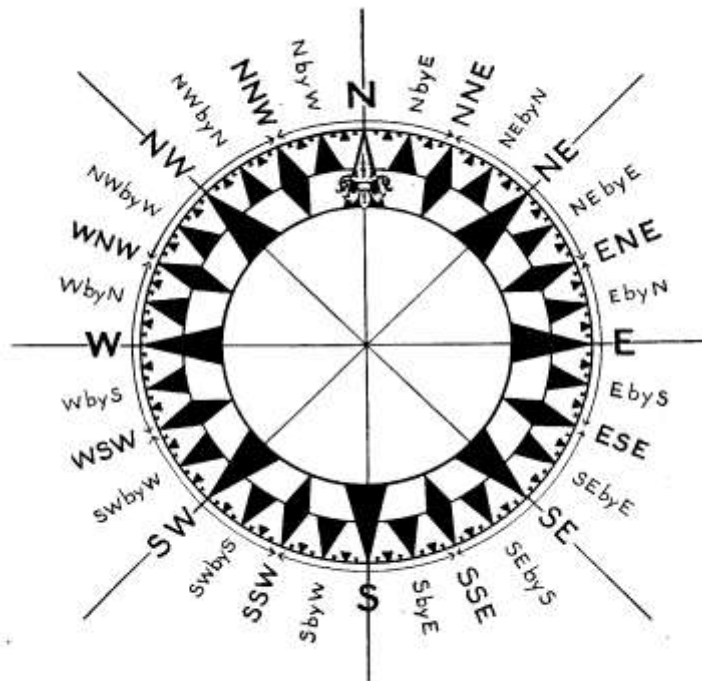




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**SKIPPER/TREASURER:**  
**SECRETARY/SOCIAL ORGANISER:**  
**SUPPLY OFFICER:**  
**ALMONER:**  
**P.R.O.:**  
**NEWSLETTER:**  
**EMAIL:**

**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](mailto:surfield@adam.com.au)

## Editor's Note

If anyone would like to receive the newsletter by email please let us have your address.

For those who have given us an insight into their lives we thank you, I am sure that the readers have enjoyed them. We are now out of Vindi boy stories, would you please put you hand up to write the next one.

The reunion next year will be held in WA and if you are interested in going we can print out the registration form for you and pass on any information that comes to hand. You could also visit the WA website for information.

Would those of you who haven't given a list of your ships and sailing dates to Tony please let him have them as they are needed for the new website.

## Next Meeting Sunday January 31<sup>st</sup> 2010

*Mick & Jill Surfield*

## Skipper's Log

I would to take this opportunity to wish all Vindi Boys and their Mates a Very Happy Christmas and a Happy Safe Healthy New Year. I thank you all for your support and attendance at our meetings during the year. We are a truly unique group of friends.

The January meeting will be at our home 6, Panter Street, Willaston, Home: 85231655, Tony's Mobile 0418839757 Anne's Mobile 0407101960.

The date of the meeting will be Sunday 31st January. It will take the form of a short meeting at 11.30.a.m. with a BBQ to follow at a cost of \$5.00 per person.

It is important we know how many will be attending for catering purposes. Please bring a dessert.

We had a wonderful end of year picnic and what with the weather playing up it was great to see so many true faithfuls turning up. An invitation went out to the pandas but they were busy settling in.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS THE LAST CALL FOR UNPAID SUBS. REMIT A.S.A.P. PLEASE ASK IF YOU ARE IN ARREARS OR PAID UP.

YOU MAY ALSO PAY DIRECTLY TO VINDICATRIX BSB 805 023 A/C 04182856.

Heartfelt thanks are sent to our newsletter editors Mick and Jill Surfield for their great efforts with the news letter.

They always need your input otherwise there will be nothing much to say, any story is always greatly appreciated, also the ladies, come on girls, let us know your secrets!

Our own web page will be up and running in the New Year and I sincerely thank Shirley, Bill and Steve Davis.

