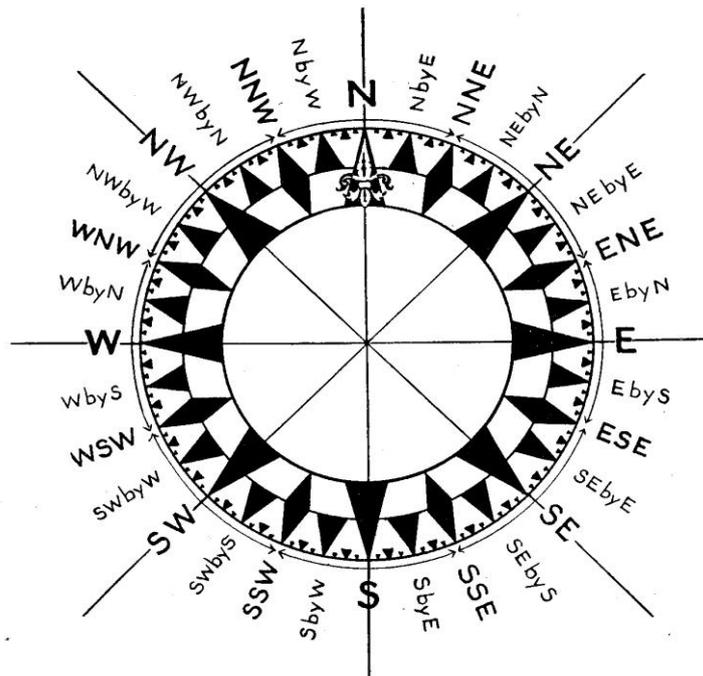




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## Editors Note

We are continuing with Colin Crawley's story of his life at sea. I am sure that many of you can relate to his time spent training on the Vindicatrix.

**Next meeting: Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2013.**

## Skippers Log

Good Day everyone! My subject for this issue is a mixture of sad and brighter news.

Firstly the sad part, Betty Wheelden lost her battle with the dreaded cancer that had returned with vengeance. Her funeral was held at Simplicity at Gepps Cross and attended by members of her very large family, also by her Vindi friends. She thought a lot of us as was acknowledged through the eulogy. God rest her soul she is now with her beloved Husband Cyril, a well respected Vindi member.

The next sad news came regarding Terry Hales of the NSW Branch who had also lost his well fought battle with poor health. He was a well respected member not only of NSW but of all states where he made his presence felt with his knowledge and friendship. He has found his safe haven with the Supreme Captain. Terry, Rest in Peace mate. Our sincere condolences are sent to his Wife Maureen.

A few of our own members have had ill health over the past couple of months and we wish them all a speedy recovery. Anne Withey has also had problems with her eye and we wish her well, we can't have the Almoner poorly!!

On to the brighter news, we welcome the return of Mick and Jill Surfield after their recent trip to the UK, also Eunice and Vern who had a very nice holiday overseas where their visit included Wales, Malta and places in between. I have managed to have a chat with Eunice and Vern when they relayed some funny goings on that you will no doubt hear about if you prod them for information.



Our very successful Christmas in July went off with great joy, food and wine. Not to mention the turkey that eventually got cooked after almost dismantling our oven due to the size of the beast. Weighing in at 9.6 kilos it certainly went around with plenty left over. After it was stripped of meat the massive carcass was then given to Winston and Shirley for soup, which I heard later went down very well. Those who couldn't make it through sickness or other unfortunate circumstances were very much missed. Everyone went home very happy and certainly well fed.

At my last request for promptness with subs I had a good response and I thank those of you who responded so quickly. It certainly does make my job easier. To those of you who have yet to pay please submit before the end of November, after that it will be considered you no longer wish to continue your membership and the books will then be closed.

Well that is all for now folks, see you at the Port Dock at the end of September, you will all have received the updated information regarding dates from Anne mailed out last month. Also two reminders, we are needing to replenish our locker of raffle prizes and the other important item of course is PLEASE send Jill and Mick stories to be published in the News Letter. You all have something to say, just jot it down in any fashion, our team of editors will see it is respectable for going down in print! *Tony*

## From the Almoner's desk

It is with sadness I report the news of the recent passing of Betty Wheeldon, after a short battle with cancer. Her funeral was attended by several Vindi members and a condolence card on behalf of our association was sent to her family. Although Betty lost her husband Cyril some years ago, she was still able to attend Vindi meetings with the aid of her Vindi friends Betty and George Hutchings. We affectionately remember Betty as a caring, gentle lady.

