Jack Kelly was found guilty of murder. It was officially called the Mitchum Dairy Murder. They had held up an office where the wage packets of nearly all the dairy workers, milkmen etc of London were prepared. The raid was a success, no one was hurt, they got into their get-away car and were just about to leave when a lone employee ran out of the building shouting and waving. Kelly pulled out a gun and shot him dead before the gang fled. Standing in the dock with the senior dock officer and Kelly, the judge read out the jury's verdict, "Guilty of murder your honour." The judge then placed a black square of silk on his head and announced that the prisoner was to be sentenced to death, would be taken away, held in secure surroundings at Her Majesty's pleasure until the date of hanging was announced. Being one of the dock officers involved with him, we immediately left the dock. A large police escort was hurriedly organised and we left to go to HM Prison Wandsworth where the sentence was to be carried out. The chief officer and I had to stay with him in the condemned cell two doors away from the execution room until a roster was made up containing three officers who would stay with him 24 hours a day until the appointed hour of the hanging. The roster was made up from officers drawn from different prisons and each officer would only do one 12 hour shift. That must have cost a fortune. I of course had a sticky beak at the gallows. I believe Mr Perot the hangman had already been informed of his duties by the time we left the cell. He didn't hang in the end. I believe he got life with a non parole period of 30 years. I can still feel the judge's gaze upon us as he read the

sentence out, it made me feel a bit shaky let alone the prisoner. When the judge put the silk on his head the senior officer gave me a nudge to be ready in case there was a violent reaction from the prisoner, but I think he was so stunned he didn't say a word as we led him from the dock to an isolation cell in the basement of The Old Bailey.

About six months later, the powers that be thought I had enough all round experience to transfer me to another prison as I was classed as one of the Wunder Kinden, possibly to be fast tracked in the service! Part of the new order as I was a mere youth (25 years old). I was called before the Governor, Chief Officer and a couple of unknown people wearing suits. I think the bowler hats and brollies may have been parked in the Governor's office. They asked me if I had any preference, I said yes, either back to the Island, Parkhurst or Camp Hill or stay at a London Prison. By this time I was married to the lovely Pamela, the girl I mentioned earlier from the Island and had bought a house in Thornton Heath, one of the main reasons I had asked to be transferred to Brixton prison. All of this was duly noted and a decision was made later that week - Dartmoor.

Once again I was convinced that idiots ruled all the Government Departments. Whilst at sea I had had to make arrangements on my next leave to attend HM Recruiting Office as National Service was still going strong and I was eighteen years old. When asked by the recruiting officer if I had any preferences I said yes, "I'm in the Merchant Navy and I'm a cook." So of course that was ignored. If I had left the Merchant Navy I would have gone into the Army Transport Division. Now here I am a pretty competent officer, trained in remand work in the prison plus Dock Officer, Security etc and they want to send me on a five year posting to Dartmoor. Not on your Nelly. I wasn't going to take a brand new bride to the back of beyond where they have supplies shipped in by helicopter when the prison is cut off by snow on the road. Curtains and carpets used to grow green mould because of the poor state of the quarters. I had a bit of this at the Lewes nick where I had to live in an old pre-fab with painted asbestos walls and a composite floor, never again. At this point we were thinking of starting a family and the thought of bringing up a child on the moor and losing my wife's wages which was nearly half of our total income was a definite no no. So once again I sung the famous song - You can take your job and shove it.

After leaving the prison service, I got a job with a brand new security business called *The Armoured Car Service* (ACS) based in Redhill, Surrey. Another police check. I've been turned inside out six times now, full background checks including family, finger printing, and would you believe it, I'm as pure as the virgin snow (yeah right). The other requirements were un-armed combat training, security clearance, a clean driving licence, at least six feet tall and twelve stone in weight, not to mention a few brains. The ACS had been started six months earlier by an American called Roy Winkleman who had worked for Wells Fargo in the States for years and had brought the idea across to England. This was the power of all armoured car services in England. Our armoured cars were the Austin J2 Vans with a steel box welded into the inside. We were in constant contact (coded) with our HQ at Hounslow, just outside of London Airport. We carried dye tanks, shelves to take all the money cases and sawn off twelve bores. God help anyone trying to break in. Our uniform was the old white Yankee peaked police hat, blue shirt, black tie, slacks, shoes and a cool solid leather Yankee police jacket. Outside of the vans our only protection was a night stick, although we did carry hand-cuffs (anybody got a four poster?) Once again rigorous un-armed combat training was enforced at least twice a week. The police hated us; they called us the private army. At that time they didn't know we carried guns in the vans. You ought to have heard what they said when they found out. Not nice. Our guns were very quietly taken away, but they couldn't stop us carrying the big heavy Webley slug gun. At close quarters I reckon a slug could have killed someone if it hit them in the head. It was a two man team, driver/money carrier (the money was kept in a metal case) and the radio/vault officer. On the road fully cashed up we often had a million pounds on board, usually a mixture of wage packets and bundles of cash notes for the banks. Driving in London was a nightmare. Every set of road stop lights, every traffic jam had the potential for a hold up. We did the siren and flashing lights game just like the fire engines and ambulances, quite often clearing the outside lane or going up on pavements to evade heavy traffic and coming to a standstill. On arriving at a bank or office the radio operator rang our HQ who then rang the client to make sure all was secure before we even opened the driver's door which had its own security system. The driver would then disembark, do a big visual check to see if anybody was looking suspicious before giving a coded knock on the back door whereupon a hatch would be opened by the radio officer. The driver would still be aware of anybody he thought might be too close to him and of a possible attack before inserting his arm through the hatch giving a pre-arranged number of fingers in the air as a final security