We had a great time at the Reunion in November at Caloundra, catching up with old Vindi friends is always a great pleasure. I would like to thank all those involved for a memorable time. SA was represented by Mick and Jill Surfield, Brian Toogood and Anne and Tony Iles. Perth is putting on the show next year and it would be good if more from South Australia could attend.

Anne asks if more raffle prizes can be brought to our meetings as this is our only way of building up our funds and we are getting low in prizes.

Finally for all those who have suffered this year for any reason, bad health, the loss of a loved one or anything that has turned your world upside down our thoughts are with you.

*Tony.*



**From the Almoner's desk**

I am so pleased to report positive news.

Jack Nicholls had a spell in hospital and underwent surgery and is now fit and well.

Vern and Eunice left wintry Adelaide behind for their caravan holiday. They are both well and in good spirits.

Seasons greetings to everyone and every good wish for 2010.

*Anne Withey*



Twenty Vindi boys and girls made it to the picnic this year, a good turnout considering the weather on the previous day. Jan and Roy's idea for a game, a name tag was placed on an individuals head and they had to guess who or what they were by asking one question at a time. The answers they received were not always very helpful. By the way George was a mushroom.

A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood. Trying to make the matter clearer, she said, "Now, class, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face." "Yes," the class said. "Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary position the blood doesn't run into my feet?" A little fellow shouted, "Cause your feet ain't empty."

*Vic Wroth of Staines in Middlesex writes:*

"As an Ordinary Seaman EDH and AB I served on:-

Port Huon	1949/50	Capt. T. Stedwell
Port Brisbane	1950	Capt. H H Smith
Port Napier	1950/1	Capt. G. Hazelwood
Port Hobart	1951	Capt. L. Copeland
Port Lincoln	1951/2	Capt. E Young and Capt. G G Langford
Port Victor	1952	Capt. Can't remember!

From the above during a seagoing period of my life from 1946 in Tramps, wartime built Liberty ships, and coal burning "Park" boats etc. I had (and still do have) some affection for the Port Line whose ships no matter what their age were always kept smart, and as building progressed were to my mind really quite attractive looking vessels, as can be seen in Duncan Haws book "Merchant Fleets - Port Line" (available via Sea Breezes if you should be interested) and the crew conditions were always good.

The crew of the Port Adelaide shown on p.471 of the December 1999 issue are clearly a repetition of the crews with whom I sailed on the above ships.

I'm quite sure that those of us who sailed these ships can recite many unusual and amusing incidents as we went the various ways around the world to Australia and New Zealand spending often extended time there whilst Strike Bound because of the local wharfies. For instance, one can say one has been under sail in the Roaring Forties when we broke out the sail carried on the Mainmast of the Port Lincoln to catch the prevailing westerly wind. The sail finally blew out. Then again, the time when we were rammed at night on the "Lincoln" at anchor at Shoalhaven in the Thames whilst loading detonators and bombs by an absolutely new "light ship" "Prince" line boat down for Directors inspection - we proceeded to tear each other apart in the tideway - they were more damaged than we were. Visits to Pitcairn Island, two 25ths December after leaving Napier NZ. The list goes on.

On another infamous occasion on the "Napier" on a warm night homeward bound in the NW Indian Ocean at approximately 3am the day after Christmas, I looked up from the wheel on the bridge to see a huge bright tropical moon completely fill the front port side bridge window and then proceed rapidly past the remaining windows to the starboard side. I had dozed off!! (A matter I still feel guilty about and had never done before or since). Looking at the compass I realised that it was all too late, we were passing the 180 and I would now have to take a turn out of our course! I was

somewhat uncomfortable during the next watch at noon and totally engrossed in steering the ship as I listened to the Deck officers query why the miles run calculated from their noon sight did not match the estimated distance run from the difference between the propeller revolutions over the previous 24 hours. I have been fortunate enough to have made two recent extended visits to Australia. My time with Port Line and others stood me in good stead in finding my way about the various States (including Tasmania where photographs of Port Line Ships still hang on the walls of some of the Hobart Pubs). The street names and plan area of the towns remain broadly the same - the buildings have just shot up 20-40+ storeys into the atmosphere. The Docks are far emptier now.