Have good news concerning Ron Matthews, he is doing well after battling Non Hodgkins Lymphoma for a year. Ron and Anne are hoping to attend our next Vindi meeting.

Birthdays celebrated or to be celebrated.



September 18<sup>th</sup> Peter Rix.

September 19<sup>th</sup> Margaret Maddocks celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in the Nursing Home with family and friends and enjoyed a wonderful day.

October 8<sup>th</sup> Jill will be kicking up her heels for her birthday.

Hearty Birthday Wishes to all.

Cheers everyone

Anne Withey



VINDICATRIX SA BRANCH

DIARY FOR 2013/ 2014

### Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September Port Dock 11.a.m.

Please note this will be a normal meeting there will be no need to climb the stairs anymore as we will be holding the meeting where we will be eating.

We did originally hope a short tour of the museum would be arranged but unfortunately the person we had down to do this has passed this on to another member of the museum, this time with a charge and includes walking to the lighthouse etc. We thought we would abandon this idea and a “just tour only” could be arranged for those interested on a non-meeting day later.

### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November from 10.30 onwards our traditional Picnic in the Park.

This will be a strictly “bring your own” everything – chairs, food and drink.

We hope to see as many as possible on this day. Last year we had fewer people but still had fun nevertheless.



**\*\*\*\*\*Kindly note there will be NO MEETING in January 2014**

**Our first meeting for 2014 will be  
Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Elizabeth Matilda Wheeldon  
21st December 1930 - 30<sup>th</sup> August 2013



In memory of our Dear friend Betty I take a few lines from those written for her funeral:

.....I am free don't grieve for me  
My life has been full I've savoured much  
Good friends, good times a loved one's touch  
I could not stay another day  
Tasks left undone must stay that way  
I have found my peace at the end of the day.

Betty was well loved in our group. Fortunately I managed to see her the week before she died and she was happy and smiling as usual, being very positive about her illness. She asked about all in the Vindi and said how much she always enjoyed the meetings and social events. A few of us attended her funeral and an envelope of flower seeds was given to everyone with the message "plant these seeds as a living memory of Betty". We will miss you Betty but we will remember you.

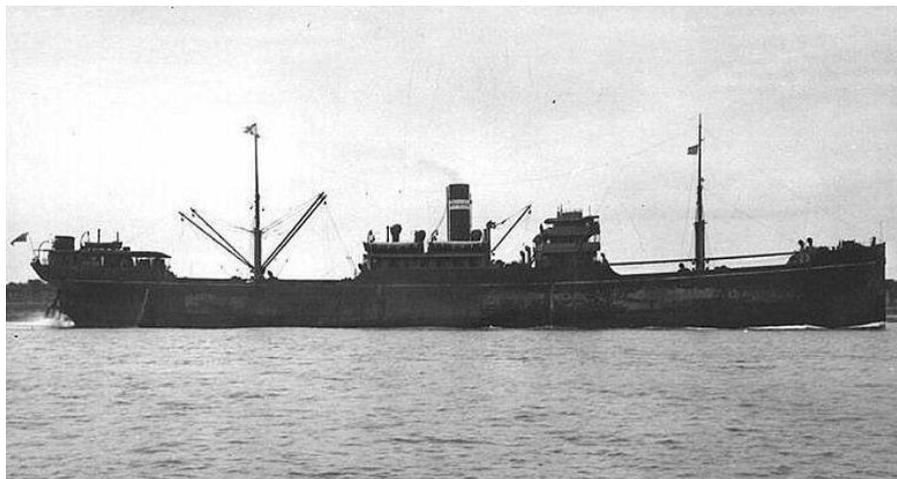
Anne Iles

### SS GAIRSOPPA

In 1919 the British Shipping Controller ordered the building of *SS War Roebuck* by Palmer's Shipbuilding Co. Newcastle. During construction she was taken over by the British-India Steam Navigation Co. with completion in November 1919 and renamed *Gairsoppa*. She transported her cargo around the Pacific and Indian Ocean. Running aground at Fulta Point India on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1930 she was refloated the same day with no damage reported.

In 1931 a request was made by the Director of Sea Transport to the British-India Steam Navigation Co. to join the British naval fleet in times of national emergency. War was on the horizon.

In December 1940 the *Gairsoppa* was taking on her cargo of tea, pig iron, general cargo and a sizable amount of silver ingots in Calcutta, India ready to join convoy SL-64 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Without a military escort the convoy headed for Liverpool in January 1941. A gruelling 8 knots maximum speed was all that the convoy could manage owing to the poor state of the merchant ships.



