

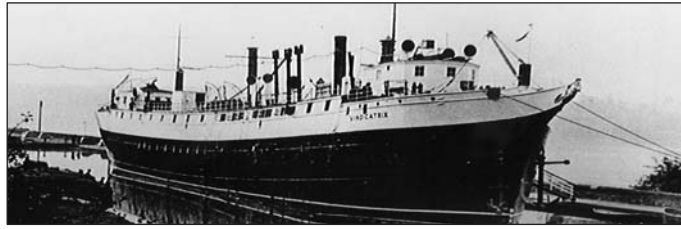


# T.S. VINDICATRIX ASSOCIATION NSW-ACT

*A part of the world wide Vindi family*



October 2008



Issue no. 64

Yet though her splendour may have ceased to be she played her sovereign part in making me.-*John Masefield*



## **Santa is coming -And so is THE FAMOUS VINDI CHRISTMAS PARTY**



Pyrmont Bridge Hotel

Top place -Top day-Top view

Top entertainment-Top food-Christmas fare

Leg of ham-Salads-sweets-Some free drinks

A Top Time Totally Guaranteed

*Or Questions will be asked!*

**'The' place to Sing & do your "thing"**

**Knees up & hair down**

**Saturday 13 December 11am**

**The place has been booked -the food has been booked -the music has been booked -A beautiful day in Sydney Town has been booked.**

**We just need YOU To BOOK to make it all happen.**

**So please- Bookings asap to**

Mick Wilkinson, 8/16 Wyadra Ave, Freshwater, NSW 2096

Cheques & money orders payable to Vindicatrix Association.

**\$30  
pp**



## **UP-COMING VINDI EVENTS**

**It's getting to party time of year again**

**Love to see you there—Your Vindi needs your support**

### **2009 Vindi Picnics**

**Sunday February 17th. -11am.**

**Same place as last year -**

**Toukley reserve, Toukley**

**Sunday March 21st.**

**Garden Island**

**11am Ferry from Circular Quay**

**A very picturesque place**

**lovely gardens & views**

**Plenty of Australian history in the**

**museum.**

**Details later but get the dates in the Diary  
Now**



*Money Money Money*



**Christmas is coming & so is Vindi Subs.**

**Be kind to our poor but hardworking  
treasurer Mick by sending in your Vindi  
subs early, it will make him so happy.**



**Mick in a Happy Mood!**

*(See the loose leaf insert inside)*

### Branch news

Saturday the 13th of September wasn't lucky for me on the Star City poker machines, I lost my \$5 stake in about 5 seconds. I don't know how the other Vindi Big Spenders got on as I lost them in that vast gaming hall.

But the Vindi luncheon was winner all the way –great food & great company  
The Garden Buffet Smorgasbord is really excellent value at \$32 for non members, \$25 for members and FREE if you become a member that day as most of us did!

Beer at \$5 a Schooner is somewhat painful but I found by drinking fast the pain soon went away  
But then I don't know of any pub in Sydney CBD area where a schooner is under \$4 nowadays.



From front to back-L&R -Peter & Leah Hand, the nicest couple you ever saw -Maureen Hales & Gloria Hodgson- Marea Mears & Peter Bearman- John Mears & Kevin Bedford- *obscured* Anne Kevin's partner– Holding the pint of German beer (@ \$6 the best buy at the bar) is Len Britton & leaning forward is Len's partner Amanda, they announced that they are getting married soon and everyone is invited (only kidding, they want a respectable wedding)



Left-Mike Siegle, Me-Debbie Siegle-Partially hidden behind my belly is Don Nicholson a 1959 Vindi boy all the way from Inverness, Don & his wife are visiting their daughter who lives in Crows Nest in order to attend a family wedding.

Mick Wilkinson (Wilko) on his left is Mick's friend Norma

Opposite Norma Is Jacqui King recently back from a beaut trip on the

Ghan and a week in Alice Springs where they saw all the sights including a Dawn balloon flight that was followed by a session in the microwave to defrost before partaking of breakfast.

Oh Jacqui's husband Bill is behind the camera taking the pictures but we don't really need his photo as he is almost a dead ringer for John Mears just add 'mutton chops'

*Aren't I awful Bill is really a Handsome fellow, according to Jacqui.*

*Poetic (editorial) license is wonderful thing you know*

## OBITUARY

**Gerald Neville Strangward 'Nev' 16 Dec. 1929 - 30 Sept. 2008**



Nev was born in Cambridge one of eight children, he was always keen to work and earn money to help the family along spending a few years doing a 'Milk Run' which gave him a broad education a good market base of regular customers for when the American GI's invaded the county and he upgraded to trading cigarettes obtained from the friendly soldiers.

What he traded for the cigarettes isn't know, perhaps it was his local knowledge of all things local.

Like a lot of lads at that time eager to do something he joined the MN and stepped aboard the Vindi aged sixteen in 1946.

Not a one company man he took what was going on the London pool, among his many ships there were a few Blue Star ships and in 1949 he joined the brand new Cargo/passenger liner 'Magdalena' which followed the 'Titanic' to become the third Harland & Wolff not to return from it's maiden voyage, the ship struck rocks near Rio de Janeiro fortunately everyone got safely off as the ship broke it's back, some, of the lifeboats landed on the famous Copacabana beach.