precaution. This was changed before every client on our inboard radio link. Only then would he drop the other end of his handcuff out of his leather jacket sleeve. The radio operator would then give it a tug to make sure it was attached to his arm before clipping the other end to the cash case, a final look around before taking the money case out of the van and very smartly going into the building.

At banks, we would park right outside the door, but office blocks often meant going up flights of stairs or using lifts. In these cases, somebody from the wages office would walk down the stairs or have a lift standing by to check that all was clear before signalling the Golden Goose (the officer who was carrying the box) that all was secure. We often did jewellery drops to Hatten Garden, body guard work or help escort paintings etc to auction displays. We were told that customers preferred us to do these jobs as our security precautions were much better than the police. The old adage, only those who were directly responsible for the planning of the job did it.

After about six months, the boss was approached by Chubb (the biggest lock and safe manufacturers) regarding a buy out. We never did find out how much, but the big smile on his face and the big bonus for all the staff said it all. We began getting bigger and better vehicles custom made, state of the art. During this time Securicor, who up to this point only did static guards or patrols, bought out Legge locks and safes. So it was only a matter of time before we amalgamated. Securicor took a dominant roll in this as they didn't run armoured cars or have the experience of mapping routes, security or industrial wage preparation. All of the ACS personnel were promoted to officers and gentlemen. Securicor had offices in every main town and city in the UK, plus offices in Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney. We were asked where we would like to be posted to as Redhill would be closed down. Everything would be run from their London HQ. I applied for Hong Kong or Singapore but got kicked back as they didn't want to pay for married couples to be posted. So once again I ended up in Southampton and started up the armoured car division. They already had quite a large contingent of static and patrol staff on the books and the executive officer of the branch wasn't very impressed with me arriving. Ex army officer, very posh, university educated, all brains and no bloody common sense because he hadn't done a real day's work in the big wide world. On our first meeting he wanted to know how I intended to start the organisation of the armoured car branch. I in turn asked him what he had done regarding setting up of secure premises for the vans, wages packing rooms, extended radio channels and canvassing of all the major factories, stores and any other companies who had over 50 staff, possible recruitment of existing staff or advertising for new staff. Stuff all! So we were off to a good start. I think I must have had visions of the writing on the wall there and then, but give him his due he got his finger out and we soon got things on track. I asked his secretary to start making appointments with all the big companies regarding our new service of wage preparation and secure delivery etc. When the boss found out that I had taken it upon myself to get things started the shit hit the fan. He said, "I was going to do all that." I replied, "London HQ would have thought it was already done and that we were behind the eight ball already time wise." We were lucky we had plenty of customers who had responded to our phone calls and had wanted more information. He told me that he could handle all of the customer side. Perhaps he could see and smell the long lunch on an expense account. Wrong again. I asked him what selling experience he had and what did he know about the account side as he could stuff this up because he didn't know what he was talking about. As word would soon spread amongst the businesses and as I was responsible for getting this thing up and running, I wanted to do it my way or my head would be on the block if it went wrong.