Sailing the treacherous waters of the Atlantic the convoy was to rendezvous with convoy HG-63 which was being escorted by two warships. In the meantime convoy HG-63 was attacked by a U boat losing seven ships. With growing high winds and ocean swells *Gairsoppa* was labouring under her heavy cargo and forced to reduce her speed. Unable to keep pace with the convoy due to lack of fuel she went her separate way on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1941 heading for Galway in Western Ireland.

*Gairsoppa* was spotted and circled by a German aircraft at 8am on February 16<sup>th</sup> 1941 at 10.30am she was torpedoed by U boat 101 commanded by Ernst Mengersen and hit in No 2 hold sinking in 20 minutes. The force of the impact snapped the foremast and the wireless antennae, before a distress signal could be sent. The order was given to abandon ship by Captain Hyland. It was thought that three lifeboats were launched but only one made it away from the ship. In charge of the remaining lifeboat with 31 men onboard was second officer RH Ayres. Many of the men perished due to cold and lack of fresh water.

Two weeks later the lifeboat reached Caerthillan Cove on the Cornish coast capsizing before the Lizard lifeboat could get to her. Three school girls walking along a cliff witnessed the boat capsizing; one ran to a nearby farm for help. They shouted to the men that help was coming. Officer Ayres was pulled ashore by a local farm worker but the other men were drowned. The bodies of radio officer Robert Hampshire, gunner Norman Thomas and two Lascar seamen were recovered

from the sea. Officer Ayres was awarded an MBE for his attempt to rescue his fellow sailors. In September 2011 the wreck of the *Gairsoppa* was found 300 miles off the coast of Ireland by Odyssey Marine Exploration. By July 2013 110 tons of silver had been recovered.

## PETER RIX



Before joining the *Vindicatrix* in 1957 I lived in Billericay, Essex.

While living in Billericay I applied and was accepted to join the *Vindicatrix* in 1957 to train as a deckhand. After some memorable moments and not so memorable I joined my first ship, the Palm boat *Omigi Palm*.

Other companies that I sailed with as a deck hand were Blue Funnel Line, Cunard, Everard and Chapmans.

A few memories that come to mind are being jailed in Recife, Brazil in 1958, catching malaria in West Africa and jumping ship in Adelaide in 1959.

In 1959 it took six weeks to sail from Recife to Columbo, this was to be my longest trip between ports.

I would say that my best trip was on the *Katsina Palm* to West and South Africa in 1958 and the worst trip was in 1959 on the *Frumenton* of the Chapman line.

The Bosun of the *Katsina Palm* and the Captain of the *Frumenton* were two of the most interesting people that I have met.

Of all the places that I visited whilst at sea, Rio De Janerio and Lagos come to mind as the most interesting that I spent in my two years in the merchant navy.

Since living in Australia from 1959 I have had employment in the iron ore mining industry in Port Headland and Tasmania, the Bauxite mine in Weipa, also Fremantle Oil Refinery, Adelaide Ship Construction and subcontracting for myself.

I have two children and three step children from my two marriages in South Australia and will inherit more when I marry Barbara.

## OUR PROBLEM

Late in July we were packed and ready for our holiday to the UK, Brockenhurst in the New Forest to see my Mum. We were going to surprise her by taking our daughter who she hadn't seen for eleven years. One week later it was all surprises as my brother came over from Canada, we hadn't seen him for five years and for our daughter it was twenty three years. On the other hand Mum saw him at Christmas. For Mick it was male company just what he needed in a house of women. Long walks and pub visits were on the agenda and in that order, as for once the weather was warm bordering on hot some days. It's funny the things one misses when moving to another country to live, and for Mick it is doughnuts, the round sort with plenty of jam.

Our holiday was nearly over and we were on our way to Southampton docks to return the hire car. On the way we had passed the P&O cruise liner *Oriana* and a Regent liner *Voyager*. The car was returned and we decided to walk further along West Quay and there was the *Queen Mary* waiting to board passengers for her departure later in the afternoon. It was too long a wait to see her sail so we caught the train back to mums. All too soon we said our teary goodbyes and headed for Heathrow and our flight home.

We arrived in Adelaide to sunshine and Election Day, what more could we want. On our way home our daughter told us that there had been a problem at home with our electricity. As she had been on holiday with us and returned earlier, nobody had been in the house for four weeks. On opening the door she said there was a terrible smell, and it was even worse in the kitchen. The contents of the freezer had thawed and were ready to crawl out the door but the fridge wasn't so bad. In came the dustbin and out went the food, good job it was collection day the following morning. She then had the job of cleaning the inside of the freezer and eliminating the smell. In the garden our three ponds didn't fare much better. With the filters and pumps out of action algae soon built up and the fish perished. And to crown it all the horse poo that

was dug into the gardens a few months ago sprouted an amazing amount of weeds. Welcome home!

