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GENERAL BOTHA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

<http://www.generalbotha.co.za>

AUGUST 2003.

JOINT NEWSLETTER

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I am not sure about elsewhere in the world, but here in the Cape there is an ominous shortage of matters marine in the local newspapers and journals. In Natal I am aware of columnists such as Terry Hutson who write regularly about local shipping news, but since the demise of, for example, George Young's shipping column in the Cape newspapers, we in Cape Town have been starved of such quality information. You may argue that with the advent of the Internet such news is available from a wider source, and this is true. Look, for example at the GBOBA Website and go to the many links available to find out all sorts of articles both current and historical that will catch the interest of those interested in our maritime heritage.

Recently, during my travels on the Southern Cape coast, I came across a book entitled "100 Years of Business in Humansdorp." Included was a chapter about historical local shipwrecks, and I was reminded of this shortage of shipping news when I read the following extract. The point being the noticeable rich reporting of a shipping incident that was regarded of great importance, not only to the local readers, but to the broader readership in the Cape and even overseas who had a professional or an academic interest in the shipping industry.

The following extract from the local Humansdorp (E. Cape) newspaper headed "Wreck of HMS OSPREY, 29 May 1886, Klippen Point 10' W. C. St. Francis:"

During the past week we have experienced for a few days strong NW gales, which caused the wreck of His Majesty's Gun Vessel "OSPREY," Commander Menzies, carrying 4 guns and a complement of 83 men, ----- . The ill-feted vessel was homeward bound from the China Seas, and struck on the rocks while under easy steam, on the morning of 30th ult., about 10 miles West of Cape St. Frances. From information received yesterday, we learn that the vessel is breaking up. Only one gallant tar met with a watery grave, while essaying to bring the hawser from the vessel to the shore. The following articles we are told, have been

recovered viz: - 17 rifles, 3 revolvers, 1 chronometer, 2 sextants, a change of clothing for each man, some sails and the remains of the rigging. The officers and men arrived here yesterday per ox-wagon, on their way to Port Elizabeth, from whence we are informed, they will be conveyed to Cape Town on Her Majesty's ship "PETREL." We cannot omit to make mention of the great promptness with which the necessaries of life were forwarded by our Magistrate in Humansdorp, C. B. Cox Esq. To the shipwrecked men." Elsewhere mention was also made of the "gallant tar's" bereaved family (wife and young daughter and son).

Opening of the GB Display at the Naval Museum.

This has been arranged between the Trust and the Navy to take place at **14:00 on 29 October 2003 at the Naval museum.** It will take the form of a short ceremony with a few words from the Chief of the SA Navy or his representative and the Chairman of the GB Trust. This will be followed by refreshments (Wine & Cheese/snacks). **All members of the GBOBA are automatically invited and your support will be much appreciated.** Please let Mrs. Kathy Nicholas (Phone: 021-7885957 or Email: tnicholas@za.safmarine.com) know if you are able to attend, so that we can have an idea of numbers to cater for. Invited guests will include naval personnel, reps from the Maritime museum, Simon's Town museum, Cape Technikon and the press/media. Dress will be Blazer and tie.

ANCHORS AWEIGH.

The passing of any Bothie Boy is a regrettable bookmark as our numbers slowly diminish. This edition sadly records the passing of some very notable characters from our Muster List, the Australian branch chairman, oldest serving member and two well-known waterfront Obies. It is difficult for these pages to pay sufficient tribute to these Old Boys' but they shall be remembered with respect and fondness.

ALEX HARDIE 1925/26 #199. For many years Alex held the post of our oldest serving member but recently passed away. Alex sailed as an Electrical Artificer during WWII and later became an electrical contractor in Fish Hoek, South Africa. He was serving on HMS Cornwall when the Japanese sank her on the 5th April 1942. He had the misfortune of spending over 30 hours in shark-infested waters before being rescued. No mean feat of survival and displays the discipline so evident in all Botha trained boys.

DESMOND W. BOWEN 1941/42 #1151. Des went straight from training into war service. His introduction to war hostilities was aboard the armed merchant cruise "Selandia," taking some 1,500 troops Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans to Port Suez. He served on 10 different ships and there were many incidences. The worst, by far, was a convoy of some 150 allied ships, of all sizes and shapes sailing from Colombo, which was attacked by Kamikaze pilots. By the time his ship reached Calcutta and nearby Northern Ports, only 57 ships remained. In Des's words "terrifying, hateful murder"! There is a lot in between. Evacuating women and children from Djibouti, running aviation fuel out of the Persian Gulf aboard the Ingermaersk, and many more. War ended with Des steaming up and down at sea, off the mouth of the River Plate, whilst several German battlewagons eased their way up stream to the safety of Montevideo harbor.

After the war Des served on a number of ships: - 1945 -1946 he was 3rd mate on "Steusky" and "Plettenburg;" 1946-1949 he served as Second mate on the South African Railway ships which sailed between SA and western Australia carrying jarra wood rail sleepers to SA; 1950 he was Mate & Relieving Master on the "Hoeveld." By examination Des would have earned the title of Captain.

Des then switched from the Merchant Navy to the back breaking and tough commercial fishing. In 1951 he skippered the Purse Seine pilchard trawlers operating out of Walvis Bay. In 1952 he skippered the "North Cape" from Cape Town to Western Australia where she was used in the crayfish industry.

This beautiful land of Australia captured Des and finally, in 1952 he swallowed the anchor in Australia and left the sea. His first job was driving a Coke Cola truck and he claimed to be the only Master Mariner driving a coco-cola truck, in AUSTRALIA!!!