I will always remember one of the liberty ships on which I sailed which had already broken her back (as they were sometimes prone) and which had been jacked up and 3 huge steel bands fixed to each of her sides. We understood that Lloyds wouldn't insure her and thus assurance of our (or was it the owners) wellbeing was taken on by the British Commission whose initials graced each side of our Plimsoll Marks. We endured storms and typhoons and very heavy weather over 9 months and during these she would spring up and down amidships as she hit each sea so that teacups would bounce about on their surfaces and occasionally spring sleeping occupants up from their bunks. The Second Mate during these periods would white knuckle grip the wheelhouse window staring straight ahead as we bounced then turn to us at the wheel and through pursed lips state "I don't like these ships, they're bloody dangerous" then she would do it all again. She was however a very Happy Ship crew-wise as she ploughed her 9-10 knots furrow around the oceans. Then there was the occasion in Buenos Aires when Eva Peron and the President stood on the balcony and told the ecstatic Argentine crowds that they had unilaterally nationalised the (British owned?) railways on their behalf - we decided although it was very exciting and interesting to keep a low profile as justice and the British Bobby were a long way away.

I am certain that those of us that were at sea can all "swing a lamp" with quite a few tales but when you look around, where are the opportunities for travel, experience and adventure now? I was always amazed not to say alarmed at the culture of "independence" or was it anarchy of some ships' crews (no doubt arising from the extreme hardships and bias of

Statute Law between the two World Wars) and again in my time the level of tolerance of some of those to whom they were responsible. Certainly on the Port Line ships this studied forbearance (no doubt endured with gritted teeth and an increase in blood pressure) was evident and appreciated.

I was motivated to write to you by reference to "Vintage Port" and would be most obliged if you could provide me with details. Can you tell me anything of Mr. Lofthouse - the crewing man we saw at Leadenhall Street, London when changing ships and who was always pleasant and helpful. I'm not too sure how impressed he might have been had he known that he figured in a doggerel song the more musical members of the crew used to sing:-

*Early one morning the Missus said to me –  
“Go down to Mr. Lofthouse and get a job at sea”.  
So being a man of action - I went and caught a tram,  
Twenty minutes later - I was “Lavatory Man”.*

You will be relieved to learn that I do not remember the remaining verses - and the tune was "jolly".

Printed with the permission of the Vintage Port Association facilitating the reunion of past and present Port Line employees.

Kindly submitted by Vince Vincent.

### **When I Was Young**

I was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1928 at 23 Shoreham Street, Wandsworth, South West London although I don't remember anything about it. Apparently we lived there for a while before moving to Mathias Road, Islington and by then I had a brother who I played with once. The last time I saw him he was in hospital where he died of whooping cough and complications. We then moved on to Newman Plaistow, East London where I first went to school in Balam Street. I remember when I had mumps Mum used to take me to Addo Picture House, it was known as the flea pit. It cost fourpence to get in and at the interval you got a cup of tea. Then I changed school and went to Cave Road School where I had to walk about a mile each way.

Our next move was to East Ham, while living there, every September we would go hop picking in Kent to a place called Ospringe, just outside the town of Faversham. We went with my grandmother and by then I had a sister Jean who is nearly seven years my junior. While there in 1939 the war broke out, I was with my aunts Violet and Hilda, Violet was 18 months older than me and Hilda was three years. Their nicknames were Moggy and Big Aggie. I also had a girlfriend who I only saw in those months, her name was Jean Parker, I haven't seen her since that day. That takes up to about eleven and a half years of my life.