Our voting and some food shopping done it was time to find out the cause of our problem. No reports of power cuts. The power appeared to be working OK for the weekend. I phoned our insurers on Monday to see if we could claim for the spoiled contents of the freezer. I have come to the conclusion that the insurance companies are on a win win situation. They like collecting our money but not parting with it.

On Tuesday when Mick was getting ready for work he went to make a cuppa, once again no power. At 6.30am we phoned Brian Toogood (got him out of bed) to see if he had room in his freezer for the new food we had started to stock. A quick phone call to work, saying that Mick wouldn't be in that day, and another call to our electrician who suggested unplugging every socket in the house to eliminate the possible cause. That done and everything seemed fine, there was even a quick look under the floor. Then to the shed, which when isolated seemed to fix the problem. Next was to find the problem with the shed. After disconnecting everything to no avail we proceeded to remove the cladding from the wall where the main power enters the shed. On removing the cover from the junction box we thought that we had found the problem, or at least we hoped it was. This was when the termites evacuated the said junction box. F### or words to that effect echoed around the shed. This necessitated a couple of beers on Micks part to evaluate the situation. Two years ago we had a problem with termites in the shed and had the whole property treated once again, and in May we had our annual inspection.

The following day the terminator came to inspect the invasion; it seems the pesky things had got in through the conduit holding the main cable to the shed. A decision was made to replace the cable; this would involve a lot of digging by the man of the house. This meant a three metre long trench 600mm deep going under water pipes and pavers. At the time of writing this is still an ongoing project.

And to crown it all the post office made a mistake and redirected our mail for an extra week.

*Jill & Mick*

#### SEA SCHOOL – TS VINDICATRIX

A week later another letter arrived from the National Sea Training School confirming they had received my application which was in order. My name would now be entered on the waiting list as a prospective deck rating and joining instructions will be forwarded in about six weeks time. I couldn't wait. At night I could hardly sleep – thinking about what it would be like, and what might lie in store for me. Will I really one day be a genuine seaman? But I knew I shouldn't rush things – first I had to pass the training. It was during these long lonely nights in the uncertainty of night that I thought of Tom and wondering what he was doing now and how he was coping on Christmas Island. I was sure he wouldn't be happy there being cut off from the world. Tom loved freedom – as I did, and an Island was not the place for him to be. Tom though, would have to go where the army sent him. But most sadly of all he would not be coming with me to the Merchant Navy as we planned – gone were his dreams of hunting man-eating tigers in Kumaon. But for me there was a chance of another adventure, travelling the world as a merchant seaman. Who knows what will happen to me and the wonderful things I might see? I could only wait and that was the hardest part – one step at a time.

At last the day finally arrived when I was to leave home, never to live in London again. I had been awake most of the night before and was up early. There was a long list of things to take with me, most of which I didn't have – like underwear and a toothbrush – and just took whatever mum gave me to take, stuffing everything inside a small, battered old suitcase. And now, with my free travel warrant for the train in my one pocket, and joining papers in the other, together with an egg sandwich wrapped in a piece of newspaper and a shilling from mum, I said goodbye to my family. 'Don't forget to send some money home will you son,' whispered mum in my ear. 'No mum, I won't forget' and walked out of the door towards a new life.

And so, with an inexplicable sensation of freedom, I set off to join the train going west to Sharpness on the river Severn – my heart pumping wildly. The smelly train would be taking me to face the unknown. But it was a lonely trip – no one spoke to me and neither did I want them to. I was feeling emotional, all my life, ever since being evacuated from London during the Blitz, and being returned again after the war, I had dreamt of leaving London and now it was happening. I had run away from home several times but the Police had always brought me back. But this was different and there was now a sense of foreboding, an uncertainty that stopped me being happy about leaving behind the things I knew and changing them for the things I didn't. From now on everything would be a new experience; I had jumped in the deep end and once again wished that Tom was with me so that we could keep each other company. A few hours later the train arrived at Sharpness Docks Station in the afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1956. I stepped out of the grubby carriage onto the platform feeling a bit lost, but there were other boys on the platform carrying suitcases or kitbags and they didn't look too sure of

themselves either, which in a strange way helped me – I knew I was not the only new boy to arrive at the National Sea Training School that day.