Des was appointed president of the General Botha Old Boys association in 2001

R.S. SCHOOLING 1944/45 #1378. A well known and highly respected maritime personality, Ray Schooling, passed away on the 7th August 2003 aged 75 years. Ray was born in Bloemfontein on 21st January 1928. His family moved to Durban in September 1939. He attended Durban Primary and then Glenwood High School until 1943 when having obtained a Bursary from the Durban Municipality he joined the South African Training Ship "General Botha" in January 1944, becoming Cadet Schooling Number 1378, and known to the

“Old Salts” on board as “Chum” Schooling. The “Ship” was at that time located on Red Hill above Simonstown. In his senior year he played rugby for the “Ship” and did well finishing his course as a Senior Cadet Captain.

On leaving the “General Botha” at the end of 1945 he joined Clan Line as a Cadet and served with this company in various vessels and capacities for the next ten years obtaining his Foreign Going Master’s Certificate of Competency in 1954 (hence the many Clan photos in the Maritime Room Cape Town).

It was during this period that he met and married his first wife Joyce whilst in London studying for his Mate’s Certificate in 1951. They had two children Elaine born in 1952 in the UK and Terence born in 1956 in Durban.

After obtaining his Masters Certificate he came ashore in Durban in 1955 serving briefly with a stevedoring company before joining the S.A. Railways & Harbours as a Mate on their tugs during that year. Ray served on most of the Durban harbour craft during the next five years. He was Mate on the tug “A.M. Campbell”, when she was called out on a salvage job. The weather that night was bad following a change of gale force wind from NE to SW. The “A.M. Campbell” got a tow wire up on the vessel, the “Kingsbridge”, but it parted shortly afterwards. It took most of the night under very difficult conditions to un-reeve the damaged 5” tow wire, get the new one up from the hold and put it on the winch drum. No mean feat under the prevailing weather conditions. Ray was in charge of the afterdeck and when the tow was finally secured again at about 0400, Ray looked half drowned and with the smile we all knew so well took off his sea boots and emptied half the Indian Ocean out of them. For that night’s work their salvage money was the princely sum of 67 Pounds Sterling.

Ray and his family moved to Cape Town on his promotion to Relief Tug Master in 1961 and in 1965 he was promoted to Master. The second Suez Canal closure came in 1967, and Ray was promoted into the Pilots Wardroom. He was known to be a very competent Pilot, and interacted well with the Masters of vessels he piloted and this carried on throughout his career. In 1976 Ray was appointed the first Harbour Master and Pilot at Saldanha Bay, when S.A. Harbours took over from Iscor, and was responsible for getting the Marine Operations at that Port up and running. He was in charge of the port from then until 1984 when he was promoted to Port Captain of Walvis Bay. During that time the port expanded dramatically, from virtually an iron ore export harbour with two berths to the major oil storage facility in SA with many laden VLCC ‘s entering the port. Ray spent two years 1984 to 1986 in Walvis Bay, eventually being promoted to Cape Town as Port Captain in 1988.

It was in 1987 or 1988 that ex “General Botha” cadets held every senior marine post in South Africa. I.e. Chief of the S.A. Navy, Head of the Marine Division of D.O.T., Nautical Adviser to S.A. Harbours and every Port Captain on the South African coast as well as the Senior Marine Managers of Safmarine and Unicorn. Ray was one of these elite marine personalities as Port Captain of Cape Town, a testimony to the high esteem in which Ray was held. Ray retired from the post of Port Captain Cape Town in 1991 at the age of 63 having completed 35 years in the S.A. Harbour Service.

In 1964 Ray joined the South African Navy (Citizen Force) and was appointed as a Lieutenant. He was attached to SAS “Unitie” [fiercely proud of being a member of Copey’s Castle, SAS Unitie] where he was able to pass on some of his knowledge. He was promoted to Lt. Commander in 1969. In 1975 –76 Ray was part of the first group of S.A. Navy CF Officers ever selected to do the Naval Staff Course, another indication of his knowledge and competence. After retiring Ray acted for a spell as Harbour Master and Pilot in Simon’s Town, piloting many of the S.A. Navy and visiting foreign Navy warships.

Apart from his duties as a Tug Master, Pilot, Harbour Master and Port Captain, Ray was a staunch and hardworking member of the “General Botha” Old Boys Association being Secretary and eventually Chairman of the Association from 1962 to 1976. He was also a long serving member of the Cape Town Branch of the Society of Master Mariners’ and was their President from 1989 until 1992. He was also active in the National Sea Rescue Institute both as Port Captain of Cape Town and after he retired as a Director. He was a member of the “Nautical Institute” and was elected a Fellow in 1999. There is no doubt that as a member of the Maritime fraternity Ray will be well remembered for his contribution to our profession in many fields. He will also be remembered for his professionalism, dedication to his job and his friendly, cheerful manner.

Ray’s first wife Joyce who he married as a young officer in 1951 passed away in 1998 after a long illness. Ray married Michele in 2000 and we in the marine fraternity are very conscious and appreciative of their efforts in selflessly supporting the maritime fraternity. We wish Ray Fair winds and a Safe passage on this his final voyage.

B.J. DOWNING 1953/54 #1819. Another “name among seafaring men” of the South African maritime fraternity weighed his anchor on the 25th July 2003. Following his school years Barry joined the S.A. Training Ship “General Botha” in 1953, which at the time was based at Gordon’s Bay. After graduation from the Training Ship Barry joined Safmarine and with his usual efficient manner, worked his way up the ranks until his promotion to Master in 1972. His first command was the reefer vessel, S.A. Tzaneen, the vessel being aptly named after the S.A. avocado growing area The S.A. Tzaneen was at the time, trading internationally in the carriage of perishable products, a highly specialised trade. During this tour of duty the vessel called at a very obscure port in Turkey, if one could call it a port, simply a small jetty jutting out into a bay. No pilotage information was available to Barry, which required him as “first trip” Master to enter the bay and approach the jetty “blind.” Unfortunately an unknown cross current caused the bow to sheer off and collide with the jetty. Captain Barry remained unflappable and calmly conned the vessel out of danger and berthed alongside without further difficulty, displaying his masterful seamanship capabilities.

