

Although there was some disappointment at the poor attendance at our AGM, I feel we all enjoyed our stay in Coventry.

It seems to me that an AGM format is not the most popular of events. Therefore take note of our social secretary's interesting proposal.

Lt. Richie Moss, our Treasurer, has resigned, due to pressure of work and I am pleased to tell you that Nigel Craft has provisionally volunteered to take on the job.

Chairman's Report

We are still going ahead with our photo competition and our Social secretary will be purchasing the trophy in the near future. Details will be published at a future date

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and may the New Year fulfil all your hearts desire.

JAC

From our Departing President

A somewhat tumultuous year for the Royal Navy in which the detainment of naval personnel and the subsequent aftermath threatened to overshadow all the good work the Service is undertaking across the globe.

What that event did bring home, is that no matter what your Specialisation, there is always the potential for capture!

However, what stood head & shoulders above this was the outstanding success of 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines in Afghanistan. Operating for a 6 month deployment in a harsh and hostile environment the photographers serving with the Brigade produced some outstanding images that really captured the action and feel of the campaign, many of which were used by the media and ensured that one of them, PO Sean Clee, won the Royal Navy Photographer of the Year 2007 award.

Work in support of intelligence continues, plus attachments to ships with the emphasis on unit PR. HM Ship's continue to achieve record-breaking drugs busts at sea, and again it is the photographs accompanying the stories that ensure prominence is given in newspapers and TV news.

Many of you are aware that, for some years, photographers have also undertaken the role of Image Analyst. This role has evolved so that we now have personnel based in the USA controlling Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, (UAVs), flying over Iraq and Afghanistan.

One of those, CPO 'Scouse' O'Shaughnessy has just been awarded the Medmenham Trophy as UK's top Defence Image Analyst in recognition of his outstanding work in this area.

As the Chairman noted in the last Newsletter I am about to hand over the reigns as Fleet Photographic Officer, a role I have enjoyed immensely.

I believe that the Photographic Specialisation's future remains bright with plenty of career opportunities for all 'Phots', as long as operational focus is maintained and evolves with the RN's changing requirements.

It is good to see that the RNPA is in a buoyant state, reflecting the hard work of the Committee and common bond of its members, a group of talented and fascinating characters. Best wishes for the future and thank you for the privilege of serving as your Honorary President.

Lt. Cdr. Martin May Clingo RN

Thanks to everyone who contacted us about Coventry and thanks to all who attended.

We hope to see you at one of the events next year but if not, please be assured of our best wishes for the festive season and a tremendous 2008.

Yours Aye

Blondie & Val

RNPA Committee

President : Lt. Cdr. Mark Singleton RN

Chairman :
John Cunningham 02392 780806

Vice Chairman/Social Secretary :
Lt Cdr Stuart Antrobus, BEM, RN

Secretary/Editor :
Brian and Val Robertson 01274 530982
Valerierobertson@hbosplc.com

Treasurer : Nigel Craft

Webmaster : Paul Cowpe RN - www.rnpa.org.uk

Historian : Maurice (Jan) Larcombe, jandor@which.net

Area Representatives :-

Serving - PO(Phot.) Flo Ford
Scotland and N.Ireland - John Berrecloth 01382 457601

Northern - Blondie Robertson 01274 530982

Islands - Danny Du Feu 0116 289 8725

Southwest/Wales - Ian Gutteridge 01326 564514

South John Flack 01329 235325

Southeast - Ray Whitehouse 01903 77090

Secretaries' Report

That's it then, Halloween, bonfires and Coventry are all over and done. The RN knows how to party and the 43 who visited Coventry did just that.

Good Hotel, good food and GREAT company all added up to a fantastic w/e. Val did a bit of talking and got a reduced bar price which went down well.

So what did the meeting produce apart from thick heads?

Well it was longer than usual as there was a lot of chat both from the floor and from the committee.

The voting took up some time and for those who did not attend here is the result.

Not a lot of change but it is interesting.

Chair : John Cunningham
Vice Chair & Social Sec : Stuart Antrobus
Secretary and Newsletter : Brian and Val Robertson
Treasurer : Nigel Craft

Then we have the new position of membership secretary and this task falls on Danny du Feu who will be assisted by Steve King.