Soon the steam train that brought us there puffed noisily away from the station and I stood alone with my tatty suitcase looking around and wondering what to do next. I saw a scruffy dark blue mini-bus – which had seen better days – with the words 'National Sea Training School' painted on the side, parked at the entrance to the station, and standing by the driver's door was a fierce-looking man with a hairy face and scruffy naval uniform. At the bottom of each sleeve were two gold rings – he was an officer. The confused group of boys milling around the platform walked towards him and I joined them. There was now no going back – I would be here for the next nine weeks. I felt more at ease in the midst of all the other boys – there really is a feeling of safety in numbers.

'Come on, move along!' shouted the officer standing by the mini-bus, at the same time putting on a battered naval cap, which he found difficult to keep straight, but did so as best he could. I smelt the salt air – we were not far from the sea – it was early winter and without an overcoat I felt bitterly cold. Mum couldn't afford to buy all her children overcoats as well as everything else, and had told me to pretend I didn't need one. 'Into the bus, quickly' he bellowed, 'Any seat will do' and the boys in front of me jogged quickly towards the waiting transport, climbed in, and rushed for the nearest empty seat and I did the same, after letting all the other boys get on first. 'Come on, look lively', barked the officer, looking directly at me as he spoke and I moved at the double, making for the back of the bus, and diving straight into the first vacant seat I could find. I always liked to be at the back of a crowd so that I could better see what is going on in front of me – I felt safer that way. I noticed quite a difference in each boy's feelings as the bus drove off – it showed on their faces. Some were smiling all the time and always ready to laugh at anything that someone else said. Others jumped up and down on their seats pointing at the interesting things we passed on the way. They wanted to be seen and were looking for like-minded boys who might make suitable friends. But others looked to be in deep shock, and sat quietly with a look of horror, speaking to no one, their pale faces and wide frightened eyes giving away their feeling. Others were at first full of bravado, but their false show of boldness grew less within minutes of the bus starting its journey and soon they withdrew into themselves feeling they had at least made the effort by trying to be sociable. I suppose I was none of these but ready to suffer in silence, dealing with things as they happened and taking whatever was to come – I had always felt different.

I don't know why I was focusing on the bad things that might happen at sea school but I did feel the tension on the bus and knew the training would not be easy. My instinct told me I was not going to be wrong. Finally a large sign came into view but it was not what I expected – 'TS Vindictrix' was not a ship but the entrance to a kind of camp. The boys on the bus gave each other puzzled looks because we were hoping to see a proper training ship with sails and rigging. But what we saw instead was a prison-like compound and within it about twenty fairly large huts. We disembarked at the gate and walked in carrying our luggage. The first thing we noticed was a group of bedraggled 'inmates' hanging around the entrance, and as soon as we were through the gates some began scrounging from us, while others stared blankly as we passed and gave us a sly sympathetic look as if we were just more lambs for the slaughter.

'Got a ciggie, new boy, come on give us a pool fag' I had no idea what a 'pool fag' was but I knew they wanted a cigarette. We all walked on and tried to ignore them. This place didn't look good at all and the mood changed. Some of the boys wanted to turn around and go home but most of us were going to stick it out and stay. But still the scroungers continued their banter and were following on behind us calling out. 'Come on mate, at least give us your dog-end' hassling us all along the camp road until one of the 'new boys' finished his cigarette and threw the dog-end to the following pack, which caused a mad scramble. They were like hungry dogs and within seconds one of the boys – who looked like the biggest and strongest – came up with the still smouldering, but damaged dog-end, and reaching inside his uniform jacket, produced a pin which he stuck in the filter end of the dog-end and with difficulty held it to his lips, determined to extract the last few puffs before it was spent. There he stood, with a smug, self-satisfied smile, surrounded by other members of the pack who watched longingly and intently, none daring to take it away from him. It was sickening to see such degrading behaviour, and even though I came from the slums of London, and my family didn't have two halfpennies to rub together, I would rather go without than stoop so low. At last the reception committee following us gave up and drifted away, but would no doubt be back at the gates to welcome the next batch of new boys.

It was now the afternoon and I was hungry. The egg sandwich mum had given me for the journey had been eaten long ago. We were all shepherded into an office where we handed in our joining papers for registration. It was all very formal and unfriendly. Next, each was allocated a place in one of the military-style huts in the compound and issued with our kit, including a smart new uniform of dark blue with a short jacket, proudly emblazoned in red at the top of each sleeve with the words, 'Merchant Navy.' and finally a dark blue beret with a silver badge on it. I felt very proud. All the formalities now completed we were marched, heads held high, to our new quarters. Inside my hut were two rows of beds facing each other with a wide gap between them. Each bed had a locker which we all began to fill it with our belongings – which for me didn't take long. I began looking around to see if I might find a friend and saw a sad, quiet-looking boy sitting on the bed

