

Herbert Wilkinson

26/05/1927—11/12/2006 Vindi 1942/3



Herbert & Isabella Wilkinson

Sadly I have to report that one of our Vindi Boys, Herbert Wilkinson, crossed the bar on 11 December, 2006. Bert, as he liked to be called, was born in Lancaster on 26 May, 1927, joining the Vindi on 26 July, 1943. He signed on his first ship the Dominion Monarch as a laundry boy on 11 October completing two voyages on her. Two other ships he did wartime service on were the Samarinda and Empress of Scotland. He met his wife of 60 years, Isabella, in Morecambe, two days before reporting to the Vindi.

They were married on 8 August, 1946.

His son, Brian, has written to me telling me that Bert was a very private person, only letting titbits of his WWII service out when documentaries were being shown on TV or WWII films; merely saying I was there when that was happening.

Only six weeks before he died did he tell his family the he was at the Normandy landings where was part of the firing party of a rocket launcher that fired twelve missiles at a time in support of troops going ashore from the ship he was on.

He swallowed the anchor in January 1947 after completing a further three single voyages on the Sterling Castle, the Franconia and the 20,000 ton Queen of Bermuda.

His service on the latter ship: 3/9/46 to 26/9/46 coincided with the time I was serving on her as an assistant steward.

Not surprisingly I can't remember whether we ever rubbed shoulders.

The Queen of Bermuda, at the time was still a troop ship, bringing home 3000 lads at a time who had fought all the King's enemies, from varying parts of the world. Bert however, didn't adapt well to shore life, in spite of Isobella bearing him two sons, one in 1947 and Brian in 1948.

On January 19th 1951 he joined the Grenadier Guards where upon he was sent to Korea and earned his discharge in November, 1955. (I suspect he could have told quite a few stories about those times too!)

Bert eventually trained as a fridge mechanic wanting to get a trade certificate to improve his income. He and Isobella followed their son Brian out to Australia in 1980. Bert determined to make a go of it, and in spite of being middle aged he took work where he could find it, including 12 hour shifts doing foundry work: not retiring until he was 70.

Brian writes his dad had been in failing health for some years.

He leaves behind his widow, two sons, eight grandchildren, five of them in Australia, three in the UK and one great grandchild.

On behalf of all our association Terry Hales as President sent a card to his widow expressing condolences to his family. A wreath was also sent from our NSW/ACT Association with a card bidding him "fair weather" on the longest voyage all us old sailors will make, crossing the bar for the last time.

John Mears. ed.