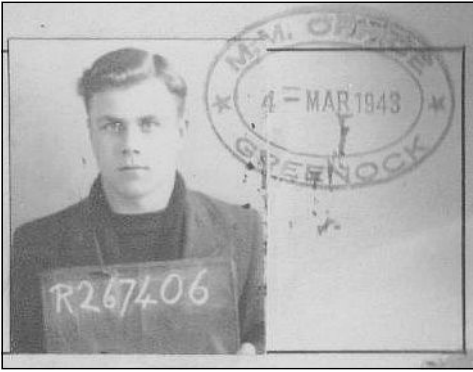


### Crossed The Bar

**Leonard Roy Wade -Jan 9 1925– April 14 2010.**

**Vindi 14 Sept–14 Dec 1942. R267406.**



Len was one of the founding members of our association and an early member of the Red Ensign 'Vindi table' some years before the Vindi Association started. Born in Leicester, he was the fourth of five children (3 brothers and a sister) his first job as a boy was doing a newspaper round so when many years later his daughter and her husband opened a newsagent's shop they had a fully trained helper. At age of 10 he joined the Sea Cadets until the age of 16,

On leaving school he started work as an apprentice at an Engineering company.

The walk to work led him past a girl's school, where unbeknown to him he was being weighed up by a bevy of schoolgirls who fancied the look of him but it was 15 year old Betty who made the connection and scored the prize.

So in 1941 they started a lifelong partnership of caring for each other which culminated during Len's last three years as his health faded away with Betty increasingly becoming his fulltime carer, tending for him with love and affection.

Aged 17 he applied to join the Merchant Navy and was sent to the Vindicatrix for his sea training. He joined his first ship the 'Windsor Castle' in Greenock on 13 March 1943. Just 10 days later in the Mediterranean off Algiers as part of convoy KMF-11 she was torpedoed at 0230 by a German Ju88 that launched two torpedoes at her. Luckily one missed. Had they both hit and the weather not been calm the story could have had a worse ending, because at the time she was carrying 2,699 troops and a crew of 289 all of whom except one man, a ship's engineer were picked up by convoy destroyer escorts. HMS Whaddon, Eggesford, and Douglas.



Sea cadet Len

Len was one of 30 crew members who volunteered to go back on board with the Captain to see if the ship could be saved as salvage vessels had been dispatched from Algiers. Len was led down the engine room by the Chief officer and posted just above the footplates that were awash with the instructions "keep and eye on how fast the water rises and watch the after bulkhead, if the water starts to rise fast or if the bulkhead gives way run up on deck and tell me."

It was only after the chief had gone that Len realized he didn't know the way out of the engine room as he had never been down there before. He just knew he had to keep going up.

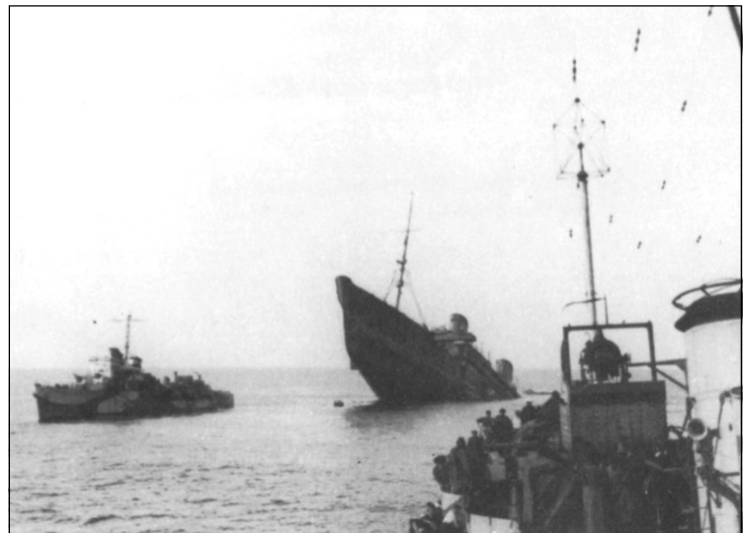
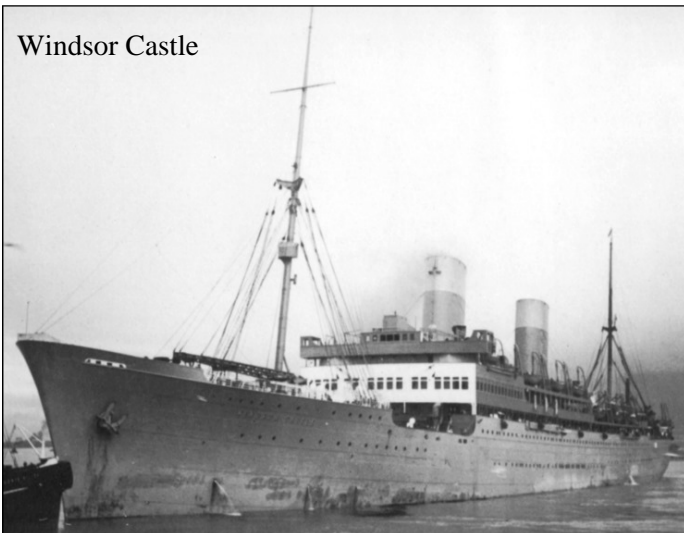
The ship sank fifteen hours later. Len along with other crew was landed in Gibraltar from there he had the great pleasure of being repatriated to UK on the giant battleship HMS Nelson.

