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## **GENERAL BOTHA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION**

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

### **NOVEMBER 2005**

### **JOINT NEWSLETTER**

Should your address details change, please send your updated details to:

Tony Nicholas, [cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za](mailto:cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za), Cellphone: 082 555 2877, Phone (H): 021 788 5957.

Please send any articles you may wish to be included in the Newsletter to:

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Visit our website <http://www.generalbotha.co.za>

### **CAPE TOWN BRANCH CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

**Jointly with the Society of Master Mariners', Cape Town branch.**

- Date: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1230 for 1300.
- RSVP: by 1200 Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December. **PLEASE BOOK!**
- Phone: Kathy Nicholas 021-7885957 or fax: 021-4213250
- Email: [cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za](mailto:cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za)

These meetings have become very popular and thus bookings are **ESSENTIAL**. Should you not have booked, but find yourself free on the day, every effort will be made to accommodate you [after all, we are an Old Boys' Association] but no guarantee can be given. We look forward to seeing you all there. We have noted a large percentage of no shows at these functions which leads to embarrassment for your GBOBA committee. If we book for a certain number then the galley prepares and expects to be paid for the number booked. Thus the GBOBA has to meet the financial shortfall. Please guys, have

the courtesy to cancel your booking before the RSVP closure should you be unable to make it.

### **P.T.I. JIMMY SMITH**

Yet another of our Legends has weighed his anchor, the indomitable P.T.I. Jimmy Smith, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Jimmy came to the ship in 1948 from the RAF and served until his retirement in 1983. The news was received by ex cadets' world wide with much sadness and bringing many tributes such as the following:

"It is indeed a sad day when we learn of the passing of another of the stalwarts of the SANC. Sandy, Nuts and Slimy Eye etc all contributed to producing the industry leaders of today. He leaves me fond memories." Peter J Fitt 1955/56.

"Jimmy had the best innings of them all, just shows how keeping fit makes you last longer. Think of all the Obies now up aloft, they will have to start exercising all over again, so wait for the thunder and lightening. The end of an era really, but what superb guys they all were, and thanks to them we are now what we are. Sincere sympathies to the family, a great man goes aloft." Dick Hellyer 1956/57.

"PTI was one of the real Bothy characters along with Sandy and Davis and others and will be sadly missed by those whose lives were influenced by them." Barry Young (alias Cornish) 1953/54.

"PTI Jimmy Smith was a fairly important part of my time at the Bothy as although I never reached the heights of Cadet or Badge captain he ensured in my senior year that I was the Senior Sick Bay cadet with young Bloomfield as my off-sider and I was very involved in the Boxing, Rugby, Rowing, Band and to a lesser degree cricket, all of which I think Smithy was in charge of and I remember him fondly and was sorry he could not attend our 50<sup>th</sup> last year, as I was also that Bloomfield could not get there. My thoughts will be with you all tomorrow, Friday, at the funeral as you and I hope a number of other old Bothy boys, whose life Smithy touched in many positive ways as he did mine, celebrate his life and mourn his passing. I will remember him." David Bell 1953/54.

"We are very saddened to hear of the passing of PTI Jimmy Smith. He was another legend who was looked upon with great affection by all those cadets with whom he spent so much time and effort instilling the values of honour and duty which have remained with us all our lives. Our condolences to all his family and many friends." Ted Fisher 1954/55.

"Very sad to hear of the passing of Jim Smith. My fondest memories of him are during 1959 and 1960 when the Bothie band was invited to perform at all sorts of functions. These seem to have been on a monthly basis all over the area and as a bandsman I recall that we were always very well looked after (and well fed!)." Errol Hunter 1959/60.

"Very sad to have your news. Despite I have only seen him once or twice at functions since I left Bothie in '61, I have always had warm memories of him. I was one of the small sods as a chum, and often the target, and had not a good time for first three months. Somehow or other, PTI Smith knew about that, and in his quiet, often unassuming way, would manage, without intervening, to often show up just before I got my head (or other appendage) knocked off!! I will not forget him." Jerry Hookins 1960/61.

"It is with regret that we learn of Jimmy's death. I can relate the following story about him. Shortly after I arrived at Gordon's Bay for the start of my junior or "chum year", Jimmy called for volunteers to join the boxing team. As I had at that stage been boxing at our local Boys Club in now, Zambia, I duly put my name down. Shortly thereafter we were summoned to the Chapel, which also doubled up as a training area for the boxing team, for selection. I was first up, being the lightest (no comparisons with my present weight, please) and was pitted against PTI himself. As we circled each other, Jimmy kept

saying, 'come on, hit me!' Seeing an opening in his guard, I hit him as hard as I could. My punch landed on his pug nose which to my horror exploded in a spray of blood! Jimmy's eyes glinted as he came after me and my next recollection was lying in the second row of pews! Being in the boxing team was not only prestigious but also had certain benefits like extra lie-in in your bunks in the morning, big juicy steaks and eggs and bacon for a few days prior to a fight. About the middle of the year the team engaged in the Western Province Schools Boxing Championships. After several preliminaries bouts, I was in the finals against a Bishops boy in the lightweight division. With the shouted encouragement of Jimmy, Davis and Granny Macdonald, ringing in my ears, I succeeded in TKO'ing my opponent in the second round. The following year, my Old Salts year, was a different story. Again in the finals, against a SACS boy, shorter than me and far less reach who had me on the canvas three times in as many rounds. The last time with my head resting on the bottom rope, through a blur I could see Jimmy's face over me saying, 'get up boy, you can still do it.' Regretfully I didn't. Several years later whilst doing my cadetship with Bank Line, I went out to the College and Jimmy, Davis and self repaired to the Van Riebeek Hotel and hoisted a few elbows and reminisced about the old times. God Bless Jimmy." John Mellows, 1955/56.