We were a glamorous pair, him in his best suit with his guard's tie waving in the breeze and me in my Armoured Car Services uniform (I hadn't yet changed over to the Securicor's drab one). The CEOs and accountants thought we were the bee's knees. My boss started speaking in a very posh voice and introduced me as his chief security officer who would detail the whole box and dice of our new service. I took along our money case with a special tamper proof lock and showed where their own security seals would be placed on completion in our secure vaults at HQ. They were fascinated when I showed them that their case was to be handcuffed to the courier. We didn't get many knock backs on our presentation. The ones we did soon saw the light. Recruitment took the longest to get sorted out. Not because there weren't plenty of applicants but because of the physical requirements, common sense, how they spoke and projected their image to us. As these people would be our front line in customer relations the main requirement was a clean police record. I tried to aim for as many ex armed forces personnel as possible for the obvious reasons. Secure routes and timing was the next big headache. Everybody wanted their deliveries within a couple of hours of each other to save having money on the premises longer than necessary. Size does matter and the big companies usually got what they/we

wanted and deliveries soon began to go along smoothly. Three months later, once again the shit hit the fan, no pay rises were forthcoming so the union called a rolling strike and with the exception of the boss ie the officer and gentleman, approximately six of us had to double up on our duties. My number two and I had to do static guard watch work, punching in times on clocks positioned at different spots around a factory or doing mobile patrol checks on personnel or windows and doors if they were unmanned. After working half or the whole night I then had to be in HQ to make sure the armoured car side of things were OK. If a driver or WO didn't arrive for work and another replacement couldn't be found guess who had to fill in! Yup, little old me. All the extra work soon took its toll on us and when we found out we were considered contract salaried staff with no extra financial reward forthcoming, the writing was on the wall. I could hear the strains of that familiar song going round and round in my head.

It was about this time on the IOW that the son and heir to all my debts was born, a bouncing baby boy named Steven. We hadn't moved over to the Southampton area because of the impending birth and Pam was living with her parents just outside of Cowes while I was in digs in Southampton. The union's rolling strikes continued, so I rolled off into the sunset. The strikes only finished when Securicor called a press conference in London and Southampton saying that union action was about to lose approximately 100 jobs in Southampton because of unreasonable demands. The unions backed down but the damage was done. There were a lot of sackings/redundancies and I heard it took a couple of years to get things back as they were. After I had left, Securicor changed the way that money transfer took place. They did away with the handcuffs and went to a body belt system. This incorporated a high tensile metal chain covered in leather which went around the officers body like a belt with about six feet of loose chain connected to the money case by a dog style snap-on clip. The idea was if the officer was attacked he could drop the case and protect himself with his truncheon. This worked extremely well; they got robbed about six times in six months!! I have no idea what system they use these days. If anybody has been back to the UK recently and remembers seeing a cash delivery, perhaps they can see in their minds eye how it was done. Maybe after all this time it has got more professional and they are allowed to carry guns, but I doubt it.

Pam, Steven and I moved into our new house that we bought in Hythe on the edge of Southampton Water. This was about 30 minutes by road from the city or 20 minutes by ferry (of course the fairies are run by the gay navy) just like in Sydney. I applied for and got a rep's job for a large company called Wallace & Cameron (Winston has probably heard the name as it is his type of work) selling tin bums for teddy bears to toilet paper and first-aid kits. They covered the whole gambit supplying pubs, hospitals, catering outlets and hairdressers. The best seller was Nivia and Atrixio hand cream. The whole of Hampshire was my patch. This often meant staying away for the night so that I could do the out-lying towns together. This position only lasted six months as it was too much work for too little pay, but it brought me into contact with my future employee. I had made an appointment to see the owner of a ladies hairdressing salon in Southampton. As some of my calls were with existing clients, this being one, on arrival I was shown to a private booth at the end of the shop. This is where the richer clients sat in isolated glory being lathered up by a raging old 'Queen' who fluttered around like a butterfly (an ex Vindi deck boy perhaps). Usually when you are trying to flog your wares (perhaps I had better rephrase that or you might get the wrong idea) and are selling superlative and marvellous commodities, it is usually done in private on a one to one basis with the owner, where prices can be discussed. Not this time, 'Sorry heart,' he/she said, 'I'm one staff short and madam has requested my undivided attention.' While I'm thinking shall I make another appointment for another day or bite the bullet and start flapping my gums, they both said, 'Don't be shy dear,' so I gave them my spiel, which under the circumstances seemed to go very well. Madam Butterfly said that she required some goodies. I'm not sure which ones he/she meant, mine or the company's and could I come back later. On leaving, the old dear in the chair gave me a business card and asked me to give her a call later. Talk about any port in a storm, I thought she was after my body as well. Telling Pam about my gay day later that evening she asked to see the card. It turned out to be for a local Hythe builder/realtor. The next day I gave her a call and made an appointment to see her husband in two days time. By Saturday lunch time I had been offered a job to work in the sales office in Hythe and to go onto their building sites to help sell new houses