Barry displayed remarkable enthusiasm and expertise in cargo work, particularly the handling of heavy lifts. A highlight and most interesting project that Barry handled as chief officer of the heavy lift specialist vessel, S.A. van der Stel, was the delivery of the main engines of the salvage tug, S.A. John Ross, which was being built in Durban at the time. The hull of the tug was double banked alongside Barry’s vessel and, by means of two heavy lift derricks used in tandem, Barry skilfully lifted each 110 ton main engine from the hold of his vessel and placed them directly onto their engine mountings in the engine space of the tug, an operation that demanded exceptional patience and skill in his profession.

Recognising his valuable skill and experience he was promoted to Cargo Superintendent in 1976 and Cargo Manager in 1992. During this period Barry became a well know and highly respected personality on the waterfront, both in South Africa and in America where he was seconded for periods. Late 1992 Barry transferred to S.A. Stevedores as Operations Manager until his retirement in 1996. Barry was also known for his SHORT pants safari suits, which he wore throughout the year regardless of the season or weather conditions. It is doubtful whether he owned any other attire.

During his time ashore Barry also served for many years on the committee of S.A.T.S. “General Botha” Old Boys’ Association. Always the optimist and the life of any nautical gathering, Barry will be remembered for his endless, fascinating story telling, a lifetime of experience in such a short space of time. Bon voyage Barry, on your trip to a harbour of safe refuge.

Captain Barry Downing - Your stories and jokes will be missed at our reunion next year matey! Indefatigable good humour, man of principle, staunch rugby forward, we honour our shipmate and his always welcoming, cheery good spirit. "General Botha" Class of 53/54.

D.K. MAAS 1957/58 #2062. Winner of the “Musician of the year” on the Ship in 1958, Derek spent about four years at sea before entering the music business. Has been involved in the record and music business as a producer both in the UK and the USA. Derek sadly passed over the side in July.

Our sincere condolences to family, shipmates and friends of all of the above.

SOS

I believe it a sailor’s prerogative to gripe and thus I shall continue to do so until you ragged lot of scranbags fall into line. Mail continues to be returned requiring much of my precious time in tracing errant AWOL Obies, time that could be more productively spent in serving the association. My success rate is about 50% and thus I require the membership out there to find the remaining 50%. Please, keep us informed of your movements and address changes.

Michael Fincken 1987, last known to be based in Kaslo, Canada. Michael has been working for Greenpeace, which involved extensive travelling.

Tony Proudfoot 1961/62, his mail returned marked “unknown” from Three Rivers East. I believe that this address is in South Africa although have never heard of the place. But how can one be “unknown”. All Botha Boys are notable, are they not?

Hilton Brent 1978, last known in Berea, East London. Strange, I thought Berea was in Durban. Letter marked “return to sender”, but no comment as to why?

A SOS from Charles Parsons 1939/40, Down Under, looking for **Ronald Stirling Franck 1940/42**. All we know of Ron was a report in the 1947/48 edition of "Old Salts"; "is going to Australia where he has been offered a commission in the Royal Australian Navy. Served as a sub-lieutenant with the Royal Navy during the last war",

So, please let us know where these AWOL Obies are.

SCRANBAG

J. BURNS. Previously at sea with Safmarine before coming ashore into their Stowage Co-ordination Centre in Cape Town, John recently joined the brand new S.A. Maritime Training Academy in Simon's Town as a lecturer. A post that John is well qualified for.

P.E. GERSOK 1984 #2832. Paul has recently reported in from Dubai where he is operations manager with Kanoo Agency there. We look forward to report of your desert safaris soon.

P.M. CLARKE 1981 #2737. A recent encounter with Guy Barker 1979, in a land mark pub [where else?] in Cape Town, we find Paul as the Global Senior Brand Manager for Exelon, Novartis Pharma AG based in Switzerland. Trust you will arrange your next business trip to coincide with our Bothie monthly pub lunch.

E. VAN RENSBURG 1967 #2318. Following some excellent detective work done by Ivor Little, 1953/54, Errol reported in after many years of being AWOL. "After I left the Bothie I shipped out with South African Lines together with Willem Hendrikse. After a year I joined Thesen Coasting (later Unicorn). I left the sea and for a while tried out as an Architectural Draughtsman. I went off to Europe, mainly Scotland and Germany and returned to South West Africa, now Namibia, in 1976. I joined Nature Conservation as a Resort officer in 1976 and worked in the Etosha National Park till 1990. I did my national service with the South West Africa Territorial Force ending up an infantry sergeant. When I left Nature conservation I was the head of tourism in the park. We moved to Mossel Bay in 1990 and currently I manage the De Bakke Santos Resort for the local council there." Now we have a holiday resort to visit. I look forward to it Errol.

H.L. STROEBEL 1981 #2732. Our Obies are truly going global, as Hilton reports. "Presently on secondment in Yuzhnov Sakhalinska, Sakhalin Island (Russia), north of Japan. I am here as project manager on a Smit joint venture, where we will initially be setting up a diving company, as well as managing two ice breakers and pursuing new business in the oil and petroleum exploration field. Weather is great for three months of the year, but winter snow depth averages 1.5m, but is known to reach 2 meters, with temperatures plunging to minus 25 degrees." Sounds fascinating but I would give the winter a miss, bad enough here!

L.A. COLE 1950/51 #1641. Met up with Len recently in Cape Town and hope to entice him to one of our pub lunches soon to tell some of his "fishy" stories. "I joined Irvin & Johnson as a cadet and was with them for 4 years in Cape Town. I was promoted and went to Port Elizabeth and served as a Mate there for 2 years. I then went to Durban where I served as Fishing Master for 7 years. After leaving Durban I returned to the Cape and amongst various fishing expeditions to Mount Vema etc I went to Tristan da Cunha. In 1972 I went to Walvis Bay and am still based there. As will be evident from the above I have caught all the various species of product, which one obtains from the sea, from the previously 'lowly' stockfish to finding the first prawn grounds off the KZN & Mozambique coasts. Considering retirement in a year or two."