After leaving East Ham we moved to Custom House which was down King George Dock, we were bombed out during the blitz so we moved to the same street as my grandparents. After a little while my grandfather died and we all moved to Canning Town, grandmother, Hilda, Violet, Mum, Dad, me and my sister Jean. We were there for a while and I got a brother Peter who is 14 years my junior. A couple of months later we were bombed out again and moved to another place in Canning Town, while there Hilda joined the land army and Vi the ATS.

Before some of that happened I was evacuated to Boxmor to a place called Pixies Hill. I had been going to Russel Ashburton School and the headmaster, a man named Mr Moon asked if some of us would like to go there. It was built on country land, there were three dormitories, classrooms, a dining room and a large gymnasium that was used for everything, in the main entrance was the office and tuck shop. There were four teachers Mr Bell, Mr Ayers, Mr Horrocks and Mr Pilgrim plus Mr Moon and the wives, in all there were about 80 of us. I finished up as head prefect and was allowed to plant a beech tree along the drive entrance with my name on a brass plaque. I stayed there about a year and went on to Chepstow Technical College where I won a scholarship for a year which was uneventful. I was one of the poor kids but they never got the better of me and my pal Phil.

On my return to Canning Town I started work in a large retail store by the name of Staddons. If you have watched 'Are you being served' we had the same sort of staff, Mr Armstrong was the floor walker. I worked in receipt and dispatch and took the goods to the various departments. Mr William was the boss there but also I had to work for Harry Palmer. We had to be there first in the morning to raise all the shutters, and there were a lot, we also had to clean all the windows as the three entrances were like arcades. As I worked a 48 hour week for only 18 shillings I did not stay there for long. My grandmother was working as a cleaner at a company called Venestas and said I could get a job there, so I did, and was paid 28 shillings a week. They made the veneers for mosquito aircraft plus stuff to confuse enemy radar and tin coated lead for lining tea chests. My work started in the packing department and after a few weeks there I was offered the job of

driving the Lister 15cwt truck taking the finished articles to the warehouse on the wharves about a mile up the hill. Being on the Thames one had to listen for the siren which I often did not hear due to the noise of the engine. There were some hairy moments at times when I had to leave the truck and run.

It was getting time to sign on for conscription and best pals Phil Pritcard and Johnny Crook were talking about joining the merchant navy. Anyway enquiries were made and Johnny and I went to Leadenhall Street to ask questions and sign up, but I had a problem, I was 17 and conscription age. It was worked out by putting my age down a week and this bought a few consequences for me later on. We were told we had to go to the Vindi for three months training and I had a bit of trouble with my Dad as he wouldn't sign the consent form, but my gran stepped in and said if he didn't sign she would. They had a right old row for a couple of day's and then he finally signed the form. We arrived at the Vindi and Johnny was very worried as this was the first time he had been away from home. There were these blokes lining us up and telling us to do this and do that and young lads asking if we had any fags. I settled in OK but after three days Johnny legged it back home. And to this day I haven't seen or heard of him again, the same with Phil.

I really don't remember a lot about being on the Vindi, if the training was hard or the food lousy I have forgotten. But I do remember when having some money going to the café and getting two slices of bread and dripping and a cup of tea. I got on very well with George Strang and had dinner with him a couple of times. On VJ night I went to Bristol where they had a big bonfire and sat on a roundabout and had a couple beers and slept there.

After leaving the Vindi I was sent back to London to Connaught Road pool, who in turn sent me to Cardiff where I got my lifeboat certificate. Then I was sent to Barry to join the *Empire Elgar* which was being loaded with coal for Algiers and she was filthy. I went on board to find the mate and had a chat and he signed me on as JOS. Back I went to Cardiff to collect my gear; I got back and went aft to the cabin that I was to share with two deck boys. The only person in the mess was a Portuguese AB named Eddie, we had a bit of tea and he asked me what I was doing for the evening, I told him nothing as I haven't any money. He gave me half a crown and told me to go back to Cardiff and say goodbye to my friends at the Flying Angel.