Two years ago Nev attended a 'Magdalena' reunion in Belfast and met up with shipmates from 59 years ago, interviewed by the BBC Nev as practical as ever said "No-one felt particularly heroic at the time. None of us wanted to get the VC, all we wanted to do was get off".

After eleven years at sea he met the love of his life Bobbie at the 'Empress' pub in Cambridge that his future mother-in-law was landlady of.

His seagoing days almost over they married in 1956.

Following a family trend Nev & Bobbie also went into the hotel business for a few years by running the 'Bell Inn' in Bottisham a village halfway between Cambridge & Newmarket

In 1966 they decided to try a new life in Australia and became 10 pound Pom's in 1966, at first living with friends in then settling in the Sutherland shire area of Sydney.

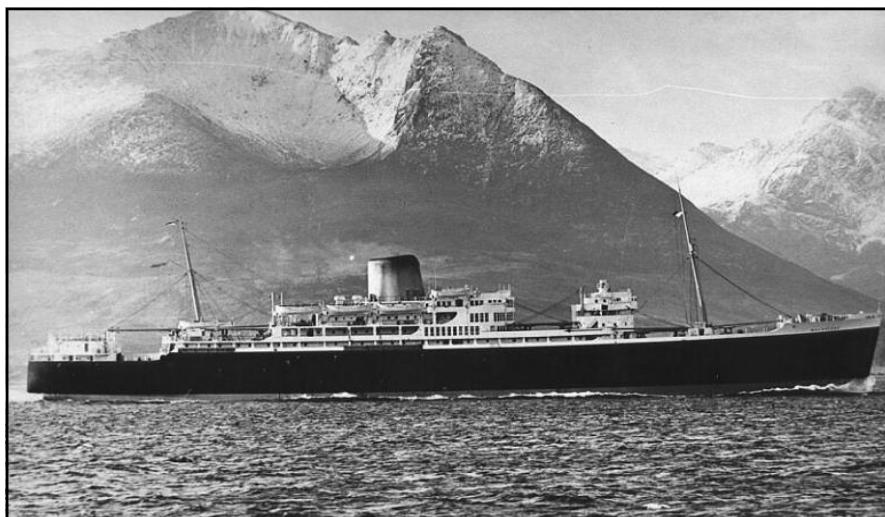
Nev went to work for TAA (Trans Australia Airlines), following the demise of TAA he became a traveling Rep in the Grocery trade, a job he loved as he liked to travel and to meet and make friends out all his customers. Made redundant from this company in 1985 they 'retired' to Lennox Hd. on the NSW North coast, retirement didn't quite suit just then so they both found work, Nev going into the grocery trade then in the Self Storage business, until retirement finally crept up on them.

Nev not a willing gardener took up Lawn Bowls and stayed out of the way while Bobbie blessed with green thumbs created a lovely garden in their Lennox head home.

Life dealt them a cruel blow when Bobbie was diagnosed with cancer and had to have several major operations over a few years during her brave fight against it but finally succumbing and passing away in 2004. Neville later made some trips back to the UK his last trip was in May 2008, when he left he wasn't feeling too good but it was thought to be the effects of a fall he had had recently but on his return in August it was found that he was suffering from a cancer in his liver.

Neville was only able to spend just two weeks in the care of his son Ken at his home in Caringbah before being admitted to the Calvary hospital were he passed away on the 30th. of September

Our deepest condolences to Ken and his family.



Left from Nev's early days  
The Royal mail Line's  
"Magdalena"  
passing some impressive  
South American scenery

## ECCENTRICS

*Not the wobbly bits on engine camshafts but the human variety*

*We have all met them when at sea, the last one I worked with was Pilot here in Sydney he used to bring his beloved dog onto the Pilot Cutter when going out to a ship, after he got up onto the bridge he would call us up on the radio and say put the dog on I want to talk to it!*

Roman John By David Partridge

Seafarers are well-read. Whether they are more literate than other sections of society is a matter for debate but what is certain is that almost every seaman I ever knew could be seen, at some time during the day, with book in hand. The subject matter ranged across the whole spectrum of human thought although of course there was a proliferation of dog-eared girlie type magazines which unhygienically travelled from cabin to cabin. But more often it was something slightly more cerebral and the knowledge that a good book was doing the rounds would swiftly bring the request of 'twos up'. Some read only westerns, others could not get past gruesome crime novels and one shipmate would read nothing which did not feature the American Civil War; another was studying philosophy and would regularly quote Kant and Jung to his mystified shipmates.

On one ship I earned the nickname of Shakespeare because I was seen with a copy of Henry 2nd in my back pocket. I must admit that initially this was so that I might be able to learn some quotations should I ever have the fortune to make acquaintance with a highbrow girlfriend. My fantasy of bedding down with the Portia of my dreams eventually came to fruition and it gave me a love of the Bard of Avon which stays with me until this day.