J.J. CURRAN 1973 #2434. Joe served at sea with Safmarine until 1976 when he joined S.A. Airways followed by one year in 1980 as a game ranger with Sabi Sabi Game Lodge. This entailed taking guests on game drives in open Land Rovers and walks in the bush, generally avoiding things with teeth. 1981 joined the computer industry with various companies over the intervening years in various roles including programming, systems analysis, project management and country manager for Software AG South Africa. When living on the coast was actively involved with the N.S.R.I. as crew and operations controller. Joe reports that his ambition "is to die of exhaustion rather than boredom". A most notable ambition.

R. MORGAN 1968 #2338. Further detective work by Ivor Little brings us the illustrious Richard. "After leaving the Bothie at the end of '68 I joined Ellerman Lines. I was very fortunate in sailing to numerous and varying destinations, Europe, Middle and Far East, North America and several African ports. I was ashore on leave in PE in June '70 when I happened upon a good career opportunity with Dulux. I took the chance, left Ellermans and entered the paint industry. I stayed with Dulux in various capacities until '89 when I had a brief foray into the realms of the self-employed. I didn't enjoy it, as I was a corporate animal at heart. I then moved to Plascon where I have been ever since."

J.N. WARREN 1980 #2705. “My latest news is that after leaving my post of Harbour Master of Dunmore East in Ireland and joining the Blackpool and the Fylde College as a Lecturer in March, I have now settled at the College's Nautical Campus in Fleetwood (near Blackpool - I cycle 9 miles to work most mornings - wonderful for the waistline), and am hard at work imparting knowledge to OOWs and Chief Mates. Currently, I am lecturing in Meteorology and Cargo Work, and am one of the Simulator Staff. Saw another South African pass through the simulator a month or so ago, doing one of our Bridge Team Management courses. We have a large foreign intake here, as well as a large local cadet intake. We deal with all levels of certification, and have a strong offshore component as well. For those lovers of soap operas, one of our lesser-known claims to fame is that some nasty villain from "Coronation Street" demise was filmed in our pool!" I trust that you would have notified us if that South African you mention were a Bothie Boy.

J. WANLISS 1993. Jonathan spent two years as cadet with Unicorn before sailing as third and chief officer with the S.A. Department of Environmental Affairs. In 2000 he joined De Beers Marine as chief officer and 2002 Smit International as chief officer. Life with Smit must be busy, as we have not heard from Jonathan since leaving for his berth. See ya.

P.G. SWART 1964 #2254. Blackie has also been on the move. After some years with Portnet [now National Port Authority] he has joined De Beers Marine serving on their mining vessels. His class are also arranging a reunion coinciding with our 2004 March activities. Look forward seeing ya all if ya'll sober enough to see me.

H.K. UNDERWOOD 1941/42 #1203. Hugh served as midshipman and sub lieutenant, Royal Navy Reserve, third and second officer with Bullard King & Co., becoming a shipping clerk with King & Sons, Durban. This followed by becoming a Specialist Broker with Hugg, Robinson & Capel-Cure, London, Sales Administration Manager with Ernest Scragg & Sons, Macclesfield and Sales Director with Woolltextile Manufacturers, Standerton. Then returned to sea as chief officer with Salen U.K. Ship Management and Marine Management Services and Ship Manager with Wallem Specialised Ship Management of London. After retirement was an inspector on new buildings in Nagasaki for Marine Management Services. A very busy career.

From the bridge of s.s. Cape Town.

Take special note - Tuesday 14th October 2003, 1130 for 1200. We are again hosting a joint lunch meeting with the Society of Master Mariners' at which Obie Dave Main of class 1971 will present a very interesting account of the salvage of the Russian submarine, Kursk. The presentation will commence at 1200 sharp followed by lunch at 1300. **Take special note of the change in time.** As we expect a large turnout of Obies and Master Mariners' we need to give the venue an indication of numbers for seating and lunch on the day. Therefore request you book in advance. However, should you not have booked but find yourself clear on the day, do attend as we will arrange for the club to cater for extras. Thus we keep the menu simple and the price low.

- Event: Presentation of the salvage of the submarine Kursk.
- Venue: Royal Cape Yacht Club, Duncan Road, Table Bay Harbour.
- Date & time: Tuesday 14th October 1130 for 1200.
- Guests, wives and partners are also welcome to attend.
- RSVP: Kathy Nicholas
- Phone: 021-7885957
- Email: tnicholas@za.safmarine.com

We have had a few enquiries from members whether guests, wives or partners may attend our lunches. Please be assured that they are most welcome at any of our meetings, we look forward to meeting the woman behind the Obie. Usually they are of better ilk than the Obie. The only function of ours that is restricted to members only remains the AGM and the Commissioning Day Dinner, as is tradition. Our apology to your better halves but am sure they understand. After all, you deserve at least one night on the town per year.

Maritime Museum. The earlier appeals through this publication for items of historical interest have resulted in members sending in many interesting items ranging from photographs, to medals and even uniforms. The G.B. Trust and the museum are extremely grateful and excited for these donations, keep them coming. In order to ensure that all these items donated are not lost or misplaced in the future, it is very important that all these donations to the museum be made through our G.B. Trust. The G.B. Trust will record every item donated on

their asset list, as well as acknowledging the donation, before passing the items on to the museum. You can of course submit the items direct to the G.B. Trust or via the GBOBA Cape Town Branch. Either way the items will be correctly documented and recorded.