next to me. He told me his name was Ian Gordon and came from Scotland. He had a badly pock-marked face caused – he said – by acne, and teeth that protruded when he smiled, which he rarely did. But he was a likeable lad and very kind. We took to each other straight away, which sometimes happens when you meet someone new. Although Ian and I hit it off I could see he was uncomfortable with most of the other boys and withdrew into himself very quickly when he was around them – preferring to sit alone – where he looked very sad, with his pale face and sad forlorn eyes, which may have hid a life full of suffering. He would not tell me much about his home other than to say he was an orphan. We remained good friends all through sea school. In the bed facing me across the hut was a tough, but very likable Welsh boy from Llanelli. His name was Mike Thomas but was known to most of us English boys as 'Taffy', which he didn't like, but it was meant as a term of endearment by them, and never intended as an insult. Ian Gordon had a similar problem with being called 'Jock' – and again it was not meant to offend. They both wanted to be called by their proper names, the same as everyone else, and thinking back I can understand it, because I would also like to be called by my real name rather than by one which wasn't personal to me. Mike Thomas with his laughing eyes and shock of curly brown hair, was the life and soul of the party – always quick to smile and very well mannered. He could talk all day about Llanelli and rugby – which he played very well; but his great love was the girl he left behind, and if he liked you, you were taken to one side for a personal viewing of photos of his girlfriend, nothing indecent or anything like that – it was just his special way of telling you he was now your friend, and together with Ian we spent a lot of our free time together and shared the few goodies we got by way of parcels from home, which for me was not very often. I did feel guilty about not having much to share with them. But they didn't mind.

The Merchant Navy attracted many boys from troubled homes and we three were no different. It was a means of escaping the sadness we had known as children, but also a pathway to a great adventure. It would make or break us depending on our courage and how quickly we could adapt to a new way of life. We needed to be strong and self-reliant. It will be hard for us here at the 'Vindi' but harder still on the ships we sailed on. We were told we would be bruised and battered in our travels around the world. We were young seamen in a man's world and would sometimes need to fight in order to solve our problems. We will from now on be on our own, with no family or friends to support us, not even our own shipmates. There will be bullies to contend with, both amongst the crew and sometimes the officers. I was to learn that the deck boy on a cargo ship was known as 'Peggy,' a demeaning name, but a traditional one. The 'Peggy' was the lowest of the low, a general dogsbody serving and cleaning in the ship's mess at the beck and call of all the deck crew. Deck boys were often intimidated, pushed around and beaten up for the slightest reason, almost as a right because the older seaman themselves had been treated the same way when they were a 'Peggy.' But I was to experience this much later – first I must get through the training school and make the best of it. I didn't know it then, but the hard upbringing my parents gave me – to be strong and always to stand up for myself – was good advice. And this, together with respect for others, and good manners was to help me not only then, but throughout my whole life and I have always shown respect to everyone and avoided people who show no respect in return. I never looked for trouble but if it came to me I would resist it in any way I could. I strongly believed that the bullies sensed this and, like natural predators, avoided me in case they got hurt. It is sad that this is the way of the world, but we must each find a way of dealing with it. Some give up and are miserable for the rest of their lives – but not me.

After that first tense and tiring day of travel and registration and getting to know the other boys and making new friends it was time to turn in, but we needed to turn the lights out and keep the noise down. But even then the hut was filled with the sound of loud whispers. The excitement of what tomorrow would bring filled our thoughts and for some, sleep was impossible. I looked up from my pillow, straining to see if my new-found friends were asleep, but they too were wide awake, 'Goodnight Ian, Goodnight Mike', I whispered as loudly as I dared. 'Goodnight Colin' they whispered and, one after the other, to the gentle chorus of squeaking bed-springs, we all drifted off to sleep.

The blast of a bugle broke the stillness of the camp, startling all those who had never heard it before and causing us to sit up quickly, 'What the hell was that?' said Mike Thomas, looking at me strangely as if I knew the answer, 'No idea Mike,' I said moving to the edge of the bed and sitting up. But all around us the boys who knew what the bugle meant were already up and getting dressed. 'All you new boys, stop abusing yourselves and get up – Now' roared the gym instructor, his voice rising above the dormitory chatter as he walked up and down between the beds. 'I want to see everyone in shorts, vests, and plimsoles and on the parade ground in five minutes' and with that he stormed out – from then on the hut was one great hive of activity. Pale naked bodies, skinny legs and nervous confused 'new boys' rushed around so as to be out of the hut as soon as possible hoping not to be the last one and incur the risk of 'Jankers' – which was a punishment for being late and standing under the ship's clock for hours, or completing an extra four hour watch sounding the ships bell. And woe betide any boy who sounded the wrong number of bells, giving out the wrong time!