Most of the ships I sailed on were fortunate enough to have a small library kindly donated by the Seafarers' Education Society and so the needs of seamen hungrily thirsting after knowledge were gratified. There also seemed to be a pile of National Geographic magazines on every ship, none less than ten years old but no matter, in this way we learned of primitive tribes in New Guinea, the winter plumage of the hook-nosed gannet and the mating habits of the lesser-spotted Malayan tree lemur. All riveting stuff. Alongside the National Geo. there was always a bigger pile of Readers' Digest, that sometimes right-wing bible of the pseudo intellectual. I liked the Digest, most of its articles could be knocked over in half an hour and even its condensed books would occupy no more than half of the 12-4 watch but whether these shortened versions ever persuaded the reader to rush out and buy the complete text is questionable. A particular favourite in each edition was that feature entitled 'Increase your word power', where a score of 70% or more made one feel pretty damn smart for the rest of the day. Another regular feature was 'My most unforgettable Character' and it is this which finally brings me to the point of this whole piece.



**Roman John was a legend.** Even to this day when ex-'Oriana' crew members meet for the first time one of the first questions asked is, 'Were you there with the Roman?' Anyone who served on any of the P&O cruise ships from the mid 70s until the 80s knew him or knew of him and his fame and reputation were least equal to that of those glorious queens of Prescott Street, Stella Minge and Gloria Gash. I first met John in 1978 whilst working on 'Oriana' which then spent northern winters cruising out of Sydney. I was sitting in the crew bar shortly after departing Sydney when a good mate rushed in, seemingly most excited. 'Guess what, the Roman is on board'.

'Who?'

'The Roman, Roman John, I sailed with him on 'Arcadia', thinks he's a bleedin' roman emperor, total nutter'. Roman John certainly did have a powerful alter ego and in his luggage he always included three togas, one in dazzling scarlet, another in shimmering gold and a third in purple which he told me was his favourite as it was colour strictly reserved for the Caesars. Along with the togas came a laurel wreath and a silver chalice from which he would sup his chosen poison of the day. John's position on the ship was as a utility steward, just one of a motley bunch who would be used wherever needs be and John's

main occupation was to tend to the cleanliness of a section deep within the ship, a task which, it is said, which he did to perfection and totally without supervision. But it was during the social hours that John moved into his preferred parallel universe. The 'Oriana' crew bar was even more legendary than John himself and there was something going on very night, be it a disco, a fancy dress night or a visit from the professional entertainers on board. John revelled in these nights and he would make a stately entrance to the applause of his subjects. On one memorable night a chaise-long was commandeered upon which John regally reclined whilst sipping wine from his chalice. He was attended by two slaves, dressed only in loin cloths, one of whom cooled him with a giant fan whilst the other fed him grapes.

John never saw this as taking the piss, more as fitting homage to a nobleman of the Eternal City and he truly lived out his fantasy. He was not adverse to going ashore in his robes but he would only do so on those places which had actually seen the advance of the roman legions and so Sydney, along with the Pacific islands, were never witness to this bizarre sight. It was when 'Oriana' spent the summer cruising the Mediterranean that John could be seen, hopelessly pissed with laurel wreath askew, *continued next page*

### ECCENTRICS cont.

propping up a seedy bar whilst the locals and tourists tried to fathom out whether he was part of the cabaret or a busker. Or more than one occasion he was rescued by his shipmates before the muggers could get to him. He also went to great lengths to maintain his huge girth, one in keeping with that of an Emperor, and he was noted for the enormous amounts of food he could consume.

The great cities of North America were also denied the sight of the resplendent would-be Caligula, instead they were treated to a very different package. Occasionally 'Oriana' would be scheduled for an overnight stop in Los Angeles, San Francisco or Vancouver and during these stopovers John would don a gleaming white three piece suit set off with a red silk tie and handkerchief. With a Havana cigar the size of a small telegraph pole clenched in his jaw he would set off to feast in as many restaurants as his savings would allow in order to act out his fantasy, indulging in the extravagances of a pampered Caesar.

John was also famous for his monologues which he would recite on request, be it in the messroom, in the bar, or at his place of work. Most of them were self-penned and dealt with characters he had met at sea although one, which he called 'Webber', was lifted straight from a Harold Pinter play.

A favourite amongst the crew was 'Plate House' in which a New York journalist interviews two plate house stewards who admit that despite having been running from Southampton to New York for fifteen years have never been ashore in the Big Apple. Others which spring to mind are 'Bell Boy' and 'Bedroom Steward'. It would be a pointless exercise to attempt to transcribe these masterpieces to the written word for without John's subtle inflections and finely-tuned timing they would be but hollow versions of the originals.



### The "ORIANA" (OF THIS STORY)

I found my way into John's favour one afternoon when 'Oriana' was anchored in a Norwegian fjord. I had come across a book detailing the life of Charlemagne, a leading figure in Roman history and I gave it to him as he was staring out at the spectacular scenery. He was most grateful when I told him that he could keep the book and from then on whenever our paths crossed he would simply mutter, 'Charlemagne'.

He wasn't usually given to idle chatter but he obviously knew that I wasn't taking the piss and I remarked, 'Not many Romans around here John'. 'Well, no, there would have been no garrisons but there would have been trading links, there would be some influence. Jewellery and weapons and the like'. 'So when did you start getting into the Roman Empire John, pick it up at school?' 'Well it isn't exactly Rome that fascinates me but Byzantium'. 'So where was that?' 'Well at varying times it stretched from Greece through to Persia and the Holy Land and even into North Africa'. 'So we really should be calling you Byzantium John?'