Members will be pleased to note that following the building of the Cape Town International Conference Centre the entire Heerengracht area of the city of Cape Town has been upgraded. This includes Hertzog Boulevard on which our War Memorial stands. The area has been re-paved, grass and indigenous trees planted to provide shade in summer. Stone seats have been placed under the trees. Even a maze has been laid with cobblestones in the centre. The city will also clean the stone of our cenotaph. The result so far can only be described as magnificent and is scheduled for final completion end of August THIS YEAR. Take a walk around next time visiting Cape Town city centre.

PACIFIC STAR AND CLASP. Recently retired curator of the S.A. Naval museum is presently compiling a booklet on the South African recipients of the Pacific Star and Clasp. He has written to us expressing his sadness on noting how few Bothie Boys have claimed this medal. He stresses that no matter how long or short your service in the Pacific may have been, both with the armed forces and with the merchant marine, you are entitled to the decoration. Therefore we urge you all who served in the Pacific to apply for the well-deserved decoration and thus contribute further to preservation of the history of our Ship. Application must be made to: Documentation Centre, Private Bay X289, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa.



BADGES, FLAGS AND CAPS. **HONOUR DUTY BADGE** On page one you will have noticed [at least I hope you did] the new badge that we have had made for members. They can only be described as beautiful and have passed the scrutiny of some of our most particular members with full colours flying. The badges are designed as “iron on” by simply applying heat from the inside of the garment on which you wish to place it. Thus they are not only intended for blazers but can be affixed to any other garment of your choice. For example a jersey as is the custom at many clubs these days. We have had 100 badges made [and paid for] and look forward to your orders without further delay.

Following some requests from our yacht owning members, we have designed a swallowtail flag, measuring 450x300 mm. Background of the flag is blue with a green Scandinavian cross on it and our crest in gold, without the scrolls, placed in the upper canton. Colours used are the same as used on the S.A. flag. The reason for the green Scandinavian cross is to mark the fact that our Ship was originally donated to the Sea Cadets and a crew of Sea Cadets sailed her out from England. Thus the reason for the green in our blazer and tie colours. Although we have less than two dozen presently on order, we have placed an order for 100 flags with the manufacturer. This signifies a substantial cash outlay by your branch and therefore I look forward to your order for your flag without delay. All orders to Cape Town branch and the items will be mailed to you if unable to take personal delivery.

Enthusiasm now abounds and some members have now requested peaked [baseball] caps with our badge on them similar to many navies around the world. Cost still to be ascertained but in the meantime please indicate your interest in these to Cape Town branch.

SLOP CHEST. Badge - R100 each; Flag - R100 each; Ties [striped] - R60 each; Plaques - R85 each; Plus packaging and postage - R15 international, R6 national; Peaked caps with badge - cost to be advised. Orders via Cape Town branch.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

R.B. DICKIN 1937/39 #920. Ray is in much relaxed retirement in Port Elizabeth. At the moment we do not know of his career since WWII but he will hopefully arrange to let us have the details soon. However, we do have this fascinating story of VE Day from him. Thanks Ray and please send us a summary of your career since leaving the ship. Perhaps Peter Murray can act as your scribe at the same as he does his own, which is still missing.

V.E. DAY ANTICLIMAX. After completing my training on the South African Training Ship “General Botha”, I joined a cruiser, HMS Dorsetshire, in Simon’s Town as a midshipman in the Royal Navy Reserve.

My first trip to sea took me to the Falkland Islands. This was followed by a few months of patrol work in the South Atlantic, as far south as the island of South Georgia. The first shot I ever heard fired in anger was when a merchantman slipped out of Santos in Brazil and tried to make her way back to Germany. When she refused to

stop on being ordered to do so, our Commanding Officer ordered an 8" shell to be fired across her bows. Not only did she then stop, she scuttled herself! Her captain and crew were taken on board our ship and were our 'guests' until we dropped them off in Simon's Town some two months later. Then it was off to Durban to join an armed merchant cruiser, HMS Ranchi, which was to patrol the Indian Ocean and do convoy work between Mombassa and Bombay. After nearly a year of this, the AMC was due to have a major refit in Bombay so a friend and I were posted to an anti-submarine trawler, HMS Amber, which was due to patrol off Aden and the entrance to the Red Sea. This gave us, for the first time, an opportunity to put into practice the navigation we had learnt on the training ship and what we had been taught by the navigating officers on the two previous ships in which we had served. We plotted the course for the 1650-mile voyage and set off in search of the port of Aden and, unfortunately, found it! Nothing could have been more boring and depressing than patrolling the entrance to Aden harbour, alternating with another trawler, on a "two days out, two days in" basis. In addition to this, we had to 'coal ship' every now and then in the heat and dust of a port at the southern end of Arabia, this had to be experienced to be believed! This patrol work came to an end when the Admiralty decided that we would be of more use in the Mediterranean, so we steamed [literally] up the length of the Red Sea and through the Suez Canal to Port Said. After Aden, this was heaven! Then it was on to Alexandria, which was to be my main base and second home for the next four years or so. From there we went to Suda Bay in Crete and patrolled among the many islands in the Aegean Sea. The welcome we received from the inhabitants of the islands, at which we called, was always overwhelming. We managed to get away from Crete just before the Germans made their parachute landings and occupied the island. So it was back to Alexandria and similar anti-submarine and mine sweeping duties off the North African coast. When the trawlers were de-commissioned, I was appointed to a battleship, HMS Barham, in Alexandria. On the morning of the 23rd November 1941, I was taken to hospital for an emergency appendix operation and on the 25th was told that the battleship had been torpedoed and sunk, taking 56 officers and 812 ratings down with her. Just over a year later, a corvette in which I was serving, HMS Snapdragon, was bombed and sunk off North Africa, which resulted in our Commanding Officer and some 30 ratings being lost. I had, therefore, for the second time and before my 20th birthday, lost some very close friends, wonderful shipmates and all my possessions. Fortunately I still had very good friends back in Alexandria to whom I could turn should the need arise (a wonderful British family who had lived and worked in Alexandria for many years). Eleven months later I was serving in a destroyer, HMS Rockwood, in the Aegean. This time bombarding the very islands (Kos, Leros and Patmos among others) where we had been made so welcome some three years earlier and now occupied by the Germans, when we were hit by one of the first radio controlled bombs to be used against a ship during the war. Our ship was badly damaged and had to be towed, under heavy and constant air attack, to the comparative safety of a small bay in neutral Turkey. During one night, another destroyer crept into our 'bay', bringing with it steel plates, welding equipment etc., and we managed to carry out temporary repairs to the gaping hole in the side of our ship. All this had to be done under cover of darkness as, during the day, we were kept under constant surveillance by German aircraft to make sure we were not preparing to leave. Finally, after about two weeks in Turkey, a destroyer arrived in the dead of night, took us in tow and headed back to Alexandria. A nightmare trip if ever there was one! After a while, I was posted to a shore base in Phaleron, Greece during the civil war in that country. This was a case of 'Greek meeting Greek' with us, supposedly, on the sidelines. This did not, however, prevent us from getting more than our fair share of snipers' bullets and mortar shells directed at, and crashing into, the former luxury hotel that was now our Naval Base. When this ended, I was flown from Athens to Gibraltar via Cagliari and Oran, to join an LST, HMLST 426. She was due to sail to Malta and from there to the Adriatic port of Ancona where she was to assist in the evacuation of Allied troops, tanks, vehicles and other equipment from the Yugoslavian port of Zara and Trieste (also partly occupied by Yugoslavia). We were all getting very excited about the prospect of the war in Europe coming to an end and looked forward to the day when this part of the war would officially be over. Our ship had been in Malta for about a week and was under orders to sail for Ancona on the afternoon of 8th May 1945. When the official VE Day announcement came through, our Commanding Officer sent a signal to the Flag Officer, Central Mediterranean, who was based in Malta, requesting permission to delay our sailing by one day in order that members of our crew who were off duty could join in the celebrations. It was not long before a reply was received instructing us to proceed to Ancona in accordance with our previous sailing orders. The sympathetic 'toots' from the sirens of other ships as we sailed from the fortress harbour of Valetta, did little to console us. So my night of the 8th May 1945 was spent, as so many other nights had been spent since the 4th December 1939, **AT SEA!**