It was bitterly cold on the parade ground, made worse by the thin clothes and shorts, but a harsh period of exercise followed: running, jumping, press-ups and all the things a boy doesn't want to do before breakfast after getting out of a cold bed. This was followed by a wash using cold water only in a tiny sink in the wash-house. Then, still wet we got changed and marched off for breakfast where I first saw the real 'Vindicatrix' alongside the jetty on the Severn. At first I

was pleased there really was a sailing ship at the sea school, but my excitement turned to dismay as we crossed the small bridge to her mooring. She looked nothing like what I had hoped for – just a sad dismasted hulk, rotting away and going nowhere. Gone were my dreams of learning seamanship aboard a proper sea-going ship with wind in her sails and being buffeted about by the waves. But I learnt that she once was beautiful long ago in 1893: when she was called 'Arranmore' and gracefully sailed the oceans of the world, rounding Cape Horn. Then she had firm triple masts and a snow white hull with fluffy sails set firmly to the wind – I would have been proud to have sailed with her then. But now the nearer I got the worse she looked. As well as her missing masts so was most of her body and fittings, there were doors where doors shouldn't be, and windows in places the designer never intended. Now her best feature was the impressive figurehead under the bowsprit which was painted in gold and other rich colours and hinted at what she looked like when she was in her prime. I had been disappointed like this before when I had been a sea cadet aboard the TS 'Redriff' an ex Royal Navy minesweeper moored in Surrey Docks near the iron bridge in Rotherhithe. She didn't go anywhere either and was just an empty shell. Money for restoration in the years after the war was short and I spent most of my time there learning about knots and marching up and down the quayside, our hob-nailed boots clattering over the cobbles.

I joined the queue alongside the 'Vindicatrix' gangway where an officer kept careful watch on those who had eaten and those who hadn't – he didn't want anyone coming up for 'seconds!' and there was not enough room on the old ship for all of us to eat together. I was now very hungry having had nothing since my arrival the day before and was looking forward to a large portion of bacon and eggs – hopefully with a sausage and some baked beans thrown in. We talked among ourselves, shivering in the biting north wind. We talked about what kind of lessons we would be having on our first day, but no one knew. We shuffled closer to the front of the queue and were now at the bottom of the gangway. 'Next five' shouted the officer at the top of the gangway and Ian, Mike and I rushed up. 'Walk, don't run – haven't you learnt anything yet' he shouted. 'No we haven't,' I whispered to myself, 'We only arrived yesterday' but of course the officer couldn't hear me. We walked up to the galley-hatch where a grubby-looking man waited with his ladle ready. He took my plate and dumped a spongy blob of grey porridge in the middle of it – I could swear I saw it bounce – he nearly dropped the plate as the heavy dollop came slapping down. I waited, looking behind the server hoping to see signs of a fry-up being made ready. 'What are you waiting for?' he asked gruffly. 'Oh, nothing,' I said and moved on. That was it – breakfast! And the only way I could eat the awful porridge was by pouring cold milk on it from a jug left on the counter and adding a large sprinkling of brown sugar. We three went to a wooden table and sat down, and as soon as we did so a cockroach appeared from under the lip of the table, hoping we might have brought something for it to eat – but it soon disappeared again between a crack in the wood. The din in the eating-hall was horrendous, mainly coming from the spoons battering and clanging on the metal plates as everyone scraped the bottom and edges, determined to scoop up every last morsel and leave nothing for the cockroaches. But breakfast was now over and I was still hungry.

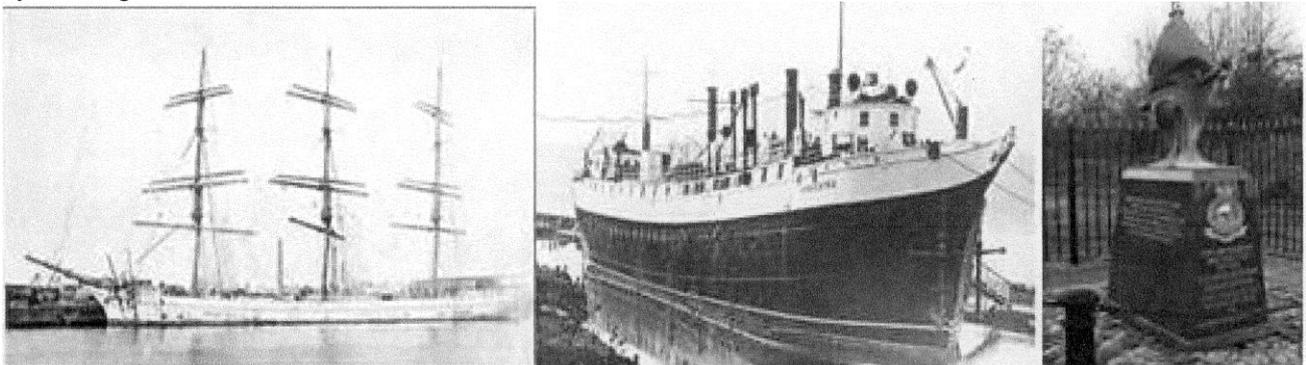
To be continued.