Jimmy's memorial service took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> October in the dining hall of Edenhaven Old Age Home in Edenvale. Ivor Little mustered, at short notice, a good representative turn out (*of Obies*), and gave the eulogy (see below). Donald Forbes paid tribute off the cuff, and emphasised the part that our Officers and Instructors had played in our lives, with special mention of Jimmy and our subsequent physical fitness.

**OBITUARY: JAMES ("JIMMY") SMITH aka "PTI": STAFF MEMBER 1948 – 1987.**

Jimmy Smith was born in Greenwich, London in 1922 and as a schoolboy proved his sporting prowess by becoming Junior All London Schoolboy Champion for the 100 yards and 200 yards sprint. He later became Senior All London Schoolboy Champion and won the championship for the four years running between 1933 and 1936. In 1936 he shifted his interest to soccer, playing for Greenwich and then Deptford in schools' soccer, and developing a passion for soccer which he enjoyed all his life. He also took up boxing and boxed in the Federation of London Boys' Clubs Championship on 1937 and 1938. After the outbreak of World War 2, Jimmy enlisted in the Royal Air force. His well known eyesight problem precluded him from active service but his sporting ability was immediately recognised and he was enrolled as a Physical Training Instructor. In 1940 he won his RAF colours by representing the RAF in athletics, boxing and soccer, before being transferred to the then Southern Rhodesia as a PTI in the Empire Flying Training Scheme. Whilst in this appointment Jimmy took part in the Air Training Group Athletics Championship where he set up a 100 yards and 220 yards sprint record and for four years represented his unit in boxing. In 1942 he represented Southern Rhodesia as reserve middleweight against Northern Rhodesia.

In 1945 he married Leonor Schaeffer of Cape Town and when he was returned to England for demobilisation she went with him. Jimmy then took a job as PTI in London County Council schools, whilst also earning extra cash as a stage comedian. In 1946 he also won the All England 100-220 yards championship. In 1947 he packed up his wife and new family and returned to Cape Town as boxing instructor at the Cape Technical College. On 1 March 1948 he joined the South African Training Ship "General Botha" at Red Hill as its Physical Training Instructor.

While at the "General Botha" Jimmy played soccer for Park Villa and, when the "General Botha" moved to Gordon's Bay, for De Beers. In 1960, 1962 and 1963 he also carried off the SA Navy Veterans Prize for the 100 yard sprint. When the "Botha" moved to Granger Bay he gave up playing soccer and coached and trained at local clubs in the vicinity. Jimmy and

Leonor had two daughters, Glenys and Linda before they were divorced in 1963, after which he married his second wife.

Ex-cadets will all remember him as the proverbial “Jack of All Trades”. He was PTI, Sick Bay Tiffy, Band Officer, Officer in Charge at the Steenbras camps and MC at Botha functions. He was also the laundry officer and in charge of shoe repairs and replacing blue collars on our work shirts. He is also well remembered by many for administering corporal punishment over the gym horse. In his spare time, Jimmy lectured on First Aid, being a holder of the St John’s Ambulance Association Award of Merit, which he earned by being credited with the saving of four lives by resuscitation after near drownings in Gordon and Granger Bays.

Jimmy’s second marriage ended in divorce in 1969 and he subsequently married Cora Pearson, mother of ex cadets Logan and Brian Pearson.

When the Botha closed down in 1987, Jimmy retired and took a job as a traveling rep. for Gilbeys and a part time position at the Camps Bay Sports Club where his fund of humour and jokes stood him in good stead. When Cora passed away in 2000 Jimmy moved up to Johannesburg to be with his first family.

He became a keen and popular member of the Gauteng Branch of the OBA whilst living in an Old Age Home in Edenvale and maintained his interest and love for all things connected with the “General Botha”, attending all the Branch’s functions. In March 2004, a week before he was due to travel down to Gordon’s Bay to attend the 53/54 class reunion, he suffered a massive stroke, from which he never fully recovered, slipping into a gradual decline, which ended with his death on the 16th October.

There is no doubt that PTI Jimmy Smith, who donated 37 years of his life to generations of “General Botha” cadets, made an indelible impression on those young boys. By so doing, he achieved something which very few of us are able to attain. Like the immortal but fictional Mr Chips, Jimmy will always be young in our memories; we will remember him as part of our own golden youth and he will, in those memories, always be in the prime of his life as our PTI.

He is survived by his wife Leonor, daughters Glenys and Linda and by a number of stepchildren and grandchildren in Gauteng, Cape Town and Oxford, UK. *Written & read by Ivor Little.*

### **ANCHORS AWEIGH**

**D.M. ROTHON 1934/35 #770.** Denis’s son contacted us recently asking whether we had some record of his father. We were able to send him a photograph of Denis pictured in the rowing team in 1935. The photograph is contained in an album we received from the late Malcolm Rose 1935/36. Denis passed away in 1978. “My father, Denis Maclagan Rthon, joined the General Botha in 1934/35. I heard that he skippered the first rowing team out of South Africa. I was just wondering if there was any record of this. He was also the boxing champ during his time there. He joined the Merchant Navy and was torpedoed during WW2 about 600miles off the Irish Coast. I have a letter which he had written to his parents explaining the events that took place. He also took photographs of the ship going down every half an hour. In the one photograph you can see HMS Vanoc on the horizon just before coming in to pick them up.”