Their job will be to look at the membership old and new and members lost, stolen or strayed who can be re-introduced to the Association and keep up to date with the membership so that we all know who is who.

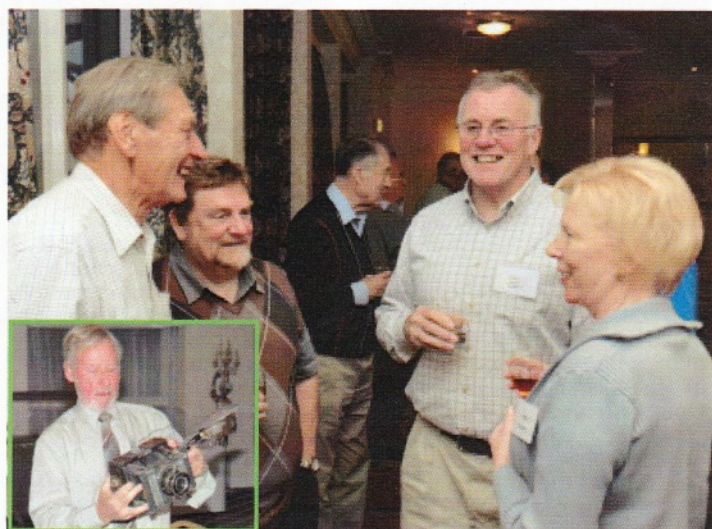
RNPA General Meeting 20th October 2007



Absent Friends and Shipmates who have crossed the bar since last meeting were remembered.

Chairman's Report

Chairman, John Cunningham, welcomed members and observers to the meeting. John expressed regret that more members hadn't felt able to attend and hoped that as a result of discussions at this meeting a way forward would lead to future reunions being well attended and to increased membership.



ed to the position of Social Secretary

John Cunningham remains as Charman
Subsequent to the meeting Nigel Craft kindly volunteered to take on the position of Treasurer, once the accounts were in order

The way forward
We discussed remaining an 'Association'

It was felt that we should retain the name of 'association' and have reunions with a small AGM associated.

Proposal

That we retain the Association under the present standing rules and re-establish the historical Photographic branch reunion (review of rules to take place)
Proposed by Nigel Craft
Seconded by Ray Whitehouse

Passed unanimously

This needs to be communicated out to all ex-members, serving photographers etc
Stuart to write an article for Navy News
Royal British Legion magazine
Airy Fairey magazine
The Wren and any others as appropriate

Address of secretary, where to join and how to get to reunion to be on website.
Stuart to speak to Paul Cowpe and bring him up to date.

Proposal

The association creates the position of membership secretary

Proposer Ray Whitehouse
Seconded by Roy Pogson

Passed unanimously
Membership secretary election
Danny du Feu supported by Steve King

Nominated by Bill Stenning
Seconded by Jan Larcombe

The RNPA Photographic Competition 2008

Peter Newton Memorial Plate - Presented to the winner of the Photographic Competition and held for twelve months.

John explained the background to the trophy. Further donations welcome
About £200 already available
Trophy to be engraved

Presentation at reunion suggested.
Rules to be decided.
Open to RNPA members as an annual event with photographs available at the reunion.

Reunion

There was a discussion about when and where. It was agreed for Stuart to investigate a booking, in Portsmouth/Plymouth Area

Stuart's connections are all in Portsmouth and he will be organising the reunion.

Secretary's Report

Brian thanked those present for their support.

New ideas are required if we want to keep these meetings going and encourage people to attend

Treasurer's Report

Richard Moss has resigned

Our Social Secretary, Pete Bunting has resigned.