Colin Crawley

### A short history of the T.S Vindicatrix

Vindi is the abbreviated name of the training ship Vindicatrix, the hulk of a once proud sailing ship called Arranmore. Built of steel, with iron rivets and with a displacement of 1946 tons, Arranmore sailed on her maiden voyage on October 30<sup>th</sup> 1893, a voyage that would eventually take eighteen months and complete a circumnavigation of the world.

On August 11<sup>th</sup> 1909 Arranmore sailed from Mejillones, Chile, to Falmouth in the UK, rounding the Horn for the last time under the Red Ensign. From a fully rigged sailing ship to a training vessel, through two wars from 1893 to 1967, a memory not forgotten.



Purchased by German owners H Folsh & Co in late December 1909 she was renamed Waltraute. Sustaining heavy damage during a storm on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, Waltraute was eventually towed into Montevideo Harbour by an Argentine fishing boat known simply as No 10. That was the last time that Waltraute would carry sail and she completed her voyage under tow of the Dutch tug Thames in 1913. During WW1 Waltraute was commandeered by the Imperial German Navy and after initial use as a store room she was refitted with an over deck from forecandle to poop and a boiler for heating

purposes. Waltraute was now ready for her next role as a depot ship for the Submarine Training Service.

At the end of hostilities Waltraute was initially returned to her former German owners, but it wasn't very long before she was commandeered once more to become accommodation for German seamen in Leith, Scotland after having delivered their ship to England in reparation for wartime losses. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1920 while at anchor in Leith, Waltraute was again hit by a severe storm, causing her to drag her anchors. At 1.30pm after repeated requests for a tug to assist Waltraute came into contact with Inchkeith Rocks and by 10pm the ship lay aground with waves rolling over her decks. Waltraute was eventually pulled off the rocks on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1920. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1921 Waltraute entered West India Docks. It is known that in 1926 Waltraute now renamed the Vindicatrix accommodated students and staff of the Gravesend Sea School.

With another war looking ominous she was under tow of the tug Kenia, left London bound for a safer berth at Sharpness, Gloucestershire and on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939 the day before war was declared on Germany Captain Superintendent Duguid of Gravesend transferred his trainees and staff to the canal at Sharpness.

Junior seamen continued to be trained on the Vindi throughout the war and when Gravesend was reopened after the war both schools were required to remain in operation as so many seamen were required. Over 70,000 students passed through these training ships. In 1967 the Vindicatrix was towed to Cashmore Yard, Newport, Gwent in Wales to be broken up for scrap. There is a memorial stone placed alongside the canal as a fitting tribute to all the young seamen that had their first taste of seamanship and I was one of those boys.

*Phil Mason*

### THE ANCHOR

How many facets to this extraordinary icon?  
Forged for duty aboard ships and giant tanker  
Steadfast and reliable over the oceans of time  
These accolades rightly go to the trusty anchor

History tells of ill-fated liner TITANIC  
Now at rest in deepest Atlantic flow  
Her pristine anchor and compass set  
For a charted course they will never go

Many an epic tale is told, of battles fought at sea  
Ships and valiant crews, enfolded in seas embrace  
Their destiny and sacrifice shared, for all eternity  
Anchors reign sentinel, over their final resting place

Happier thoughts dwell ashore in peaceful village rustic  
Nestling midst green rolling hills and vales  
With welcoming landlord in The Crown and Anchor  
Pulling frothy pints of refreshing amber ales

In sport we acknowledge the anchorman  
The dependable backstop of a team  
Making the difference between a win or loss  
Perhaps the seasons hope of a sporting dream

Consider then the warmth of heart and soul  
Love at the helm, willingly steered without rancour  
Lighting life's voyage with meaningful endeavour  
In the alluring wake of hook, line and anchor

The true depth of the mariner is sounded  
Recorded on illustrious nautical page  
Serving his masters the Captain and Neptune's command  
The reward, a well earned haven of safe anchorage

*Anne Withey 2012*