**G.J. RACKSTRAW 1935/36 #830.** 1937 Gordon joined the British shipping company Ewing McDonalds in a shore position until the outbreak of WWII in 1939. He went up north with the S.A. Army. After WWII Gordon rejoined Ewing McDonalds and was appointed Import & Export Manager based in Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe], serving Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Rhodesia. After retirement from shipping he joined the South African Institute of International Affairs where he served for twelve years. Deceased August 2005.

**G.F. FRANCK 1945/46 #1406.** George passed away 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005. Unfortunately we have no further details of his career and would appreciate any information members' recall.

**R.L.C. MACQUEEN 1939/40 #1049.** 1941 to 1943 Robin was apprenticed with Andrew Weir's m.v. Isipingo. 1943 he unfortunately failed the eyesight test for 2nd mates and then joined, as able seaman, General Steam Navigation's m.v. Heron which was then under the Blue Ensign as a Royal Navy Ammunition Ship. 1944 came ashore in Port Elizabeth, as a Stevedore Foreman and Rigger. In 1946 Robin started a cartage Business with his father and in 1950 - returned to Stevedoring. 1955 assistant transport manager for a P.E. Timber company and in 1959 took over the family cartage business until 1970 when he sold the business and joined the buyer as transport manager. 1981 Retired from business and joined the S.A.D.F. Museum service. Robin served as a sergeant at the Military Museum, Donkin Reserve until retirement in 1989. Decorations 39/45 Star, Atlantic Star, Burma Star, 39/45 Medal. Deceased 6th August 2005.

**R.E. SMITH 1957/58 #2075.** Passed away 9<sup>th</sup> July 2005, Robin was previously with Mitchell Cotts in Durban. Further details of his career would be welcome.

**D.L. BECKER 1959/60 #E25.** Previously Marine Superintendent, National Port Authority, Richards Bay, Davis passed away 5<sup>th</sup> September 2005. Further details of his career would be welcome.

**Charmaine Harris, widow of Doug Harris 1943/45** sadly passed away 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005. Charmaine was sister of the late Ray Schooling 1944/45 and one can only wonder what Chum Ray's thoughts were of Old Salt Doug dating his sister. Charmaine was a staunch supporter of the GBOBA and shall be remembered for her endearing spirit and smiles despite her debilitating illness. She shall be missed yet remembered at every Bothie meeting.

**G.G. LOWNDES 1943/44 #1307.** Gilbert has been reported deceased by a family member. After G.B Gilbert went to sea on the s.v. Lawhill sailing between South Africa and Australia. After WWII he transferred to the s.s. Erica sailing to the Far East. Later came ashore, returned to Bloemfontein, and joined African Oxygen from where he was promoted to most major cities in South Africa.

**J.B. McLoughlin 1932/33 #641.** Jim sadly passed away on the 23rd October 2005. After Bothie Jim served with Ellerman Hall Line as apprentice. When his apprenticeship was completed, he joined the mines. In 1940 he returned to sea with the Seaward Defence Force, then S.A.N.F. Jim served with distinction during WWII but was always very modest about his service. After the war he left the navy mid 1946 after getting married to Hazel and rejoined the mines as arranged when joining up. Jim also had the distinction of being part of the Queens Coronation contingent as Lieutenant 1953. Retired April 1979 and spent many years with the National Sea Rescue including Deputy Station Commander N.S.R.I. Station 9, Gordon's Bay. Jim was held in high esteem by all and was a remarkable person. He was very proud of his Bothie training and most certainly lived the ship's motto, Honour and Duty. He shall be missed.

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

## SOS

As usual much mail has been returned. Most of it I have been able to trace [time taken which I can ill afford] but I am still looking for **Graham Boulden 1939/40** last known in Pinetown and **Derrick Makkink 1939/40** also last known in Pinetown. Mail returned from **Jack Gemmell 1947/48** marked "Post Box Closed" and no reply from his home phone, last known in Magaliessig. Word is that they were moving to the South Coast. Someone out there must know of them??

John Taylor is asking for information of his shipmate **Alan Victor Teubes 1943/1944**. All of you out there grab your local phone books or whatever and I look forward to your positive news.

John Tillman (HMS Conway 1950) living in France, has written to ask for information about **John 'Buck' Brian Marrison 1950/51 #1664**. They sailed together in Union Castle in the '50s. Where is he now?

### **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

Our website brings in a number of requests from family members of ex-cadets for information and it saddens me that I am often unable to assist. However through this medium I expect many of you out there can assist with these requests;

“My name is Michael S. Gamble, and my father was **Douglas Valentine Gamble**. He was born in Potchefstroom, Transvaal, on the 16.3.1915. I have been trying to trace him or his relations, and the other day I found your website and my father's name. He had the number **555** and was there during **1931/32**. After the War he and my mother divorced and I believe he returned to South Africa. I have had no news of him since then, so any help or personal history of his would be greatly appreciated. Here are a few details that I have gathered about my father. He served in the merchant navy prior to the Second World War, and then during that he served on board the SA Naval ship called the 'Van Dyke' and the HMS Argus, during the North Africa landings. He was injured and sent to Scotland to recuperate. After the War he must have returned to South Africa, where he filed for divorce in 1949. He did have a brother called Paul, but I don't know if that is the same Paul Gamble [**1936/37?**] on your muster list. His mother's maiden name was Church and I believe there was a Commodore Surgeon in the family based at Simons Town. I really don't know much more than that. Did you manage to find any photos? My son (who looks a lot like him) would also like to have them.” Please advise any information you have or recall including photographs of him.