'Well, yes, that would be correct but it won't happen'. And of course it never did.

My opinion of John has always been that he was one of life's true eccentrics, one who took his lead from no other and who was totally unique. But a fellow traveller has a different opinion and he describes John as 'a total raving loony, an absolute nutcase'. The genesis of Martin's judgement lies in the fact that he had the dubious experience of being

John's cabin mate for a few months. This was in the early 80s when VCRs had become readily available and affordable. John had equipped their cabin with a small TV along with his new toy. Alongside of the VCR he kept a stack of Frankenstein movies which he would watch endlessly, but never the whole film. He had programmed the machine to show his favourite scenes and repeat them over and over as he sat in front of the screen silently mouthing the words, occasionally interjecting with the shout of 'Byzantium!' It easy to see how Martin's judgement differs from my own.

John was raised in Bethnal Green, a tough area in the East End of London and I often wondered how his family and friends saw him and whether his fantasies were specifically reserved for those periods when he was at sea.

The sight of a fully clad Roman Emperor parading down Bethnal Green High Street on a Saturday morning would certainly have raised some eyebrows. Many shipmates are forgettable and soon forgotten, others become true friends, occasionally for life. Others are memorable simply because of who they were.

So it was with Roman John, a permanent and precious part of the folklore of 'Oriana', the Big O.

## DAY LIGHT SAVING

Daylight saving was first suggested, rather whimsically, by that great all-American All-Rounder, Benjamin Franklin, back in 1784. But nobody really took him seriously.

In 1907, an English builder, William Willett, wrote an essay published in the 'Times' called "Waste Of Day-light". He actually proposed setting the clock forward by 80 minutes, in four separate jumps of 20 minutes each, as the calendar moved through spring into summer.

Willet introduced several daylight saving bills into parliament, none of them got far-

But the arrival of WW1 changed the political equation, as DST was promoted as a way to alleviate hardships from wartime coal shortages and air raid blackouts.

After Germany led the way, the United Kingdom first used DST on May 21, 1916. U.S. retailing and manufacturing interests led by Pittsburgh industrialist Robert Garland soon began lobbying for DST and it was introduced in 1918.

In Australia, it proved so unpopular after it was introduced in 1917, that it was abandoned the very same year. The Federal Government introduced one-hour daylight saving in 1942, during World War II. It remained in force until 1944.

That was the end of daylight saving for us until 1967, when Tasmania introduced one-hour daylight saving. In 1971, after much controversy and discussion, one-hour daylight saving was introduced into New South Wales, Victoria and the A.C.T. Queensland, most of which is in the tropics and which would therefore not get much benefit from daylight saving, reluctantly joined in, but soon abandoned daylight saving. In 1974, Western Australia adopted one-hour daylight saving, but it was thrown out by a referendum in 1975.

New South Wales decided to adopt daylight saving permanently after a referendum in 1976.

Currently, about 25 countries shift to daylight saving time.



William Willet

## New Merchant Navy books

**"Ropner's Navy" –August 2008-** By Billy MacGee the famous writer/activist/webmaster on all things Merchant Navy tells the story of the more than 100 years of Ropner history. It features more than 60 original photographs as well as details of the seamen who sailed in the ships. Details of the history of every ship in the fleet is listed and details of the fate of those ships sunk by enemy action in two world wars.

\*\*\*\*\*

**"All Brave Sailors"** by J. Revell Carr is a new hard cover issue of the book first published in 2004 it tells the remarkable tale of those lucky few that survived the sinking of the English merchant ship, the Anglo Saxon by a German raider is a compelling story. The book also tells the story of the German raider who sunk it, most especially it's notorious captain. In relating the extraordinary life and character of Hellmuth von Ruckteschell, Carr has not drawn a stick figure villain, but has presented a fully realized and complex figure. This is the mark of top-notch storytelling and history.

Obviously the more inspiring story is that of those who survived on the Atlantic Ocean aboard the jolly boat for two months. Their struggles with hunger, exposure, thirst; injury and madness are the stuff of legend.

Carr wisely lets their story speak for itself. While filled with admiration for those plucky few who survived (and those who didn't as well) he does not embellish. He doesn't need to.

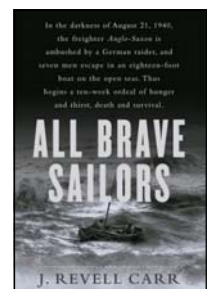
Among the many attributes of this book -- perhaps most notably that it's a cracking good read -- is that it gives recognition to the merchant seamen who so bravely and at such extraordinary risk served the allied cause during both world wars (my father among them). Merchant seaman suffered the highest proportionate losses of any service group during World War II.

"All Brave Sailors" is the story of war and the terrible cost it extracts from ordinary people. Not just those who perish, but those who they leave behind. We also see the costs extracted from those who survive. I would have liked more pictures and a few maps, but these are mere quibbles. This is a book worthy of the story it endeavors to tell and is highly recommended.