Agenda

Treasurer's position
Current signatories
Richard Moss
John Cunningham
Stuart Antrobus
Pete Newton

JC said that there was approx. £3000 in the bank

Membership and meetings

It was asked whether we needed a membership secretary
Discussion over the membership and attendance at social events

One reason would be to find out if people we knew in the service are still around

It was felt that the AGM format was not attracting attendance at reunions. Active serving members not interested or don't know where they will be at the time

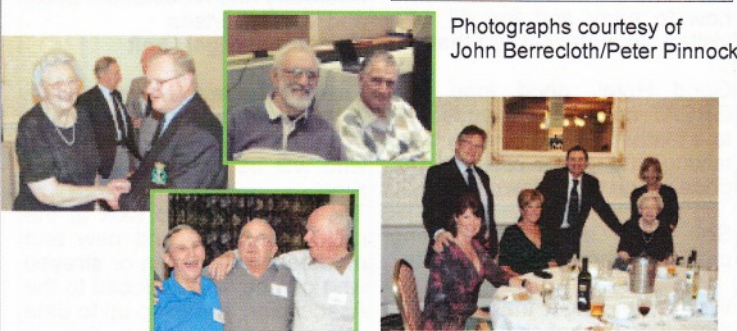
There was a suggestion that the format which used to exist where the Peregrine trophy awards and reunion were held at same time was more attractive but it was understood that, having moved this to London, it would not be returning to Pompey.

I was agreed that it was easier to attract members, celebrities and sponsorship to the previous format

Election of officers

Blondie and Val were elected as Secretary/Newsletter Editor and received a vote of thanks for their efforts.

Stuart Antrobus remained as Vice Chairman and was elected



Photographs courtesy of John Berrecloth/Peter Pinnock

This piece about Mike Bristowe courtesy of Norman Grantham (thanks Norman - Ed)

Mike Bristowe enrolled as a Phot following refusal as a rating pilot. He joined the RN at WW2s end and offered himself for pilot training.

The Admiralty was at six and sevens then as the new sophisticated aircraft were expensive and merited an Officer in command. Mike and I were relegated to the Phot branch whilst deliberations took place. No more rating pilots.

gave up the challenge but Mike persevered. He was accepted for pilot training and serving in 738 Squadron at Lossiemouth in 1960 losing his life when on the 27th July he took off on a Navex with a Midshipman W Gilligan in Sea Vampire T22 XA114 but within one mile of the runway veered 70 degrees to port and crashed at Coulard Bank Farm.

Mid Gilligan ejected but was too low to survive.

Poor Mike never had the best of aircraft. He reported accidents in Scimitars XD238 XD239 XD246 XD264 and Sea Venom WW203.

He called me at Culdrose early in 1960 suggesting I should still consider an Aircrew future with him but I had already decided on a Colonial Service career.

It's a great pity I couldn't have persuaded him to join me. We might still have the company of a truly first class chap.

BTW if anyone has any photos of Mike I would be happy to print one and pass on a copy to Norman

John Edwards (known as Andy in RN) sent in a piece - originally published in the Globe and Laurel. He met Ron Bowey in HongKong when his news unit was on route to Korea in 1950.

I didn't get it electronically but I have attached the photos and have photocopied the article and added it as an addendum

The Heroes Return



A message from Our Vice Chairman

Hi Everyone,

This just a short message to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH for supporting Michelle & Bradley in the way that you have over the past few weeks.

I'm aware that many of you in Scotland were frustrated at not being able to register your vote in the short time allowed by the TV company. It appears that there was some kind of technical communications problem between the whole of Scotland and the London phone HQ and the volume of calls just could not be handled. This is only speculation so please don't quote me on it! Michelle and Bradley are now through to the next exciting stage of the competition and genuinely appreciate all of the support you are giving them.

If you would like to see photos from Saturday's show please visit their website at www.bradleyandmichelle.co.uk Hope this finds you all well and in good spirits!

SPREAD THE WORD AND PLEASE KEEP VOTING

Stuart and Colleen



Subject: AGM 2007

Hi Val & Blondie, thanks for the newsletter. Pity about last years AGM.

It would be nice if a few of us could go to Malta again- perhaps an informal get together there could be arranged, everyone making their own way & accommodation at the same hotel (not necessarily the Qawra palace) there during the same period. It probably wouldn't cost a huge amount more than the AGM weekend in Coventry !

I went back to Malta on my own at the end of October, as my wife Aileen went to Australia for a couple of weeks to help out with the arrival of a new grandson. Rather than stay at home on my own, I got a cheap & cheerful flight & hotel from Malta Bargains, at the Palm Court hotel (known locally as "Faulty Towers" !) , just round the corner from the Qawra Palace.