**GRAY, James Edward No: 388 years 1928/1929**. Another family member request, anybody recall any details of him?

*The family SOS requests published in our August newsletter has gone unanswered. PLEASE revisit it again; surely someone out there recalls some little detail?*

### **SCRANBAG**

**M.A.J. CARRINGTON 1976 #2548**. Mike sent a photograph of his recent command in Australia named “Carrington”. Now how did he manage that? “I have attached a few photo's from my "brag-bag" of my recent command, a Voith Tractor tug, "Carrington" which I was hoping to send to my previous boss!. The Bothy old boys that I have bumped into out here in South Australia have been, Allan Harkastad (Master of one of the "Cape" boats that call here regularly, Gordon Hayward (Marine pilot at Nelson, New Zealand), spent a week with us after doing a course in Launceston. Patrick Atwood (Deputy Harbour Master in Wellington, New Zealand) was out in April on holiday with his wife, Robyn. John Fisher, (retired) stays around the corner from me and we see quite a bit of each other. Jon Joubert, the son of the late Captain Joubert, (ex senior Manager of A.N.L.) beat me to a pilot's position with Flinders Ports and I see a fair bit of him when up in Whyalla. Michel Lagesse is now running a shipping surveying / agency business in Fremantle but spends some time up on the north western side of Western Australia always extremely busy. Ken Murray, (Deputy Harbour Master of Melbourne) often gives me a chin wag on the Al Capone.” Is the Jon Joubert mentioned above the same Owen John Joubert class of 1974? If so we last heard of him living in Parow [Cape Town] in 1993. **SOMEBODY PLEASE PUT ME IN CONTACT WITH HIM!**

**F.A. KOP 1971 #2394.** Previously Freddy and Adrienne owned a B&B in Cape Town, we now find them somewhere in England, South Kensington I believe. Keep in contact you two.

**I.B.T. MACPHERSON 1983 #2808.** Iain reports: "Following my move from SA to the UK in 1998 I have once again changed continents. This time south east Asia – India to be precise. Following a major restructuring of our organization and a management shake-up I was appointed Director of Global Services Centers, FWL Technologies – a global provider of Supply Chain software. Given that our largest off-shore operation is in Pune, India I decided to relocate to where the action is. I have been traveling between the UK and India since February, making the final move with the family (dog included) in mid-July. India is a fascinating place best described, I think, as Durban's Grey Street on fast forward. Having looked forward to getting away from England's gray skies for a while we have recently been hit with some of the heaviest monsoon rains in living memory and I have hardly seen the sun for two weeks! The rains have affected us to the extent that we have had to evacuate our building to avoid rising flood waters and bridge closures across the river which splits the city. At least we have seven months of continuous sunshine to look forward to."

**R.J. SPENCER 1954/55 #1910.** Richard failed his eyesight test after leaving the training ship and thus did an engineering apprenticeship with Globe Engineering. He subsequently went to sea with Ellerman & Bucknall as an engineer. Sailed with Safmarine in 1964. 1965-69 with Reckitt & Coleman in Research & Development. 1970-95 with Caltex Oil at their Milnerton refinery in field and supervisory positions in Reliability Services before retirement in 1995.

**D.E. BARBIER 1955/56 #1927.** After G.B. went to Agricultural Collage at Potchefstroom for two years before becoming a learner farmer in the Winterberg. Later joined the Sir Abe Bailey Estate in Colesberg in charge of general farming and the sheep stud. Later moved to Komgha before purchasing his own farm at Kei Road in 1961 where he farmed sheep and cattle until 1978. Thereafter farmed at Steynsburg until retirement in 1993.

#### **THE LEGEND LIVES ON – CHARLES RUPERT TAYLOR 1926/28 #324**

Recent visitor to our Cape shores from Natal was one Alan Pembroke who brought with him the memoirs of Charles Taylor, OBE R.A.F. retired, the book being donated by his widow, Virginia, to the G.B. Trust and hence museum. A summary of such an eventful life; After G.B. Rupert joined the R.N.R. as a midshipman in H.M.S. Lowestoft before joining Ellerman & Bucknall and during this time he also served in minesweepers. In 1933 he joined the R.A.F., soon obtained his wings. He moved rapidly through the ranks and was posted to various stations in Africa during WWII, serving mainly on flying boats. Rupert was cut out to command and was well supported and respected by his men, being twice mentioned in dispatches and awarded the OBE in 1944. He commanded the R.A.F. station Leuchards near to St. Andrews before retiring in 1946 with the rank of Group Captain. Returned to S.A. and there followed 25 years in industry culminating in 16 years with Feltex. He was Chairman and later President of the Royal Air Force Association and 12 years representing the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund. Passed away 12<sup>th</sup> June 1997. The book contains an entire chapter of his time on the Ship and there are a number of references in the book to other Bothie Boys. A valuable record contributing to the preservation of the Legend of the Ship.

#### **LEGENDS IN THE MAKING**

The Maritime Studies Department at Simon's Town School continues to go from strength to strength producing young men and women with solid background training in matters maritime. There are two courses, one aimed for those wishing to follow a career at sea and the other for those entering the shore industry, many of the students doing both the courses in addition to the usual school curriculum. Many Bothie Old Boys' contribute to this program

including setting exam papers. Chris Kortum recently hosted a class of these students on board his vessel, Safmarine Nokwanda, for a voyage from Cape Town to Durban. The worthy winner this year of our prestigious G.B. prize [binoculars] was Musa Mbakaza. Look out for him on the bridge of his own command one day.