*Book revue from 'Amazon' books written by Neal Bellet (Wayne, New Jersey United States*



Left  
The Anglo Saxon



## **MERCHANT NAVY DAY 2008**

*What a fizzer it was here and in most of our country except South Australia where the MN fraternity did the Red Duster proud by having a Community march and commemoration to celebrate Merchant Navy Day in Port Adelaide.*

*At this service the city of Port Adelaide granted the Freedom of the City to the Merchant Navy.*

*Well done to everyone concerned in the organization of that day.*

*Perhaps you can give us some pointers in how to go about it here in NSW next year.*

### ***The report below is from a local Adelaide newspaper***

Almost 600 former and serving merchant seamen, Port Adelaide residents, and even local school children marched the length of the Port Adelaide Wharf on Wednesday, September 3, to celebrate and commemorate Australia's merchant navy.



Organiser John Williams could not have been more delighted. "It's been a great day. I'm proud to be associated with it."

Port Adelaide Enfield Mayor Gary Johanson said the event epitomised the spirit of the Port. Naval Commander Craig Pritchard, who marched alongside the merchant seamen, said the day was about the "unsung heroes" of Australia's war effort.

"But they're also the unsung heroes of peace time - 95 per cent of trade comes through Australia's ports."

Deputy Premier and Member for Port Adelaide Kevin Foley said recognition of Merchant Navy Day, which is also celebrated in Canada and the United Kingdom, was long overdue.

"Merchant navy men have almost been forgotten." "It's a very proud day to be a Port man," he said.

Local seaman Keith Ridgeway received the symbolic "key and charter" of the City of Port Adelaide Enfield on behalf of the entire Merchant Navy in a ceremony attended by Governor Kevin Scarce late Wednesday afternoon.

### ***From the MUA website***

Former and serving merchant seamen, Semaphore Port Adelaide RSL veterans, Merchant Navy Association SA, Maritime Union of Australia Veterans and other members, Vindicatrix Association SA and the South Australian Maritime Museum will be marching with a number of other maritime organisations, relatives and friends of seafarers and waterside workers and local school students.

The internationally renowned SA Pipes and Drums band will lead the march along Queens Wharf.

With funding from Port Adelaide's multi million dollar Newport Quays development 28 large Special Merchant Navy Day Street Flags promoting the historic event are now flying in Port Adelaide two weeks before the event.

A large Merchant Navy Red Ensign flag is flying on top of the new Tom 'Diver' Derrick VC Bridge across the Port River.

## **Freedom of the City awarded to the Merchant Navy Association (Wales)**

Who became the first 'Freemen' of the County Borough of the Vale of Glamorgan three years ago, will exercise their right to march through Barry on Saturday, April 19. The event, including a parade and wreath laying, starts at King Square around 11.15am and will last approximately half an hour.

The event begins with a salute taken by Vale Mayor Cllr Clive Williams and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Colin Jones, and culminates in a wreath laying at the Merchant Navy Memorial outside the Vale Civic Offices.

Wreaths will be laid by Cllr Williams, Mr Jones, Merchant Navy Association (Wales) president Oliver Lindsay, Barry Mayor Cllr Maggie Payne, who is president of the Barry branch of the association, political leaders and MNA members.

Prayers led by association chaplain the Rev Malcolm Davies will be followed by a minute's silence.

The Freedom, which is the highest tribute a County Borough Council can bestow, is a long-standing tradition whereby public recognition is given to individuals and/or organisations as an expression of the high esteem in which they are held both by the council in the area and its people.

The Civic Offices memorial commemorates merchant seamen from Barry and the Vale - their names are inscribed on special plaques - who have given their lives at sea during two world wars.

Cllr Williams said: "I'm sure this march and wreath laying ceremony will mean a great deal to so many families who have fond memories of a lost member or relation.

"The Vale and Barry, in particular, is well known for its maritime tradition, and, proportionately, Barry suffered more than most in terms of Second World War casualties of merchant seamen at sea."

## VINDI TRAVELLERS

Fred & Margaret Saunders of Newcastle way NSW have recently returned from a trip to the UK.



They had a really good time in the old country visiting new places, seeing old friends and tripping down memory lane. Fred with Margaret made his first visit back to the Vindi's old berth since he feeling 10' tall walked out of the gates for the last time way back in 1949. Fred like all of us 'returnees' felt the echoes, that the place has for us all, wondered about his old Vindi mates and all the years that have marched into the past since he was last standing there. Their trip was a present from their children, I can't think of a nicer present they could give, but it does show that Fred didn't educate them in life's important things like the dates of the annual Vindi reunion in Sharpness, they missed it by just a few days. I ask you!

Left Fred by the Vindi memorial that stands near the gates to the old camp. *good to see that is still looking as good as new.*

*The memorial is a credit to our association and others who contributed and to the Sharpness people who look after it's welfare for us. Lets hope it still is standing there in 100 years time.*

## VINDI TIME TRAVELLER

1939 Bundaberg Vindi boy Arthur Clark was instantly transported back 68 years in time on January 4th this year when he received an email from a girl friend he had met in Glasgow in 1941.

### *HOW IT CAME ABOUT*

The lady in question now long married of course was discussing with her husband the pleasure of their younger years and the joy of finding ones first love.

And Arthur's name came quickly to mind, she said' I have often wondered what had become of him" And her husband, like many of us now a computer fanatic 'Googled' Arthur Clark and to their amazement up came pages about him and a Video with Arthur himself speaking, all because of Arthur's own website on wood carving and the pages about him from the Bundaberg Art Gallery & Museum.