Two days later we left harbour for Algiers and then we started to clean the ship, I have never got so dirty in all my life and I was terribly seasick. The rest of the AB's were Stornwegians who spoke a lot of their own lingo, four of them were cousin's named MacDonald. They were Jock, Big Jock, Wee Jock and the other Jock. Not knowing the drill I had no cigarettes, not much in the way of toiletries and didn't know when the shop, which was run by the Spanish chief steward opened. He told me that I would have to wait until it opened after tea, onto Algiers. As you know there was no modern machinery to unload cargo, and ours was unloaded by hundred's of natives with baskets. Anyway that evening the Jocks took me to the casbah, plied me with some vin blanc and I don't remember returning to the ship that night. All along the wharf there were these 90 gallon kegs of vin rouge and vin blanc so the Jocks decided to roll one onto the ship. How they got it on board I have no idea but they did. They smashed the end in and we had crews from other ships coming across and filling up buckets with plonk. The following day the police came aboard, but of course nobody knew anything about it. The cargo was finally unloaded and reloaded with iron ore and the ship was filthy again.

Leaving Algiers for Hull we started to clean ship again. Being iron ore everything was at the bottom and we rolled all the way back to Hull and unloaded, this took a few days, then I signed on again. We went to West Hartlepool and loaded some cargo for Halifax, Canada. We got a new bo'sn and as soon as he saw me he asked me to lend him five pounds. Fortunately for me, Big Jock knew him from a previous ship and made him give it back to me, in the end he did not sail with us and one of the AB's took over. My first trip across the Atlantic was a little frightening, to say the least, the sea was rough with those big greenies breaking over the ship, but we made it.

Halifax was a nice place then but of course it was a long time ago. When we finished unloading we moved upstream to a place called Dalhusie to load pit props. It wasn't a very big place, most of its population being Red Indians and they were most inquisitive. On the Saturday we heard there was to be a dance some distance away at Cambletown so half a dozen of us decided to walk there along the forest paths. We danced all night then walked back, I wouldn't do it now. After the pit props were loaded and lashed down; they were stacked ten to fifteen feet high on the fore and aft decks, we then sailed for Maryborough in Cumberland. While the cargo was being unloaded some of us went to The Steam Packet, which was the local tavern. At one stage during the evening I climbed onto the bar and sang 'Don't fence me in' to a lot of raucous comments. The woman who ran the pub gave me a right old rollicking, said I was a naughty boy or words to that effect, and that if I did anything like that again I would be barred. Little did she know I was under age. Leaving port we sailed to Newcastle-upon-Tyne where I signed off and went home.

Ten days later I signed on the refrigerated *Port Halifax* bound for New Zealand. The bo'sn was Paddy Doyle, the lamp-trimmer was Mick McCann. We sailed for Boston USA. Paddy reckoned I was the best ordinary seaman he had ever met.

After we docked in Boston Paddy, Mick, me and a couple of AB's went ashore to meet some of Paddy's friends who lived there. It was a great night until going back on board, Paddy and Mick were making so much noise we were arrested, put in jail for a few hours until he quietened down, and then we were let go. Leaving Boston we sailed for New York and tied up in Hoboken. If we wanted to go into New York we had to get the ferry and it was freezing cold and they had just had about eight inches of snow. Anyway I decided to go on the Saturday afternoon to look around Broadway and the places one had heard about. On catching the train into the station you had to follow the coloured arrows.

As I wanted to go to Broadway those arrows were blue, I followed them and ended up where I started. I saw this fellow coming along so I asked him how do I get to Broadway, he said follow the blue arrows; I said that I did but didn't get anywhere. He was wearing a rather shabby raincoat and said he would walk with me. I still wasn't a man of the world and I got worried he was a homo. He invited me to his apartment and I was really worried, anyway coming out of Grand Central this chauffeur came up and said good afternoon Mr Nourey did you have a good morning. It turned out he was the French consul, we got in the car and he took me home to meet his wife and daughter Cherez. It was pleasant for five days but I am still not impressed with America.