### SLOP CHEST

These slop chest items all proudly display our association insignia. Available from Cape Town branch. Place your orders without delay with Kathy Nicholas:

Phone: 021-7885957 fax: 021-4213250 Email: [cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za](mailto:cptchairman@generalbotha.co.za)

<b>BADGE</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>FLAG</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>TIE [STRIPED]</b>	<b>R60</b>
<b>PLAQUE</b>	<b>R100</b>
<b>PEAK CAP [BASEBALL TYPE]</b>	<b>R60</b>
<b>'n NAAM WAT SEEVAARDERS EER</b> Geskiedenis van die opleiding skip.	<b>DONASIE</b>
<b>A NAME AMONG SEAFARING MEN</b> History of the training ship.	<b>DONATION</b>
<b>FIRST DAY COVER</b> 60 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Old Boys' Association	<b>DONATION</b>
<b>BELT BUCKLE</b>	<b>R100</b>

**PLUS PACKAGING AND POSTAGE! Note: some items in the slop chest are available from Durban branch as well.**

Cheque or postal order should be made out to "General Botha Old Boys' Association". Post to: P.O. Box 4515, Cape Town, 8000. Alternatively, the payment can be made by electronic fund transfer directly into our bank account. Details as follows:

- Bank: Standard Bank
- Branch: Thibault Square, Cape Town
- Branch code: 02 09 09
- Account name: General Botha Old Boys' Association
- Account number: 070835128

### DURBAN BRANCH NEWS

(Ernest Nellmapius – Secretary, Durban Branch)

**The Christmas lunch will be on Wednesday 14 December at the Royal Durban Golf Club within Greyville Racecourse. Secure parking is available off Mitchell Road. Cost R100 per head which includes tip. To book please call Candy on 031 5692585. Final bookings in by Friday 9th Dec.**

A recent high point in Durban was the Trafalgar bi-centenary dinner held at the DLI on 21st October. Ninety four persons, of whom a good number were OBIES, attended and a very good dinner with great camaraderie was had by all. Thanks to the Naval Officers Association for their excellent organisation. Paul Kilmartin, the past Chairman of the SA Military History Society, KZN proposed the toast to the Immortal Memory of Lord Nelson. Paul gave a wonderful and interesting talk about the battle and Nelson's impact on the course of history. At the last Naval Officers Association luncheon the wife of, Bothie Boy Group Captain Rupert Taylor, gave his "book" to the OBA. The book was passed on to the Cape Branch for inclusion in the museums collection. (*see The Legend Lives On" above*).

Our monthly lunches at Point Yacht Club remain popular and it is always nice to see new



faces or to meet up with old pals again. It was nice to see Dave Freeman again after his long stay in hospital. Subsequent to that he had a Gall Bladder operation that was successful and he is home again and feeling a lot better.

#### **UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH – Ted Fisher reports.**

Firstly, once again, from all UK Obies our sorrow at hearing of the passing of PTI Jimmy Smith - someone held in great affection by all of whom came into contact with him over the years both on and off the ship. Our condolences to all his family.

I write this en-route across the Black Sea sailing from Istanbul toward the Crimean port of Yalta, my first, indeed, our only cruise since I left the sea and shipping scene more years ago than I can remember! According to the on board newspaper weather in Britain is wet and windy, typical autumn!

**News:** Belated congratulations to Captain John Shone (43/44) and his wife Sheila who enjoyed a double celebration in their golden wedding year as exciting singles Bowls (Fishbourne Club Chichester) winners in separate competitions both with a clear lead of three and four shots respectively – a great achievement!

**Social:** As previously mentioned a few of us with wives are joining the Conway Club Solent Branch for their Christmas Function in The Forest Lodge Hotel at Lyndhurst in the New Forest date being Friday 2 December – meal cost £20.00 per head. Spaces are limited so please contact me urgently should anymore of you wish to join us.

**Spring Function:** Could still be on the cards and I am keen on having the date of Saturday 4 March 2006 as a lunch to coincide with the Commissioning Weekend in SA. However, the cost for an hotel venue (Marriott Goodwood Park Hotel and Country Club Chichester) could be toward £30.00 per head for a private function room – I do need a response from Obies, are you interested or not in such an event????

Caroline and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the next social.

Best wishes to all, Ted Fisher, Tel: +44(0) 1903 744400 e-mail: [tedefisher@aol.com](mailto:tedefisher@aol.com).

#### **GAUTENG SPRING FUNCTION – Ivor Little reports.**

In a break with a by now established tradition, the Gauteng Spring Function was held early this year instead of on Heritage Day. The meeting was hosted by Frank and Mandy Pascoe at the Randfontein Golf and Country Club and was well supported by 61 people, ranging from elderly ex-cadets to young toddlers, and one visitor from the UK.

Tom Fraser once again entertained us by supplying the music and acting as MC, Eric Moir said grace and Ivor Little proposed the toast to the ship. There was the usual clowning around with the microphone and Ian Thurston supplied us with a couple of Norfolk country ditties. The Gauteng OBA choir (established for the purpose and disbanded in ignominy immediately afterwards) attempted a pair of songs but made a fair success of "For Those In Peril On the Sea". A message was received from the good ship "Babushka" (where Alan Ford was out at sea on the Vaal Dam) wishing us well. A few of the more energetic members then took to the dance floor as the rest quietly took their leave, the last stragglers departing in time to get home for supper.