DURBAN BRANCH NEWS

"The Bothy Old Boys' / Master Mariners dance will be held on **04 October 2003** at the Elangeni Hotel. We realise that the band was an issue last year and we guarantee that there will be a vast improvement this year. We are aiming at 200 guests and we advise you to book early. Please direct bookings to the Durban Branch Chairman or to Bryan Webster on: Tel off: 274 2411, Cell: 082 323 9940 Email: bwebster@stevedores.co.za or: <mailto:websters@mweb.co.za>.

Monthly Luncheons. Venue: Royal Natal Yacht Club; Time: 12h00 for 13h00; Date: First Wednesday of every month. This is a very sincere appeal to members to support our monthly get together and to spend a worthwhile R25.00. Bring your colleagues and friends along and enjoy a 4-course meal.

AUSTRALIAN BRANCH NEWS

A number of Old Boys attended the funeral of our Australia Branch Chairman Des Bowen on 2nd June. Grenville Stevens read the eulogy. Des had been an active member for many years. He was seriously ill in December but recovered and looked very well officiating at the Annual Dinner in March. He will be missed by all.

Deputy Chairman, Stan Damp, has agreed to act as Chairman until the next AGM in March when nominations will be requested for all positions.

Our next function will be an evening Braai on Thursday 13th November at Greenwich Flying Squadron Yacht Club in Sydney. We would welcome any visitors to Australia to join us at this function. We also plan to hold the Commissioning Day Dinner and AGM on Saturday 20th March 2004.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting one of our senior members. **Bill (Wilfred) Spencer** (#526) was on the Bothy in 30/31 after which he joined Shell tankers with shipmate **Peter North** (#517). After 4 years he swallowed the anchor and chased the high wages on the Transvaal mines. Later he immigrated to Australia and had a service station in Sydney for many years. He now lives in a retirement home at Tweed Heads just south of the Gold Coast. He had no contact with our association over all these years until his daughter contacted Tony Nicholas. We had a good chat and I left him his class photo downloaded from the Web. He identified himself immediately and we showed it to the nursing staff with pride. I will be sending him a copy of "Old Salts Yarns" as he enjoys a read and will visit him again. He has good memories of his time on the Ship and even thinks kindly of his seniors! Any news of the career of Peter North will be of interest to him.

Peter O'Hare (2247 '64), Hon Sec, Australia Branch. peteroh@bigpond.com. Telephone 0417 028809.

GAUTENG ANNUAL SPRING FUNCTION

The Gauteng Branch is having its **annual spring function on Sunday, 14 September 2003**. Our venue for this occasion will be arranged by Jack and Marge Gemmell, and will take the form of a three course Sunday lunch at the extremely well appointed clubhouse in their complex. There is a swimming pool, billiard room, lounge, dining room and bar. The dining room is spacious and airy and has a lovely view over the gardens. The complex is wheel chair friendly.

A full three-course meal will cost the princely sum of R40 per person! Marge has personally spoken to the caterer and told her that ex-Bothie boys are big eaters and this has been duly noted! In order to keep expenses down we have not requested a barman or bar service so please bring along your own bottle of wine or any other booze you might feel inclined to want to sample that day.

As is usual with our functions it should be a very good day. At this time of the year we usually compare our strategies to avoid being ripped off by the Capetonians and Durbanites when we are on holiday. You will be able to pick up some good tips on credit card fraud at the Waterfront, what that bottle of wine *really* costs and why not to book a Christmas lunch at any restaurant within 50 miles of the above two cities. We can also offer advice on whether to use the BMW or the 4X4 and how to force that 1962 Cortina in the fast lane on De Waal Drive over the edge. (*CT Branch standby Huguenot Tunnel to fend off the pirates, and DON'T hug a Vaalie!! – Scribe*).