They where 'gobstruck' never expecting Arthur to appear instantly in their lounge room. Reminiscent of the TV show "As time goes by" their new love was thwarted by the lack of that one vital letter passing between them that was needed to keep their romance alive.

*And here the plot thickens.*

It wasn't until many years later that the lady's father had a "confessional" moment and told her that he had destroyed the letter Arthur had sent to her.

To make things worse Arthur's mother had written to the girl unbeknown to Arthur saying they were both far to young to have a serious relationship, from this the girl assumed the mother had talked Arthur into changing his mind about her.

And of course Arthur thought the same as he didn't get any reply to the letter he sent.

*The damage well intentioned parents can do*

As her letter says 'youngsters should be allowed to find their own way along that path of discovery'

*I love this paragraph from the letter*

"I was playing Hopscotch with my younger sisters when one of them said "Arthur is coming down the street"  
"I rushed upstairs to the flat to quickly wash & brush up before coming down to meet you"

*And go's on to say*

"The joys of youth in those days when innocence was part of growing up and feeling the difference from playing Hopscotch to having feelings for the opposite sex. The youngsters of today seem to have lost this innocent transition to becoming a young lady.

*A beautiful story to relate there has been a lot of emails traveling between the two catching up on 68 years of happenings. Ed.*



Left Arthur's first ship "Windsor Castle"  
Built 1930 Sunk 23/03/1943 in convoy KMF-11 by German aircraft (torpedo). She was hit at 02:30 sank 17:25, 110 miles WNW of Algiers, One crewman, Engineer William Ogilvie Mann, died. 2,699 troops and 289 crew were removed by HMS Whaddon, HMS Whaddon, HMS Eggesford, HMS Douglas. Arthur had left the voyage before after 2-1/2 years on her.

## A MASTER OF UNDERSTATEMENT

**Jim Gardener Vindi 1943.  
From Lovely Banks Victoria**

*I always thought I was good at editing a story down but I 'doffs me cap' to Jim.*

*Below is a letter he sent to our treasurer Mick with his subs early this year, Mick gave it to me and I promptly lost it until my computer died and I had to 'muck out' my office before installing the new computer and desk. His half page story of his first ship and its 5 months 21 day voyage covers half the world and lots of momentous happenings. I would have filled at least 2 books telling all this.*

Dear Mick,

Keep up the good office I always look forward to the newsletters and any old news.

Next week I will celebrate (65 years ed.) my leaving the 'Vindi after training going to Glasgow to sign on the 'MV 'WEARPOOL'

We went to Faslane to load military stores and ammunition then waiting at the Tail of the bank for a convoy to Gibraltar, were Italian frogmen where playing havoc with shipping. Then into the med convoy to Bone in Algeria, plenty of air raids from the Ities & the Huns, ballast back to Gib and the thought that we were going home...

Convoy down to Freetown then solo unescorted down to B.A. up the river to ROSARIO back to B.A. drinking and carrying on with the German crew from the GRAF SPEE who told us we were never going to get home because they knew they had friends out in the south Atlantic waiting for us. We finally loaded and crept out of B.A. one evening making Freetown 21 days later. Then a convoy home to England, paying off in Avonmouth. It was a good 5 month 21 day trip, we saw a bit of this and that but came through O.K.

I was seventeen and the world was my oyster and I opened it.

Give my kind regards to all the Vindi lads

Yours respectfully

Jim Gardner R275917



The 'Wearpool' 4982 tons, one of Ropners navy, built in 1936 by Wm. Doxford Stockton on Tees.

Reading on the web -after Jim's voyage she made 2 more voyages supplying the army in North Africa loading in New York for Oran. She appears to have survived the war unscathed and lived on to a grand old age being scrapped in 1980.

Ropner's sold her to the Swede's in 1964 who renamed her the "Adelso" they sold her to the Greeks in 1971 and renamed her "Leftkipos" then again to "Dimitros" in 1979.

A credit to her builder Wm Doxford who with their famous opposed piston oil engine that proved very economical to run helped the UK MN fleet, especially the tramps to rule the shipping world for many years.

The unique 'signature' noise the engine made when chugging away at it's most economical cruising speed was said to be "making money..making money..making..money"



*The plaque honouring the memory of all those who lost their lives serving on Ropner's ships in peace and war was recently unveiled in Ropner park Stockton on Tees.*

*You can read the moving speech made by Billy McGee at the unveiling on this website*

<http://www.murrayarmstrong.com/tm/ropner.htm>

Or just 'googling' ropner.

## A MASTER OF UNDERSTATEMENT 2

**Dennis Hunter Vindi 1947 –Beechwood NSW.**

*Way back in Jan 2007 Dennis sent this letter to Mick along with his subs, Mick gave it to me and I filed it. It resurfaced during the same upheaval described in the previous article.*

*You see my filing system doesn't actually lose anything it just preserves them for posterity.*

Dear Mick,

I was on the Vindicatrix in early 1947 and I signed on to the "SS Banff Park" early in May that year. What a trip that was. Several calamities happened. For instance 2 men were arrested in Karachi— one for theft and one for assisting. The assistant steward was jailed for 6 months and the other bloke who was actually trying to stop him got fined.