Those cadets attending were: Frank Wheeldon (41/42), who received the prize for the oldest "Old Salt" present by mistake, as it should have gone to James Robinson (39/40); Gordon Bennett and Laurie Barnes (46/47); Rene Poerner (48/49); Tony Davis (48/50); Drummond Terry (50/51); Vic Albert, Graham Jooste and Ken van der Walt ( 52/53); Tony Hunter, Ivor Little and Eric Moir (53/54); Tony Jacquet and John Orrock (54/55); Archie Campbell and Brian Glass (55/56); Alistair Douglas (58/59); Ian Thurston (Worcester 58/59); Frank Pascoe and Steve Hearn (59/60); John Driver (60/61); Fred Marais (61/62); Brian Preiss (64); Dave

Sharrock (74); Tom Fraser (79) and Dave Atkinson (85), who received the prize for being the youngest chum present.

Our next meeting will be in March 2006 at a date and venue to be announced. Thanks Mate, Ivor.

### **"Chasing the Lubber Line" - Anecdote from Sean Day (#2297; 1967).**

I was deeply saddened to read of Glen Syndercombe's passing in the August newsletter.

I was a very junior Ensign (CF) under his command on *SAS Jan van Riebeeck* in 1973. You are absolutely right about his ship handling - he was superb! I can still picture him standing on top of the chart house on the JvR, behind the open bridge, conning us into a very tight berth in Durban in a high wind. No tugs, no fuss.

JvR was the Navy's training ship in those days. Every 6 weeks we embarked a new batch of Citizen Force trainees fresh out of basic training. One winter night we were steaming up the Transkei coast at about 25 knots. I had taken over the watch at midnight and the man on the wheel had been relieved as well. There was a light on the port bow (I forget which lighthouse now) when I took over, and I went into the chart room to check our position. JvR had an open bridge, and so it was always tempting to linger in the warmth of the chart room when one retreated to put a fix on the chart. Fortunately I didn't do so that night - when I returned to the bridge I was appalled to see that the light was now well on our starboard bow. It took me a few seconds to realize that we were steaming straight at the Transkei coast, less than 3 miles away, at 25 knots!

I ordered the helm over hard to starboard, causing the ship to heel sharply. This brought Glen Syndercombe bounding up to the bridge! It turned out that our inadequately trained man on the wheel had been "chasing the lubber line"!

I have often reflected on how, had I whiled away an extra 5 minutes in the chart room, the JvR might have been on the rocks. That would have brought an abrupt and premature end to both Glen's career and mine!

I was glad to catch up with him at the GBOBA Christmas lunch in Cape Town a couple of years ago. He was a fair but strict commanding officer - a great example to us all.

### **Boer Bell - Item No. 7358401151 on eBay Auction.**

This item was brought to our attention recently with the following caption:

“From an old, local estate and buried away for 75+ years! One of many great bells found and a rare one. I am unsure what ship this came off of however the collectors will know! Worthy of research! Engraved as shown GENERAL BOTHA ABERDEEN. Weighs about 20 lbs and is absolutely original. Measures about 10" h and is in excellent condition. Clapper is also original. No visible makers or foundry marks. May have some historical importance. South Africa Boer War Navy World War 1 British Orange Free State. Present bidding stands at \$309.”

Cape Town Committee became excited about this and discussed the possibility of bidding, but thinking it through, there was nowhere apart from the museum to keep it, and is it a genuine artefact from the ship? Further investigation and Ian Manning wrote the following explanation:

“When SATS GENERAL BOTHA sailed from the UK in 1921 she had to be registered officially as TS GENERAL BOTHA [sic]. This was because there was already a ship [trawler] named GENERAL BOTHA on the British register. Aberdeen is, to the best of my knowledge a fishing port and I suggest that this bell to which you refer if from a trawler [possibly one of several over a period of years]. The size of the bell [10 inches] also points to a reasonably small ship.

General Louis Botha was quite a popular figure in the UK in the 1910s and 1920s and there was even a British destroyer named BOTHA at one time during that period.

To the best of my knowledge the SATS GENERAL BOTHA bell at the Naval Museum is the original from the old ship. It was still in use when I was in SANC GENERAL BOTHA in 1955-1956. The SANC GENERAL BOTHA bell was once the bell of HMSAS JAN VAN RIEBEECK and it was over-engraved in the very late 1950s or early 1960s and then replaced the old SATS GENERAL BOTHA bell. There were no other bells as far as I know. The SANC GENERAL BOTHA bell was used at the SAMNA, I think.

I do not think we should buy the bell on e-Bay. I will be surprised if it has any connection with SATS GENERAL BOTHA. Yours aye, Ian Manning.”

If anyone else has any ideas on this, please let us know. At least it brought in some more interesting history about the ship.

### **COMMANDER JAMES SLEIGH, DSO, OBE, DSC, GB 1931/32 #593 & Naval Aviator**

*In the May 2005 edition we reported on the passing of Commander Sleigh on 7 March this year. Here is a more detailed extract of this Obies interesting career (ed).*

Entering on adult life at a turbulent period of world affairs, James Sleigh quickly found himself in that most challenging of environments - flying from aircraft carriers. His courage and skill as a fighter pilot and leader were put to the test in most of the theatres of the Second World War, during which he won the DSO and DSC. He was also decorated for his service in Korea.