Our venue is the clubhouse, "Highbrook", Crestwood Drive, Lone Hill.

The time for the get together is 12h30 and the dress is casual. Detailed directions will shortly be sent to all Gauteng members and we look forward to the usual good turn out. **Ivor Little.**

GBOBA – UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH NEWS

I am sure that all members here in the UK who knew him, will be saddened to have learnt of the sudden passing of Capt. Barry Downing (53/54) – your scribe was one of his 'chums' in 54 and enjoyed meeting him again in 2002 and 2003 whilst in Cape Town.

From a very sunny, warm UK this summer not a great deal to report at this stage, however, one or two snippets' to show that the spirit of the Bothie lives on:

I received an e-mail from Tony Nicholas advising a Phil Wade (60/61) had been in contact with him and that he was on his way to the UK. Subsequently, an e-mail from Phil requesting details of what takes place during our monthly meeting at the Rising Sun Warsash – unfortunately he could not make the meeting. Phil modestly said he is skipper on a 147-foot sailing boat (**see www.timoneer.org**) and would be docking in Portsmouth. A phone call secured an invitation to Caroline and I to visit a most luxurious craft where we spent a very interesting hour or so in conversation with Phil, now living between Lymington, Hampshire and Majorca plus of course taking care of his 'owners' super craft.

Last months Rising Sun lunch saw the regular attendance of Doug Wrathmall (56/57). Also there, were Johnny Johnston (38/39) (No985) and Graham Petrie (38/39) (No1000) who had not met since London in December 1941!! Until fairly recently neither knew they were both living in the UK. Time did not allow for too much of a natter and they have promised to meet again in the near future – perhaps scribe can claim some assistance to them for this rather historic occasion after 61 years.

Again, scribe was rather pleased to receive a telephone call this week from Stuart Bloomfield (54/55) – he is on a months visit to the UK for the christening of another grandchild in St Albans. We have not met since leaving Bothie in December 55 and met with wives on 11th August so. It was really great to see a former SCC of maintop as myself - I think? They are moving up to Howick north of Petermaritzburg, both are like the majority of us old stagers 'retired' or 'semi.' Stuart sends his 'salaams' to all who remember him especially Ivor Little!

That's it for now, shall be at the Rising Sun on Sunday next 3rd August and hopefully with effort we may possibly arrange a proper function later in the year? Don't forget my e-mail tedfisher@aol.com or Tele 01903 744400 – look forward to hearing from anybody! Ted Fisher.

Web Site.

For those real 'Old Salts' who went to sea in square-riggers, there is now a page giving names, brief details and pictures of the ships they served in, and related interesting historia. If any names or details have been omitted please contact the Webmaster and get him back on course.

A chance purchase of a July 1957 copy of "Panorama" at the Milnerton Market by the Webmasters daughter, has given us some really interesting pictures of the Bothie at Gordon's Bay in the days when the "Dromedaris" was still in pretty good nick. These pictures will feature on the history page under the Gordon's Bay link by the time this newsletter reaches you.

For full details of the above and any other new items or changes go to the 'Notice Board' page - web site link.

43/44/45 - 60th. Reunion - March 2004. OB's from the above years will soon be hearing from the Reunion Committee (if you have remembered to update the OBA with any address changes!) detailing some interesting activities that are being cooked up, and suitable for our advanced years! In the meantime address all queries and requests to Dave Powell Phone 021 790 1973 - email davepowell@saol.com, or Gordon Web - Phone 021 531 4465 or Bill Scott Phone 021 794 6570 - e-mail billscott@iafrica.com . Also watch the web site for latest information on the 'Notice Board' page- www.generalbotha.co.za.

Class of 53/54 Reunion.

The cadets of this year are holding their Fifty Year Reunion from Friday 19 March to Sunday 21 March 2004. As it is to be held at the SA Naval College Gordon's Bay, this reunion could not be staged to coincide with next year's AGM and Commissioning Day Dinner on 5 March 2004. The following week is also unsuitable due to the "Argus" cycle event.

On the programme is a welcoming Cocktail Function Friday night, the Reunion Dinner proper Saturday night (with identical "Sailing Dinner Menu" of fifty years ago), church service in the old Rec Hall Sunday morning (old boys Lesley Green conducting, Don Oliver on the piano), followed by a luxury coach trip to ex-cadet Hans Schöder's beautiful wine farm "Oude Nektar" in the stunning Jonkershoek Valley - wine tasting and lunch.

The class of 53/54 extends *a cordial invitation to any of their senior cadets and junior cadets who may wish to join them.* This may be for all or part of the planned activities. You are more than welcome. Please contact either Ivor Little at +27 (0)12 651 3647 - iclittle@lantic.net or, if in Cape Town, Barry Cullen either directly at one of the monthly RCYC lunches or at +27 (0)28 272 9637 - cull@xsinet.co.za

COAST GUNNERS SINK THE BOTHA

This is an article published in the Cape Times about the time of the sinking, the date of which was 13 May 1947. We received it from Doug Lawrence 1941/42, Australia.

Two women and about 30 men on board the Admiralty tug, St. Dogmael, watched from a distance of less than 100 yards the former South African training ship, General Botha, sink slowly, bottom upwards, beneath the waters of False Bay, yesterday afternoon. The Botha was sunk by gunfire from Scala Battery above Simon's Town, 13 miles away.

We left Simon's Town in the St. Dogmael at 1 p.m. Among those on board were Captain T.L. Poolman, of the Coast Garrison Artillery and the Rev. L.N. Green, a member of the Botha Board of Control.

The former was there to assist in directing the fire from the battery. The latter was on board so that should the guns fail to carry out their task, he could detonate a charge that would quickly dispatch the doomed ship.