Bye for now
Jules

Subject: 1937 Cmd Photos

Dear Valerie,

I'm trying to list the original Cmd Photos.

There couldn't have been many; I seem to think one, or possibly two, were killed in WW2.

Can we ask the membership for details please?

Only those who were trained photos having been recruited from General Service and the Royal Marines who were subsequently commissined are of interest .

There were a number of come-overs from other branches but my interest is not with those.

Any ideas?

Kind regards,
Norman
normang@tiscali.co.uk

Subject: searching for ex- photographic mates

Hi there,

I noticed your email address on your association's web page. My name is John Lawrence (newks). I served on 847 nac sqdn out in Singapore at HMS Simbang between the dates of March 1969 and 1971. During that time we obviously had a naval photographer as part of the Sqdn. his name is :- John Troth. We also had another photographer but i can't recall his name. I don't know if you or any of your colleagues can help. We are holding a reunion in October this year for the first time at the Bosworth hotel and would like John to attend if you know of him or his contact details.

If you do know where he is can you ask him to telephone me (number available) or email me at john.newks.lawrence@hotmail.co.uk then I can give him all the details etc. Thanks
yours
Mr J. Lawrence

Correspondence

From Norman Graham

Order in Council No. 149N dated 8 June 1937 recommended

"The establishment of one post for the rank of Warrant Photographer, promoted by selection from Chief Petty officer Photographers"

This appeared as an Order in Council in the London Gazette on Friday 18 June 1937

Who was he?

My wife and I are of the opinion that he , whose name we cannot remember, was the porter at Plymouth College ending his working days carrying the goods and chattels of rich naval officers and others children.

Such were Cmd Photographers and others treated in those days.

Kind regards,
Norman

Photo Gallery



Hal Far 1961

Back row - Johnny Sceats, Nige Craft, Andy Anderson?,
Curly Hawkes, Jan Morgan, Buster Brown,
Rusty Darker?, Brian Cooper, Blossom Hartle?, Frank Calder
Front row - Ernie Earnshaw, Mike Thorne, Paul Johnson?,
Ginge Topliss, Taff Eyres, William (Bill) Pagdin (cheers, Nige)

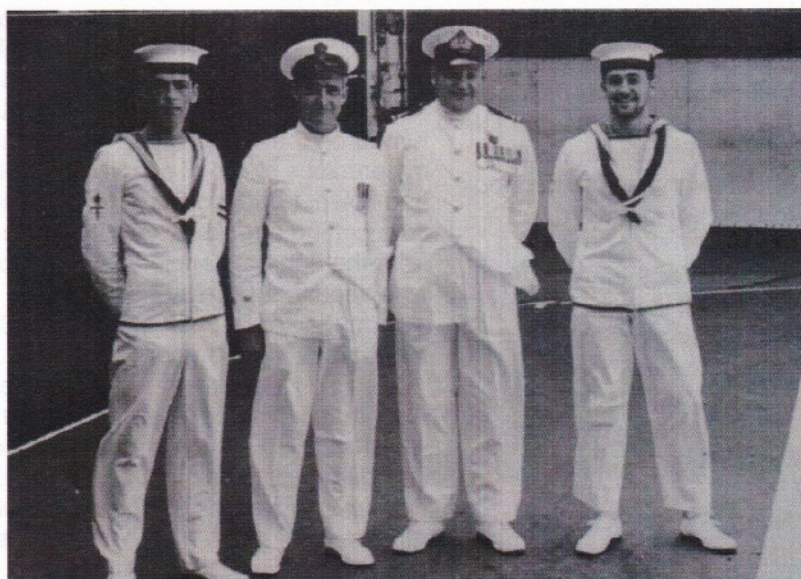
Lossiemouth Section 1958

Back row - Terry Gill,
Gordon 'Bogie' Knight, Alwyn J Smith
Centre row - Bill Huggett, Paul Yockney
Front row - Pete Ramsden, Alfie Tubb



Yeovilton section 1966

L/Air Bob Watson at Cleaning Stations



HMS Albion Sept. 1967 - Captain's divisions

L to R - L/Air Paul Yockney, CPO Wally Donkin,
Lt. Jimpy Greenfield, NA Chris Dalby

Thanks for the memories to Paul Yockney and Jan Morgen

(editors note, please feel free to mail me with corrections to names along with any anecdotes)

"Mister Jexson. Who vud vant to?"