We went aground in the Bay of Bengal and just off Colombo the 2cnd. Engineer broke his back falling down a coal chute. A fireman died between Calcutta and Madras. The ship caught fire in Rangoon. Number one hold and number two hold went up as they were loaded with raw cotton and rubber. An oil lamp had fallen from it's post as we were unloading at night. The refrigerators were burnt out and several plates were buckled on the starboard and port sides. Before we sailed for Keppel Harbour for repairs we had to take on live-stock-sheep and pigs. We spent 3 months in Singapore waiting for repairs to be completed.

So it was quite an eventful trip.

Kind regards Dennis

### YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!!



Left the unfortunate "Banff Park" Reading about her on the web it turns out that Dennis's trip aboard her was 'par' for the course.

It's a mystery she lasted 25 years. She was built under the emergency war ship-building program in Canada

Type: North Sands

Delivery Date: 03/09/42

Builder: Davie SB & Rep. Co. Ltd., Lauzon, Quebec

Manager McLean Kennedy Ltd. Montreal

Transferred to MOWT1947:

Mgrs.; Ohlsson S.S. Co. Ltd. Hull, UK1949:

Mgrs.; Constantine S.S. Lines Ltd. Middlesborough, UK

History:

1950: Oakhurst. - Rex Shipping Co. Ltd. Halifax, NS/Hadjilias & Co. London clients of I.H. Mathers & Son,

1957: Catalonia. - Asturias Shipping Co. Panama/Hadjilias & Co. Ltd. London

1961: Xenophon.

26/10/62: Wrecked on rocks of Ushant, France. Latitude : 48\*18.322' N / Longitude : 4\*50.665' W

## CUTTY SARK

Phil Hughes a Dover Vindi boy has been sending me maritime snippets for years now and recently he has been keeping me up to date with the fate of the "Cutty Sark" that was almost totally destroyed in that woeful fire.

An enquiry has found that the blaze was started by an industrial vacuum cleaner that was left on over the weekend, it filled up and overheated. The report went on to slate security guards who failed to make patrols and some were sleeping. And after smelling smoke coming from the vessel they didn't call the fire brigade for 37 minutes.

The guards also tore pages from their logbook to cover up their mistakes, the police found them in the garbage bin.

The Cutty Sark trust may now take action against the main contractor 'Heery International'

Meanwhile a fund was started to collect donations for the restoration

The biggest donor by far has been the Romanian born Israeli shipping magnate Sammy Ofer who has given \$7million to the fund. The gift followed another donation of \$45million he made to the British national Maritime Museum—The biggest act of cultural philanthropy by an individual in Britain.

Mr Ofer an 86 year old billionaire is ranked 226 in the worlds rich list. Some of the assets he owns or partly owned together with his brother Juli, consist of one of the largest private shipping companies in the world, which includes the company ZIM & Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.



Left the burnt out vacuum

He served in the Royal Navy during WW2.

## **JUMPING SHIP**

Lots of our Vindi boys made new lives for themselves here, NZ and around the world by jumping ship.

### **It's nothing new.**

My eldest daughter in researching our family tree discovered that a Grand uncle of mine jumped from a RN ship called the HMS Ruby at the Uruguayan port of Montevideo in 1885 and a year later his name was on the 1886 American census. (*Fast movers us Hales'*)

Vindi Boy Norm Clark of Ross Tasmania has a book written by an able seamen who jumped ship here in 1947, picked up by the police in outback WA when working laying the rail line to Perth a few weeks later. Following detention in prison he along with 300 other UK MN seamen were shipped back to England in the steerage class without a penny or a smoke amongst them, while in the second & first class accommodation well fed and feted were 400 Italian POWs being repatriated.

The book went on to say that in 1946/1947 some 7,000 UK MN seamen jumped in Australia, so many that the lack of crews available in UK made the UK government apply pressure in Australia to round them up and send them home.

**Norm said he going to leave me the book in his will. Aren't you Norm.**

All this was brought on by the following item I found when reading some American history from the war of Independence 1775-1783 –that's the Americans fighting the British.

*“As for the American merchant marine, it was full of British seamen  
Beyond doubt inducements were offered them at every American port to desert and ship under the Stars and Stripes.*

*In the winter of 1801 every British ship visiting New York lost the greater part of its crew.*

*At Norfolk the entire crew of a British merchantman deserted to an American sloop-of-war.*

*A lively trade was done in forged papers of American citizenship, and the British naval officer who gave a boat-load of bluejackets shore leave at New York was liable to find them all Americans when their leave was up.*

*Other nations looked covetously upon our great body of able-bodied seamen, born within sound of the swash of the surf, nurtured in the fisheries, able to build, to rig, or to navigate a ship.*

*They were fighting sailors, too, though serving only in the merchant marine.*

*In those days the men that went down to the sea in ships had to be prepared to fight other antagonists than Neptune.*

*All the ships went armed. It is curious to read in old annals of the number of cannon carried by small merchantmen. We find the 'Prudent Sarah' mounting 10 guns; the 'Olive Branch,' belied her peaceful name with 3, while the pink 'Friendship' carried 8.*

*These years, too, were the privateers' harvest time.*

*During the Revolution the ships owned by one Newburyport merchant took 23,360 tons of shipping and 225 men, the prizes with their cargoes selling for \$3,950,000.*