Port Halifax

We sailed for Panama and they told us that when we got to the locks I was to look out for the mules that towed us through. There I was I looking for donkeys; I never knew then that they were mechanical. A couple of days out of Panama on our way to Wellington the engines stopped in the middle of the night and as most of you know if you were asleep you woke up instantly. We drifted for ten to twelve hours before the engineers were able to fix the problem then it was plain sailing for Wellington, or so we thought. The wharfies had been on strike for a week and then went of for another five weeks. Finally we moved on to Auckland where we loaded fairly quickly and left for New Plymouth where we loaded lamb carcasses. I was on board for Christmas morning, one of the wharfies came and asked me if I would like Christmas dinner with his family and I said yes. As it turned out their name was Rae and they wanted to adopt me. With the lamp-trimmer Mick, two AB's, Bill Rudd and John Howie we all arranged to jump ship, each night we took a parcel of gear ashore. Then we left for the last top up of cargo in Wellington. I received a letter from Mum saying Dad was very sick, when was I due home. The other three jumped ship I didn't. On the journey back we painted the ship to be all spick and span back in King George V dock. When in the Red Sea we hit a sand storm on the starboard side and part of the bridge, it did a better job of cleaning than we ever did; needless to say it was a lot of work to get all shipshape again. When I arrived home Dad was as fit as I was.

My next ship was *MV Treworlas* one of Hungry Haines ships, I signed on in London as usual we had to clean the ship after dockies had been aboard. First stop Genoa, I was amazed at all the sunken ships in the harbour and to this day I cannot watch a movie of sinking or sunken ships. I saw some of the sights or what was left of them after the war. Set sail again onto Suez stayed overnight. My friend on board was an AB from Bermondsy, I didn't know until later that he was the best pick pocket around. As we went ashore through the gates he said to me 'shall give them back', while talking to the police at the gate he had taken a whistle and gun, that got us barred from Port Said for life. Onto Bombay, I was not impressed. In later years when I took my wife to England we landed in Bombay she then understood when 20 miles out and 25,000ft up she said 'what is that smell' and I said 'Bombay'.

Only there a couple days then onto Colombo anchored out, did not go ashore, onto Penang, the port of Sweatham sounds like its name. Coming back on board a few of us were skylarking when I lost my footing and landed in the open sewer, I was a little smelly. Onto Singapore more sight seeing including Raffles, Changi wasn't open to visitors then. There was a very good club there for servicemen and seamen but I can't remember the name. Arriving in Hong Kong we anchored out and unloaded into sampans. I had just come back on board and the mate was standing at the midships ladder and he called to me 'how is number five going' I looked in to see that it was nearly empty and fell in. I broke my right ankle and bruised a lot of places and was taken to Causeway Bay hospital. The surgeon was Italian and said I would probably have one leg a bit shorter than the other but it didn't happen. The lads had packed my bags and sent them on to me the suitcase was packed tight with Ardath cigarettes which were part of the cargo for the navy and army depot. I sold some of them as I needed some cash for the three weeks I was there. Another inmate at the hospital was a bloke named Curley, we used to sneak out after tea some evenings then bribe the doorman to get back in. This particular night we staggered back and matron was at the desk, we sneaked round the side and got in through an open window. I went first and put my plastered foot on this poor Chinaman, he hollered and we raced through the hospital jumped into our beds and when the lights were turned on pretended to be asleep. Whether they knew it was us I will never know because the next morning I was put on board the *Empress of Scotland* as a DBS, she was loaded with troops being sent home. It was a very quiet trip and I was

very low on money but I did make friends with some squadies. We arrived in Liverpool and I went to the shipping office and they gave me a ticket to Kings Cross Station. I asked for some money as by then I had nothing, arriving in London about 2am in the morning I got a bus to Aldgate that was all I could afford. Walking along Commercial Road with my bags a taxi pulled up and asked if I wanted him and where was I going to, I told him Canning Town but that I had no money, he said hop in he was going my way anyway. He dropped me off at Canning Town Station and I walked round the corner and got Dad out of bed. They had no idea I was in England let alone coming home.