Times were good in the housing scene and for wages I was offered a small wage plus a percentage of commissions or full commission. I had to be a bit cautious to start with. The price difference between flogging a toilet roll and a new house was quite considerable, so I opted for the first option. This lasted for about a

month. I soon found you don't sell houses they sell themselves. It's just a matter of putting enough punters through. The old adage is true; there is a house for everyone at the right price. Business was booming so I went on commission only and made very handsome wages. My lady boss was a very astute business woman. When she advertised her port folio in the paper she said she would pick up inter county clients from the bus or train station and chauffeur drive them around the properties and then return them to the station. This was a big hit because not everybody had a car and that 'she who must be obeyed' at home could go out house hunting during the day and tell the husband what he was going to buy when he got home that evening from work. 'Darling you will never guess what I saw and you bought today.' We all know who does the choosing in life and it ain't us Vindi Boys, ain't that the truth. But of course the main aim was when you had the clients in the car they wouldn't be seeing other agents' properties. One winter afternoon at the weekend sitting in our sales office of the houses/bungalows we were building, (sitting on my fat ass and picking my nose, as one does when bored shitless) a nice car with two very smart people pulled into the parking lot. I greeted them at the door and when introductions were made I showed them the various design plans, explained where they were on the building site and offered to show them around. This they declined which I was a glad about as it was freezing cold and hissing down with rain and my office was nice and warm. (I was a steward not a hairy 'A' deckie). Half an hour later they came in looking like drowned rats but excited, which put a warm glow into my back pocket. I asked them to take off their coats and sit down and get warm while I made them a cuppa. A new direction in my life was about to unfold. The first thing I noticed was that Joe Easthope was wearing a Merchant Navy tie so we were off to a flying start. He told me that he had been a steward on the *Queens* so we swung the lamp for a few minutes while they finished their tea. I mention their name because not only did I work with Joe about a year later but Joe, Eileen and their children became great friends with my family. Sadly Joe passed away a few years ago. His daughter Pat caught up with my ex (Pam) only a few months ago in Adelaide. They liked the design of our largest bungalow, asked the price and wondered if we were open to an offer. I rang the boss to get a decision on the price. He said OK and that he would like to meet them and would be there in 15 minutes. Meanwhile I started getting all the paperwork filled out to make up a contract. When I asked him about mortgage details, who he worked for, salary etc he told me he was a steward with BOAC. I told him that I was thinking of applying to BEA as they had just started advertising for (catering staff) stewards and stewardesses. If I were not successful in my application he said, BOAC were just about to start recruiting after a two year break and it was his opinion that BOAC had a lot more to offer. For instance: international flights rather than internal, European countries and of course larger aircraft meant more staff and a better chance of getting a job. He himself was on the 707 fleet.

The boss arrived, so it was back to business. I signed them up and all was well in the world. I had just added some cream to the bread and jam that I had already earned that week. As they were leaving I quietly asked Joe if I could ring him the next day. Yes anytime he replied. When I rang, him he invited us over to his place that night for a drink and to discuss what working for BOAC entailed. The base wage wasn't too flash but we received a tax free allowance for every day we spent out of the country which was approximately 180 days a year. The biggest lurk and perk were the allowances BOAC paid the crew. Our humble little bed where you could rest your weary head after a hard days flying was usually in a four or five star hotel which BOAC either owned or had shares in. When signing in you would hold your hot little sticky hand out and they would fill it full of dollars, they paid you the rate of whatever the menu said. It was always silver service or a la carte, not the coffee shop menu. So for one complete day at the hotel you would receive the monies for a full cooked breakfast, tea and tab nabs for mid morning, a three course lunch, tea and tab nabs for afternoon smoko and a three course dinner at night. (The cheapskates refused to include the lobster dishes) and to finish up a cup of cocoa so that we could get our beauty sleep. Hard work but somebody had to do it. Of course sometimes it was only a stopover ie twelve hours so they would pay for the evening meal plus breakfast.

These revelations certainly got Pam's and my attention and I'll go into further details a little later.