*But of the size and the profits of the privateering business more will be said in the chapter devoted to that subject. It is enough to note here that it made the American merchantman essentially a fighting man”.*



**Left** the HMS Ruby dressed overall & the yards manned.

**Right** at anchor with the boat booms rigged out.

She was classed as a cruiser and was doing a 2 year stint on the South American Station when my grand uncle Arthur jumped from her



Her job apparently was to cruise up & down the coast paying official visits—

No doubt 'showing the flag' and letting everyone know who had the biggest navy and saying “don't you forget it”

## MY JOURNEY IN A TIME MACHINE—THE “SS KYLE BANK” 1958



I wish now that I had had the sense at the time to appreciate what the 'Kyle Bank' was and what she represented but being a young kid I couldn't get out of her quick enough and back onto something modern.

Alas I missed my chance to get to know the qualities of the life and times she represented.

She was, in her time I now realize, a state of the art vessel built circa 1930 to do a job that she did exceedingly well throughout her long career, a career that proved her to be an efficient, economical, reliable well built seaworthy vessel.

A lean machine in today's jargon.

What you saw was what you got, no pretensions.

Painted a practical Black & Brown all over - the only white

paint being the band on the funnel, the apron on the stem head and her name.

I can't recall the Captain but I can still see the mate, he was the same colour— black uniform jacket & trousers and a brown woolen crew necked jumper (no shirt), he never changed his clothes.

We 4 deckhands and the 4 Arab firemen/donkymen lived in the foc'sle - a scrubbed wooden table separated our 2 rows of bunks, near the head of the table a Pot bellied stove always aglow with burning coal, outside of this central area Handy Billys, rope & wire slings hung from deckhead beams, drums of paint kerosene, turps, linseed oil, Stockholm tar and Beeswax. A work bench with vice, fids, spikes, serving mallets, spun yarn and twine and all the paraphernalia of a Bosun's store, it all added a not unpleasant aroma to the air in the foc'sle and lots of creaking noises when at sea that somehow mellowed the thumping of the anchor chains and the waves against the bow.

The most unpleasant thing in the foc'sle was the Arabs constantly 'hawking' - they all had empty Capstan tobacco tins hanging on nails by the head of their bunks into which they spat great green gobs.

Being on coastal articles she was a feed yourself job, no cooks or stewards or refrigerator, a large iron pot, of a size you would boil a missionary, in was our life saver, bolted down on top of the coal fired galley stove it was kept on the 'blood' bubbling gently.

Before sailing we 4 'new' coastal sailors had a tarpaulin muster then dashed ashore to buy spuds, onions, bread, meat & eggs. The iron pot was about a quarter full when we joined from the previous crew, god knows what was in it but to it we added our supply of spuds, onions & meat.

Our bread bacon & eggs soon ran out so it was stew for breakfast dinner and tea until we got ashore again in Amsterdam. Nothing was wasted, we didn't have a gash bucket, anything left over went into the pot.

Oh and we forgot to buy tea so it was water all trip not that we really missed it, working 4 on 4 off you didn't spend long out of your bunk when watch below

The rest of the crew all fed separate from us-not that you could blame them for that but they all fed in separate groups, none of them ever came in the galley, the engineers had a stove in their messroom, the firemen cooked on the pot bellied stove in the foc'sle, I never found out what the Captain and mates ate or did for food.

The engine room was beautiful! I can't describe it any other way it was absolutely spotless and just gleamed from the top grating down to the bed plates. The hand rails, the plates and grating you walked on shone.

The engine itself was a whispering miracle of gleaming metal rods and wheels revolving to a murmuring rhythm. The Firemen's domain the stokehold was similarly impressive, gleaming bright work, the front of the boilers burnished black, not a piece of coal to be seen except when they swung a shovelful from the hopper into the fires which they kept burning bright and even -they had the knack of making look so easy, when I had a go I scattered coal everywhere.

Though they did something strange as we were about to enter St Malo about 7pm on a sunny Sunday evening - we were in the locks, the top of our woodbine funnel was just about level with the top of the lock wall - were stood many local townspeople out for an evening 'promenade' - ladies in sun hats & summer dresses, men in their Sunday suits children all dressed up when Bang—from the funnel shot a great mushroom shaped cloud of virtually liquid smoke, almost like crude oil, great sticky globules falling all over everyone, the crowd screamed and scattered—summer dresses ruined.

In port it was Donkey boiler and beautifully crafted oil lamps on gimbles that gave a homely glow especially when snug in your bunk and I learnt something of the Lamp trimmers art.

Coming back from the pub it was sausages and toast for supper on the pot bellied stove

Salt water showers, never used except as Oilskin lockers.

Stand up baths in the galley from the freshwater hand pump .

But my favourite memory is of lying in my bunk on sunny days watching hundreds of little light beams chase around all the dark corners of the foc'sle, the beams came from thick glass 'portholes' about 6 inches in diameter set into the deck head on the underside they had several glass pyramids about 3 to 4 inches long that diffused the sunlight coming down from on deck and scattered the light beams around and as the ship rolled they would swoop up and down ever moving and changing colours as the refraction angles changed.

I have never seen the like of them since, wish I had one now, wish I had stayed on my time machine longer.

Sigh! Terry hales