By 2 p.m. St. Dogmael had reached the Botha where she lay anchored in the bay. The old cruiser looked a sorry sight with her decks stripped of everything of value, her stern badly battered and her scuttles and portholes open to speed her end. We took the position 3,000 yards to the north of the Botha and the message "St Dogmael is in position and ready" was transmitted to Scala battery. "Here it comes," said a girl's voice from Scala over the radio.

And then it came, first a flash and a minute puff of smoke from a mountain above Simon's Town and then a great white fountain of water 100 yards beyond the Botha. Then followed five more shots all of which hit the water beyond the anchored ship.

BALL OF SMOKE. It seemed almost as though the Botha was to pass through the ordeal unscathed, but the next shot sent a great brown ball of smoke out from the vessel and the next shot did further damage.

From then on the Botha became lost in growing clouds of smoke that surrounded and hovered over her like a funeral shroud. Altogether 24 rounds were fired four at least scoring direct hits. After the firing was over there was a long pause while the smoke cleared away.

Then, to the surprise of majority on board the St. Dogmael, the Botha was seen still riding the waves apparently unharmed.

The St. Dogmael closed in and circled the Botha at close range. Even then no fatal damage aboard the cruiser could be seen. Then, shortly after 3 p.m. a slight list to port was observed and the order was given from the St. Dogmael that the detonation was not to take place.

Gradually the Botha's list became worse and soon she was canting over at almost 45 degrees.

A few minutes later the swell seemed to take her broadside on and she could be seen to shudder and then slowly keel hard over to port.

THE END. The end came quite suddenly. With the scuttles open the sea poured into the stricken ship. A succession of three big swells completed the damage.

She gently turned upon her side, showing her barnacled bottom glistening and stream lined like the back of some huge brown whale.

For a moment she seemed to hover with her masts beneath the water. Then with the sound of clanging metal inside her she slid beneath the surface stern first, spitting angry clouds of steam and churning the water into whirlpools of froth.

A minute later and there was nothing to be seen but a huge circle of troubled water and a few splinters of wood and rope ends were the Botha had been. The time was then 3.35 p.m.

“S A VAAL” ~ Finished with Engines.

From **Maritime Matters** website at <http://www.maritimematters.com/siteindex.html> (Ocean liner history and cruise ship news):

Famed Ship Drops The RED And The III As She Prepares To Depart For Breakers April 14: The latest report from Freeport, Bahamas relays that the BIG BOAT (with "RED" and "III" now freshly painted out), former TRANSVAAL CASTLE, SAVAAL, FESTIVALE, ISLANDBREEZE, BIG RED BOAT III is belching boiler smoke from her Union Castle funnel as she is fired up for the long, slow voyage to India. With fresh smuts covering her decks and those of the adjacent REMBRANDT, she will soon anchor off Freeport and await certification and insurance coverage before steaming off to her final berth on the beaches of Alang or Bangladesh.

Fairplay 14 Jul 2003: The largest cruise ship to be broken up at Alang to date, the 31,793 GT former cruise ship The Big Red Boat, now simply named The Big Boat, was beached there yesterday. American operator Global Marketing Systems reportedly sold it to Ashish Shipbreakers for about \$4.5M after attempts to rehabilitate it for a further re-sale to the cruise industry were abandoned.

And almost in the same breath news of the vessels that replaced the Mail ships:

Friday July 18 2003 Lloyds List: DANAOS Shipping of Greece has bought the Big Whites, four of the world's best known containerships which have been serving the Europe-South Africa trades since the late 1970s. The SA Helderberg, SA Winterberg, SA Sederberg and Maersk Constantia, formerly the SA Waterberg, have been sold by MC Shipping which acquired the quartet from AP MØller-Maersk in April 2002. The ships are on charter until October 2004 and are still deployed within the Southern Africa Europe Container Service, The group has already announced plans to re-tonnage the joint service with new buildings of around 4,300 teu nominal capacity from 2005. AP MØller, which acquired ownership of the legendary Big Whites when it bought Safmarine in 1999, sold the ships last year to MC Shipping, but then took them back on a bareboat charter basis. The Big Whites were built in 1977 and 1978, and are still thought to have a trading life beyond next year despite their vintage, given the condition of the ships and the present shortage of tonnage.

The Story of the Honour Boards.

Not a single Old Boy has come to light with an exciting account of how the Honour Boards found their way from the Ship to Red Hill (see May 2003 Newsletter Pge 1). As I said in the last newsletter, I had visions of courageous youths lashing stout spars across cutters, hoisting the Boards over the side and onto the makeshift platform, and rowing this lot to the Town Pier. Alas, I fear that the truth is much more prosaic than I had imagined. I received a phone call from **Ian Edwards (#1102, 1940/41)**, who told me that he visited Simon's Town in 1944 as a senior cadet aboard the City of Chester. He found the old ship alongside, being utilised as a detention barracks. He went aboard her to have a look around and found that both Honour Boards were still in their old position on the main deck. This leads me to believe that because the cadets were only supposed to be at Red Hill as a temporary measure, the Honour Boards were deliberately left aboard. Later, when it became clear that the cadets were unlikely ever to return to the Ship, she was alongside and it was a relatively simple matter to manhandle them ashore and onto a truck, for the trip up to Red Hill. *G Syndercombe (#1571, 1948/49)*.

Appeal: Do you have any good quality textbooks? Simon's Town High School needs your old books, and in particular Norries Tables. Please contact any one of the Cape Town Committee to hand these over, thanks!

Golfer: 'You must be the worst Caddie in the world.'

Caddie: 'No sir, we couldn't 'ave a coincidence like that.' (Henry Longhurst).

Hole-in-One: an occurrence in which a ball is hit directly from the tee into the hole on a single shot by a golfer playing alone. (Henry Beard & Roy McKie).

If you watch a game, it's fun. If you play it, it's recreation. If you work at it, it's golf. (Bob Hope).

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