On his next voyage he had better luck, he sailed from Glasgow and paid off the same ship the 'Hoperange' in Liverpool a full year later. He saw action in the Battle of the Atlantic and made voyages out to the middle east and Australia.

For five months he was based in Italy, his discharge book records him leaving London in April 1945 to the 'Naples then to the Taranto shipping pool' and returning to Liverpool in November 1945. Apparently these shipping pools were set up to help man the many ships running supplies to the forces and the Italian populace at that time.

He paid off his last ship the 'Ridgefield' at Tilbury on Feb 15 1947.

Windsor Castle



## Crossed the Bar - Len Wade

4

Len and Betty married at their local church in Leicester in 1945 where Len went back to his trade on leaving the MN.

Deciding to try a new life in Australia they left England with 10 year old daughter Janice on the 'Strathnaver' in 1957.

They lived for two years just south of Wollongong at the Berkeley migrant hostel. Settling into the area, Len started work at the Port Kembla BHP steelworks as a Boilermaker in the fabricating shop where he stayed for over 20 years.

From 1967 he became interested in golf and was a member of Port Kembla Golf Club for many years playing competition and also enjoying social golf with Betty.

In later years he and Betty enjoyed many social functions with his fellow Vindi Boys and many friends from the Red Ensign MN group who had also served in the MN during WW2.

After retirement Betty and Len made a few holidays back to England to catch up with family and friends and enjoy an ale or 2 in the lovely old English pubs that he loved .

And of course to visit the home of his old training ship the T.S. Vindicatrix at Sharpness in Gloucestershire where they stayed at the oldest pub in town the Pier Hotel.

On their last couple of trips they were able to catch up with their Granddaughter Paula who is domiciled in London now. Paula, wasn't able to make the funeral due to the

Volcanic dust shutting down the airports in the UK but on the card attached to the flowers she and Jason sent, it mentioned that they were sure Poppa would have found and old English style pub in the sky.

Our deepest condolences to Betty, Janice, Paula, families and friends.

*Several Vindi Boys, Red Ensign men and their partners attended the funeral service and a Red Ensign was draped on the coffin. Betty and Janice thanked us for our attendance, we in turn would like to thank them both for their warm friendship and the service they arranged for Len. It was a nice way to say goodbye when you have to say goodbye to an old friend and comrade.*

*Footnote – Association member John Mears was also on the Windsor Castle when she sank, he didn't know Len then. They first met on the 51st. anniversary of the sinking of the Windsor Castle at a Sydney University Merchant Navy Association function to welcome American WW2 MN veterans in 1994.*

*The Berkeley migrant hostel was home to at least three other Vindi families around the time of Len & Betty's residence there. Again it would be many years before that was known. TH*



### **Above Len & Betty**

*Betty told me that Len wasn't happy wearing a 'uniform' for the wedding but his mother had insisted as she had received taunts from neighbours because Len was seen in civvies' all the time he was at home on leave. Len himself received similar insults when on leave as did many Merchant Seamen making the wearing of a 'uniform' of cap and reefer jacket a common practice. The MN silver badge was issued in 1940 to signify war service for the wearer.*



50th.anniversary



Vindi group at Red Ensign meeting  
Flemmington



ANZAC day march Sydney