Back to Connaught Road office, but I caught a bad cold and was not allowed to take another ship for two months. I went to work with Dad's boss, he sent me to this feather factory in Bethnal Green where I had to clean the walls and whitewash them. Back to Connaught Road office where I was sent to join the *SS Talca* she was a sam boat. We left Victoria Docks for Amsterdam to load some cargo then onto La Palice in France for more. Back to Southampton then we finally left for Victoria, Bermuda. As we were only there for a day I borrowed one of the crews' bikes and rode around, seemed a nice place, mostly English people of the then upper class. I can't remember if it was Havana or Kingston Jamaica next but spent only a couple of days in each place. Up through the canal to Panama City for a couple of days then started down the west coast of South America. First place was Beunovetora we actually tied up there for about three days. I bought a pair of rope sandals there which I kept for a year. Stopped at various places for a few hours, a barge was brought out unloaded something then on to somewhere else same thing happened. Then came to a place called Antofogasta we unloaded quite a bit there then onto Calloa which is a few miles from Lima in Peru. We were at anchor and asked the watchman who came aboard if there were sharks, he said 'Si no sharks' so a few of us swam around the ship that night, when the light was over the gangway hundreds of octopus came up, we didn't swim in there again. December 23<sup>rd</sup> I went into Lima and met a couple of the crew from a Canadian ship birthed astern, had a good night out. I didn't get back anywhere to wash down for Christmas Eve and was logged ten shillings, I told the skipper two words and he logged me another ten shillings. I went down to the mess to change and went ashore, actually I went back aboard the Canadian ship then we went ashore. I stayed and had my Christmas dinner with them, it was probably better than on our ship.

December 27<sup>th</sup> we sailed for Valparasio that was a wild sort of place. After tying up some of us went ashore for a bit off a look around then onto a local cantina. Later in the evening as we went back to the ship down a narrow street two gendarmes on horseback came charging after us waving their swords, we ducked for cover and they went straight past, it wasn't us they were after, it was quite scary at the time. We stayed there a couple of days and set sail. On New Years morning the Captain had us all together wished us a Happy New Year, so I got my one pound anyway. Back through the canal and headed home with all the usual shipboard things to be done at sea. Home for three weeks then signed on the *MV Port Phillip* in Cardiff, I met my friend Barney again by then we had become great mates. The bo'sn was a Welshman can't remember his name, he was so big and fat that he rigged a handy billy over his bunk so he could get out. Through the canal once more and heading for Melbourne where I met my wife to be in the Port Melbourne Flying Angel. I was a good dancer in those days and spent most of my time ashore. The ship was completely refrigerated so we loaded lamb there for three weeks, a couple in Sydney back to Melbourne for a week then home via Suez. I wrote my wife to be every day and she wrote back. I told Mum all about her and she did finally meet her twenty three years later.

I signed on the *Loch Garth* in Victoria Docks bound for Vancouver, back through Panama again, I really liked Vancouver. My mate Tom and me jumped ship and went to work in a lumber camp, one weekend we went into town and got drunk. Unfortunately we were mistaken for bank robbers from another camp and were arrested. When it came to light that we were illegal immigrants we spent some time in detention. They put me on a Swedish ship and sent me home paying me one shilling and sixpence stowaway money. We tied up at King George V Dock and I was able to walk home from there.