I was standing face to face with an all-powerful member of the Soviet Politburo. A member of the Supreme Soviet, surrounded by an entourage of his sycophants, who were all laughing.

Never in my life had I encountered eyes as cold as those of the unblinking man who held court.

Mr. Chill Eyes had just signed a formal contract with me, which meant all assembled there were obliged to celebrate the event by downing several tots of either freeze-proof strength Moskva Vodka or excellent Armenian Brandy taken from a few hundred ready filled shot glasses paraded like little frosty soldiers on side tables.

The drink was too early in the morning for me but obviously not for the fellows who imbibed freely and stuffed themselves with accompanying gherkins and caviar. No doubt the goodies came at the expense of the then, much-deprived, Soviet citizens.

The contract was for a valuable package of a dozen beautifully produced Russian children's films, the talented filmmakers would shoot everything in the book to the very last word.

The rule for them was, you had to tell the whole story and nothing but the story, except for inserts of how privileged it was living in the Utopian synonym of the Soviet Union.

Nearly all the children's movies screened for me contained pieces of politics somewhere in the script.

It was standard Soviet practice that all submitted film scripts had to be vetted through seven different departments.

Unfortunately, they were not exactly in the Seven Pillars of Wisdom category. I twice managed to navigate the production labyrinth with scripts.

I recall that my first stay in a Russian hotel was at a time when very few tourists ventured into the USSR - except I was definitely not a tourist.

My hosts had honoured me by accommodating me at The National, at the time, Moscow's top hotel, originally built in the decorative times of Imperial Russia.

I was given huge high-ceilinged rooms; the bathroom of which inconveniently lacked plugs for both hand washbasin and bath.

I could find no bugs of any genre although I had been advised there would be.

The supply of soap for the regal bathroom was miniscule. The bonus was six pieces of toilet paper of such coarseness you could have sandpapered down a Soviet tank.

I learnt to hide the meagre rations, by the time I returned on the first evening my precious shard of soap had flown. I had a difficult time getting a replacement from the unhappy ancient who seemingly sat 24/7 outside my suite - a pack of Marlboro worked on her.

After that first visit I've always travelled a survival kit including two sizes of plugs and several cartons of cigarettes.

It was a successful trip previewing feature films and television programmes, which after dubbing them, usually into English, I would sell on to international TV stations. Mostly British and American companies.

Russian Soap

An American TV senior executive had asked me to pick up a Russian TV Soap series which he wanted to appraise for his ABC TV network. I'd told him I didn't know of any, but I would certainly look out for some.

After signing the documents, Mr. Chill Eyes, asked if there were other productions I was interested in acquiring in addition to the programmes just contracted for.

Remembering the request about 'Soap Operas,' I spoke out. When my question was translated the Headman looked puzzled and asked me to explain what was a 'soap opera'.

Not being an ardent TV soap watcher I gave a condensed description, that they were usually a long-running television series about ordinary folk. In other words, stories showing the daily life of Russian people.

When this had been translated, Mr. Chill Eyes spoke and the whole meeting erupted in laughter. My translator, a cultured senior Professor of English at Moscow University's Pedagogical Institute, had difficulty translating. She was torn between laughing and embarrassment. She explained the joke.

Mr. Chill Eyes literally had said, "No! We not never make no such series. We all know what good life like in our country. Anyway, who would want look at everyday Russian life on TV - even with singing?"

She was embarrassed not only about the grammar but also the clever insult to the ninety five percent of citizens who were not Party Members, constantly short-changed by successive governmental 'Five Year Plans.'

Mr. Chill Eyes spoke again. Immediate silence. This time the assembly clapped. I'd just been given free run of every Russian Opera and Ballet ever filmed.

"But not for soap Mister Jexson. You understand?" He added and then smiled knowingly as if a secret existed between us.