James Wallace Sleigh was born in 1916 and brought up in South Africa. In 1931 he joined the South African naval training ship *General Botha*. In 1936, after a brief spell in the Merchant Navy, he was drafted as a midshipman to the sloop *Rochester* on the African station. Commissioned as a sub-lieutenant in 1938, he was offered the opportunity to transfer to the Fleet Air Arm, and obtained his wings on the eve of war in September 1939.

His career in the Fleet Air Arm was to give him the opportunity to fly a range of aircraft from biplanes to jets. After his first operational tour on biplane Gladiators, he converted to the American Grumman Wildcat, which the Royal Navy first obtained in 1940 and named the Martlet.

In 1941 he embarked, with 802 squadron in HMS *Audacity*, an 8,600-ton converted German refrigerated cargo ship, which had been fitted with a flight deck, to become the first of the escort carriers that were eventually to play such an important role in the Battle of the Atlantic. She was 400ft long, had a top speed of only 14 knots and only two conventional arrester wires. There was a third – known as the “Oh, for Christ’s sake wire” – which pulled out only 30ft and also collapsed the safety barrier.

HMS *Audacity* and her Martlets covered two Gibraltar convoys, in September and December 1941, and made their mark as a deterrent to the U-boats, first closing the “air gap” on that convoy route. During her second – and last – voyage, homeward bound from Gibraltar, aircraft from the carrier shot down two Focke-Wulf Kondor reconnaissance aircraft which were shadowing the convoys to assist the u-boats to find them.

In an interview given to the South African *Navy News* long after the war, James Sleigh recalled: “A Kondor was sighted flying at very low level 15 miles to the east of the convoy heading for the coast of France. Two Wildcats were scrambled – myself and Berty Williams my No.2. A long chase ensued as the Wildcat had only a slight speed advantage. After the first quarter attack, all the guns in both aircraft jammed – a common fault that was usually rectified by re-cocking the machinegun from the cockpit. After many attempts, I brought one gun back into action. Meanwhile the Kondor was down at 20ft above the water hell-bent

for home. I decided to have a go at head-on attack. Twenty miles later with a closing speed of 500 knots at 20ft I opened fire at maximum range. The 'K' burst into flames, and as I pulled up I collected 30ft of his aerial wire and a piece of the stub aerial in my arrester hook. If the Kondor had not taken avoiding action at the last minute, I would have missed him."

Sleigh was awarded the DSC for this action. After four days of running day night battles between the convoy escort and German air and submarine forces HMS *Audacity* was sunk on December 21, off Ireland by five U-boat torpedoes. But naval air power had proved its immense value in convoy escort operations, and with five U-boats sunk for the loss of only two merchant ships, the U-boat commander Karl Dönitz had received his first severe check.

In 1942 Sleigh went to the US naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, to form and command 890 Squadron, which was being equipped with Martlet 111s. In June 1943 the squadron was embarked in *HMS Illustrious* for operations off Norway and in the Mediterranean. *HMS Illustrious* was part of Force H and covered the landings at Salerno, for which Sleigh was mentioned in dispatches.

In November 1943 he was posted to the cruiser *Royalist* as Staff Officer Flying. As such he planned Operation Tungsten, the Fleet Air Arm attacks in April the following year on the battleship *Tirpitz*, as she lay in her lair at Kaa Fiord. For the operation itself he transferred to the carrier *Persuier*, from which he led a force of Wildcats that formed part of the fighter escort to the Barracuda bombers. In the two phase attack, carried out on April 3, 1944, the German Battleship sustained severe damage and casualties, and Sleigh was awarded the DSO for his part in its planning and execution.

*Royalist*, to which he returned, then went to the Mediterranean to cover the landings in the South of France, and saw action in Southern Greece, Crete and other Islands. When *Royalist* left for the Far East late in 1944, Sleigh returned to the UK to take up a post as chief flying instructor at the RN fighter school at Yeovilton.

The post-war years saw him as Carrier Air Group Commander in *Ocean* and then *Glory*, which were based in the Mediterranean. After a brief interlude as Commander Air at Ford, he returned to *Glory* as Commander Air, as she sailed out to serve in the Korean War. He was appointed OBE for his services in Korea. He retired from the Navy early in 1958 after a series of staff appointments.

Sleigh returned to his roots in South Africa with his English wife, whom he had married in 1940, and two daughters, leaving their son to complete his education in England. For a happy five years he farmed in the wine district near Stellenbosch, and then joined the hydrographic staff attached to the South African Navy, from which he retired in 1981.

### **Benefactors.**

Donations from Obies and friends are used mostly to cover the ever increasing costs of distributing this newsletter, of which there are in excess of 500 printed copies posted around the world. The Committee accepts with gratitude donations received since May 2005 from the following:

E L Poulton, J Hewitt, B D Coquelle, Sueann Evans, J Fisher, W A Codrington, W P Goldsmith, W J D Damerell, C A Kroon, J Gemmel, C H Copeland, J A Rayner, P D Murray, H C Liedtke, Jean Farquhar, H J Viljoen, Margaret E Wijnberg, H D Barbier, A V Hague, W D Nelson, F Setzer.

### **Follow the Captain ... .. to the lifeboats!!**

During a particularly lengthy period of foul weather, while the research vessel "*Meiring Naude*" was working in the Aghulas Current off the Transkei coast, I had felt it necessary to remain on the bridge continuously for over 24 hours, to observe the varying sea and swell conditions as they occurred. The Scientists, being unable to work, came up frequently to see

how things were looking weatherwise. They were always very interested in the bridge operations, but careful not to obstruct the deck officers in any way.