Loch Garth

Signed on the *Dominion Monarch* she had just been refitted for her maiden voyage as a passenger cargo liner, she had been a troop carrier. I met Barney again. I was told I was to help the Baggage Master a bloke named Bradshaw, we got on very well until he said he wanted half my tips, when I said did I get half of his he said no so I told him he wasn't getting half of mine. I kept the job though, he and the bo'sn were not good friends. Onto Cape Town only there a day and a half, went ashore and visited this well known place called the Rena Del Monica. Barney and I had a goodnight and I went to the little boys' room, I passed out sitting on the loo. When Barney found me all I had on were my underpants. I had to stay there until he found me some clothes to put on. Fremantle for a day Melbourne for a day then Sydney where most of the passengers left, discharged cargo and back to Melbourne to reload, spent all spare time with my girlfriend.

Must mention this, one of the passengers was Dr Everat who was a big noise in the labour party and when I arranged all his and his wife's luggage he gave me five pounds and a bottle of scotch. I never did vote labour. Headed back home via Fremantle, Durban, Cape Town and London, in all the time I was aboard I never spent any of my pay. When I was paid off with my tips and pay I had nearly a years pay in cash.

Barney's dad was ex merchant navy and we heard about a Union Steamship Company buying a ship and needing a crew. We found out about it and said we would join but we would have to resign from the Merchant Navy which I did, they gave me a train ticket to Edinburgh to join the ship in Leith. I didn't have a clue where that was, I arrived in Edinburgh at six in the morning broke as usual, I found a Sally Army place where they gave me breakfast and a loan of five pounds. Finding the ship I signed on and got a promissory note, went back to return the money, they said I didn't have to but I did anyway. We left Leith and sailed to Gravesend where we were loaded with bags of Portland cement. She was only a small ship. Being only an hour from home I went home and said goodbye to everybody again. Refueled and restored we left Gravesend heading for Port Said. I didn't go ashore through Suez to Colombo. After leaving Colombo we hit shocking weather, we were awash for days and we only had nine inches freeboard forr'ad. Two days out of Fremantle it was touch and go if we had enough fuel to get there, we did but they had tugs standing by to rescue us. I arrived in Fremantle on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1949 then onto Melbourne but down the coast the cook got appendicitis so we had to race up to Albany. Luckily our First Mate came from Albany and knew his way without a pilot. Finally Melbourne for a couple of days and I was able to spend time with my girlfriend again. We left on Caulfield Cup day for Sydney and it was absolutely pouring with rain, I was paid of in Sydney on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1949. Returned to Melbourne and was married on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1949. If I could go back in time and do it all again I would, with a few minor changes.



Those are the first twenty one years five months and two days of my life, there was a lot unwritten perhaps I will write a book.

John Tamkin

### First Day at the Vindi 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1955

Having been accepted for sea training I left Inverness early in the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1955 in a state of excitement at the prospect of seeing England and in anticipation of what lay ahead, my life having taken on a new direction.

I changed trains five times between Inverness and Sharpness and the journey took 24 hours. Consequently I didn't exactly arrive at the Vindi as sharp as a tack. On arrival at the camp I was taken with other new boys to a hut and, leaving my suitcase on my bed, went down to the ship for breakfast.

I returned after breakfast to discover my suitcase had vanished. I didn't have much but such as it was resided in that suitcase. In a state of panic I approached an officer and the exchange went like this:

“Avelostmacase! Ahleftitondabed! Itsnotherenoo!”

“Would you mind speaking slowy and speaking in English?”

“AmspeakinEnglish!”

“Not like any English I've ever heard, so start again.”

He soon established I had the wrong hut and my suitcase was safe where I had left it.

After that tense beginning I settled down to 12 weeks of life at the Vindi. Some boys thought it was too tough and just walked out the gate and away from their sea training. Perhaps they acted hastily but on the other hand the Vindi was a picnic compared to actually going to sea back then. I enjoyed my time there and, like many others, still look back with nostalgia to my days as a Vindi boy.

Len Nicol Central Branch New Zealand



Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year

Jill and Mick