'My God! Horrors of horrors! Was my bathroom bugged and I hadn't spotted it? Had I been videoed? Had the thickset Muscovite and cohorts seen me bending down in the shower and heard my curses in my frantic attempts to recover the tiny piece of soap I'd dropped before it went down the plughole?'

If so, then I must have given them quite a show of every anatomical angle and detail on view.

Once more I smiled politely and said my 'Thanks,' but with the firm knowledge and quiet assurance that if I had been filmed naked, this Jolly Jack Tar had not let Old England down.

This was the way of things in the Soviet Union in those times. You read between the lines and between the jokes-in between the vodkas, of course.



Working on a Corporate Video & Stills Shoot for Discovery Cruises which means being paid to smile and float about The Discovery with a charming lady.

It's very stressful, of course. It's also a long way from the Indom. If you're thinking, 'I could do that.' Then you probably could.

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31/04/07

Things Historical

Having finally got round to collecting the Associations historical collection from Ian Wrightson I have now just about completed a catalogue of the holdings and hope to put it online soon.

Like most photographers collections there is a distinct lack of captions on a lot of the photographs and I hope that Blondie and Val will find room for some regular "Mystery Photographs" in the newsletters. The first two are below.

The first of a group in a doorway has no detail but may have been part of Ron Little's collection. Anyone know the Who, Where, Why and What of it?



Finally does anyone know where all the group albums are now? The last I saw of them was when I was at Tipner some 17 years ago and they were obviously copied for the presentation at The Bournemouth AGM. Someone had a DVD with them on and in the Absence of the Albums I would be grateful for a copy of the DVD.

As always if anyone has Photographs of photographers at work or play (With captions) I will be happy to scan them and get them onto the Website. All contributions will of course be returned.

Jan Larcombe
jandor@which.net

Falklands



retailed by
Brian Hanrahan
at the Peregrine trophy
award ceremony

This was not a war Britain had prepared for. It was busy cutting back its navy, and preparing to scrap HMS Endurance -- the one ship permanently stationed in Antarctic waters when Argentina invaded what they claimed were their Malvinas islands.

Britain greeted the news with confusion, anger and caution, but rallied behind the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher when she decided that even though they were half a world away -- they would be recaptured by force if necessary.

So it was that 3 days later -- an impossibly short time in military terms -- I was sailing to the South Atlantic aboard HMS Hermes, an aircraft carrier that had survived since the Second world War at the head of a Task force with every ship the navy could muster.

As we left Portsmouth, patriotism washed over us like a wave. On every vantage point people waved flags and banners, cheered and sang. Nobody aboard had ever seen such an outpouring of national emotion.

For the next ten weeks I had a privileged -- if at times frightening -- seat at the centre of the military machine. It was an odd perspective -- everything we heard about diplomacy and negotiation was coloured by the knowledge that if they failed, we would fight. They did.

That didn't make the men around me war-mongers. This was going to be a chancy business.

Far from home, outside the range of shore-based air cover, trying to recapture the islands from a numerically superior enemy who'd had time to dig in and prepare.

The admiral in command Sandy Woodward probably knew the odds better than most. He told me later that this was a time to trust those above you to get the calculations right. If they thought it was doable, then you went and did it.

In that summed up the attitude of the entire fleet -- and that expectation that they could win was probably what tilted the balance.

Six ships were lost -- I saw three of them in flames -- a devastating sight for a force which had to be entirely supported by sea.

But the losses were shrugged off as a necessary price to pay to put and keep troops ashore -- that was the harsh calculation of war, something the country had to get used to.

On land, the troops conjured up an image of invincibility from an almost impossible position. Without helicopters because of the shipping losses -- without roads because the Falklands hardly had any, the troops had to march across the islands and still find the energy to fight battles. Psychology played its part. At the end the Argentine garrison found itself cut off from home, dispirited and surrounded by British forces that kept winning every battle. So they surrendered.

At the time the British had barely a day's ammunition left -- but they didn't behave like it. Back in Argentina -- the military junta that had exposed the nation to such humiliation were finished. They were soon toppled by an angry population.

And the British -- they came home to find the crowds still waving and cheering.