Any way back to flogging houses. My lady boss got seriously sick so as the senior sales staff it fell to me to get all the new listings for sale, laying out all the sales brochures which often went out all over the UK and planning the sales campaign in the local press for the coming week (did I tell you that the only reason I was the senior staff was that it was just the boss and me running that side of the business). It soon became apparent that I couldn't do it all on my own. The boss said it was up to me to hire someone as I would have to work with them. These were in the days before lady sales people were in the housing sector, unless it was the owner's

daughter. I recruited outside of the housing industry as I didn't want someone coming in with preconceived ideas. The boss had done a good job training me so I wanted to continue in the same theme. We held the edge over some of our biggest competitors by giving hands-on, one on one service that people like by treating them individually, not just being handed a fistful of brochures and left to their own devices. It was popular at the time to have multi agents selling the same house. It all boiled down to the best service. Of course this did have a drawback as you were at their beck and call 24/7. One client sticks out especially. He was being transferred from inter-county to start a new job in January and at 8.30 Christmas Eve I finally got his signature on the contract. Money is money my boy. I thought my mixed heritage was Scottish, maybe there was a drop of Jewish blood in there somewhere or perhaps it was just personal satisfaction.

The New Year started off well and I made the biggest sale of my career. It was a lovely old country house with stables and a couple of acres, all the other acreage was to be retained as a hobby farm by the gentleman owner. The exterior was chocolate box pretty all oak beams, white wash, mullioned bow windows and ivy. Part of the oak beams over the entrance were intricately carved, they had been salvaged a few hundred years earlier from a wrecked Spanish galleon that had come to grief on rocks on the southern side of the IOW. All of the interior beams came from the same source. After hitting my head once, I soon remembered to duck going through doorways. It was a big rambling place, draughty as hell and no central heating, God knows how it could be installed either. The ground floor had large slate slabs throughout. The walls were oak beamed and in between lath and plaster. Upstairs the floors were all oak planked an inch thick with wooden pegs to hold everything in place. A central heating man's nightmare. But the most interesting thing of all, and the *pièce de résistance* and a salesman/advertising man's dream was a *Priest's Hole*, cleverly hidden by a false carved panel in the staircase. If it was ever used for real I hope the intended victim was a midget. I couldn't get into it. When doing a rough advertising splurge to show the boss the creative juices really flowed and even if I so say myself it was bloody marvellous. The office was inundated with phone calls requiring details and brochures. It was the biggest coup the office had ever had; over a hundred inquiries. I cut ruddy groves in the road between the office and the property showing people over it, no open inspections in those days. I finally sold it for the vast sum of just under £15,000.00. In 1965/6 the average house price was between £2,000.00 - £3,000.00. The boss was well pleased and bought herself a brand new sports car. I think that was a big incentive to quickly get better. I did well out of it as besides my commission I now had the use of an almost new Morris Van-den-Plas 1100.

After the excitement had died down, life returned to normal until BOAC advertised for staff. I was now 26 years old, a couple of years outside of the advertised requirements but what the hell. I sent in my CV and it looked quite imposing on paper. I didn't really expect too much but my own little angel was still sitting on my shoulder. I was invited up to London for the first interview; there were three in all. By the end of it, they knew everything there was to know including what I had for breakfast at the Vindi. The last interview was very different. All the applicants, boys and girls were put into the same room in a big circle. A training officer stood in the middle and said, 'I'm going to put various situations to you and you will all have to respond to them.' Each person had a different one. There was then a class discussion on the given answer. The officer was still in the centre saying what if this or that happened and generally stirring the you know what. We found out afterwards that basically fifty percent of the class got dumped for being too bolshy and aggressive. At this stage it was a great learning curve - mind in gear before mouth! To my surprise I was offered a position to start training however I could still fail at any number of stages during the course. When I rang Joe and told him the good news, we met for a final get together and an in depth of all the pro's and con's that would not only effect me but Pam as well, as she would be home alone for six months of the year. Most trips would be between 3-10 days but it could go up to three weeks, it all depended on what fleet of aircraft I was posted to; VC10's or Boeing 707's. This was of course if I survived the training. Pam was very supportive and was all for it. I think she could also see the 10% trips, best hotels, cheap jewellery etc. It was now time to break the bad news to Mrs E the boss. I had already told her about my plans and I think she thought the same as I did, more chance of being struck by lightning. She said if it didn't work out my job would still be there and she wished me all the best for the future. I'm sure she secretly hoped I would fail the training.

A man drops his wife at a hardware shop and tells her to buy a 3” steel hinge for the front door. When she goes in, the salesman is serving a customer, so the woman looks around the shop and sees a beautiful silver teapot that she takes a fancy to. The salesman, having finished with his customer asks the woman what she wants. She asks him the price of the teapot. He tells her \$350.00. “I can’t afford that she tells him.” She then tells him that she wants a 3” steel hinge for her front door. He goes to the store room at the back of the shop and calls out, “Will you be taking a screw for the hinge?” “No,” she answers,” “But I will for the teapot.”