Finally I felt that the weather was moderating and I would be able to get into my bunk for a good relaxing sleep. The ship was still rolling heavily on occasions, and the normal practice, in such conditions was to place your life-jacket under the mattress to form a comfortable wedge, which held you securely against the bulkhead.

In preparing for this move I took my life-jacket onto the bridge while rearranging the tapes, etc. I did not notice the Scientists disappearing down below, but very shortly thereafter they appeared on the bridge with their life-jackets on, and emergency whistles at the ready.

*Submitted by George Foulis, 1949/50.*

### **HMS “Kempenfelt”**

Dear Scribe, Being OB No. 1773, I was very interested in Commander Pomeroy’s “The First Thirty Years”, in the newsletter. He mentioned the destroyer, HMS “Kempenfelt”, which he delivered to Simonstown in ’48. Strangely, my “first trip” after leaving the Bothie in ’53 was in “Kempenfelt”, when she was towed from Simonstown to UK in ’54. The RN captain (Lt. Cdr. Tyres), even put me in charge of a bridge watch. Rather a strange situation, don’t you agree, for a seventeen year old first-tripper to be in charge of a watch on a warship? I guess I should explain that I was in that position due to having been accepted by the RFA as an apprentice in late ’53, and possibly also due to my application to join the RNR then. In retrospect I am glad I started my career at sea in RFA, as I am sure that led to me having many interesting (and exciting) experiences I could not have had in the regular MN.

Recently I came across a piece which I feel may be of interest to seafarers etc. from the book “The World at War” by Mark Arnold-Foster. DSO, DSC, mentioned in dispatches 3 times and demobilized as a Reserve Lieutenant in 1946.

“The Battle of the Atlantic was an attempt to force Britain to surrender for lack of food. The attempt very nearly succeeded. One main reason why it failed was the extraordinary tenacity of British Mercant Seamen. More than 32,000 died at sea during World War II, all of them volunteers, out of a total of 145,000. The overall casualty rate in the British Merchant Navy during World War II was higher than that in any of the armed services. It was comparable to the casualty rate suffered by the forces assigned to particularly desperate missions. For five and a half years British Merchant Seamen suffered roughly the same degree of casualties as General Wingate’s Chindits, who penetrated behind the Japanese lines in Burma. British Merchant Seamen were never actually compelled to sign for another voyage. Nor did they do it for the money. These civilians went back to sea again, time after time, simply because they were sailors, and thought they should.”

*Submitted by Roger Layzell, #1773.*

*Every year at this time (11 November) the Society of Master Mariners organizes a memorial service at the MN Memorial in Cape Town Harbour when these great sailors, some of them Obies, are remembered. No doubt there are similar memorial services around the globe.*

### **Cutting from The Cape Argus – 30 December 1949.**

#### **“South African Vessels Going to Japan.”**

The first South African ships to visit Japan since the war, and possibly the first ever, will be the Cape Town Liberty steamers *President Steyn* and *President Kruger*, owned by Southern Steamships of Johannesburg.

They have been chartered to take 9,500 to 10,200 tons each of heavy grain from the River Plate to Japan in December and early January at a freight of 61s. a ton.

A “President” steamer has just been chartered to bring 9,600 to 10,400 tons of phosphates from Morocco to the Cape next month for a freight of 34s. 6d. a ton. At the same time

charterers agreed to pay two Italian ships – the *Zeneiza* and the *Punta Amica* – 36s. a ton to bring 9,600 and 9,100 tons respectively to Cape Town, with late November loading. All three ships will get an extra 1s. 6d. a ton if they discharge at Durban.

**BABY BORN IN WHALER** – The care-taker crew of the Dutch whale-catcher A.M.12, lying at the Collier Jetty waiting the arrival tomorrow of her “mother” ship, *Willem Barendsz*, were all of a dither on Sunday morning when a Coloured woman gave berth to a baby on board their craft. They hurriedly sent for assistance, and within a few minutes an ambulance arrived to take the mother and child to hospital.

### **The Last Word – from Patrick Atwood.**

Below is an extract quoted from Andrew Craig Bennet’s column ‘Quarterpoint’ out of Wednesday September 28 2005 Lloyds List which I thought you may like to consider for ‘The Last Word’ at the end of one of the Bothie newsletters.

“Indeed, there can be little doubt that the Almighty does understand shipping rather well. The only ship ever completed on time and precisely to specification was Noah’s Ark, and a glance at the penalty clause in the building contract tells us why! If all shipbuilders were obliged to sail on the vessels coming from their yards, and were faced with drowning in the event of late delivery, there would be less work for the class societies and much less for the lawyers and the defence associations.

But we may note that the Almighty did not rely on these precautions alone. He drew a very tight spec. The ark was to be built of gopher wood, nothing else, and pitched within and without — with pitch. No pitching on the outside only and no using any lesser materials. All perfectly clear and no loopholes — indeed, it is a pretty good spec for ballast tanks, to this very day. How many of us have really looked at a spec, cobbled together in hurried negotiations, and seen just how many places the yard can, and generally will, drive a horse and cart through?”

It remains for me to close this, the last letter of 2005, by wishing you and your families a blessed and peaceful Christmas, and to ponder on this interesting and appropriate statement for the new year –

‘The Pessimist complains about the wind, the Optimist expects it to change and the Realist adjusts his sails.’ (Author unknown).

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