Many thanks to Brian for allowing us to include his story in our newsletter

MEMORIES OF R.N.S.O.P.

Installment 1 of Bob Lomax's RNSOP recollections - to be continued in the next few issues of the newsletter

I can't even visualise what happens in the modern 'Joint Services School of Photography' with its Mega pixels, Zoom Lenses and Laser printers but I can offer some memories of the Royal Navy School of Photography of nearly sixty years ago and how 'would-be-photos' were trained at Ford.

In early 1949 some 30 young Naval Airman would arrive at RNAS Ford from various air stations around the country where they had received their basic training. Either by luck or being bright in initial training they have been fortunate to be selected for Naval photographic training.

This was to be 6 Course and would be later whittled down to 24 bodies at the dreaded 8th week exam.

Our course and Divisional Officer was Commissioned Photographer 'Wally' Gresham with C.P.O. 'Biffer' Nash and P.O. 'Ratfaced' Brown together with the younger Mr Barber (one of two Barber brothers who were civilian instructors).

At various times (usually when the C&POs were sleeping off their tots) poor old Ldg. Phot Len. 'Low-angle' Brown would read to us from the Ilford Manual of Photography detailing the various chemicals required to make up a developer. !!! This we had to write down and memorise, it was Instructional Technique of the highest order, I still remember Silica Gel absorbs moisture with avidity. I didn't find out for years what avidity meant and I'm sure Len who later became a good chum never did know!!!

We were housed in a clapped out wartime wooden hut with corticine on the floor in places and two wood burning stoves for heating, the lucky ones grabbed beds near the stoves and our class leader 'Shorty' Walker ex TAG took up residence in the cabin at the end.

5 Course who were in the next mess became great rivals as to who could find most wood for the stoves, usually by breaking pieces off each others huts.

If we were lucky we would travel down to the school in a 3 ton lorry, all of us !!! But if we been stropky we were marched all the way with no talking as we passed the Wardroom and so-called married quarters, all in about 6 to 8 semidetached houses. Quite a sight with 'Shorty' calling the steps.

The school buildings were outside the airfield perimeter on the lane leading to Yaptan from Ford railway station. Once within the school discipline became even more relaxed, the CO, a Lt. Cdr. Taylor together with Lt. 'Scruffy' Manley-Cooper let the Commissioned Photos get on with it.

Offices, stores and classrooms lined one corridor conjoined to another corridor of darkrooms by two printing rooms.

Most of the first eight weeks were spent in the classrooms absorbing the basics of optics and Photo-chemistry theory, with spells mixing chemicals and learning the rudiments of the Watson half-plate and VN press camera.

With simple contact printing, all this leading up to this dreaded 8th week exam. I must confess I spent the exam week in hospital in Chichester and on my return found the class cut down to 24.

The rest returned to Lee for other duties.

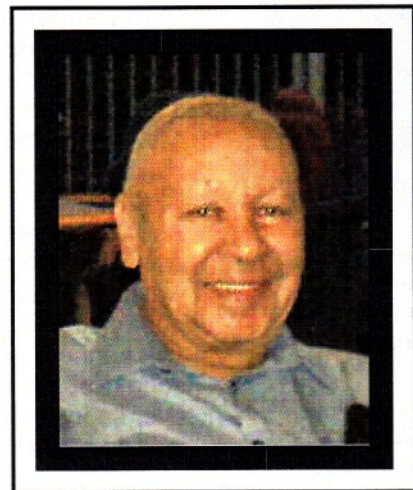
Whether I would have passed myself we shall never know but Wally Gresham said I could stay if I forego my sick leave to which I readily agreed.

Having missed out on some of the training whilst in hospital I was given my own personal instructor for contact printing!!! One P.O. 'Soapy' Watson. He wasn't too happy about this extra work and his method of teaching me is worth relating.

"Now we have three sorts of paper... hard, medium and soft. I want you to expose each sheet to this negative for 3, 6, 9 and 12 secs. for each grade, a total of 12 sheets which I want you to develop for 2 and a half minutes at 68 degrees, then pick the best print and then produce for me 12 matched prints".

With that he promptly retired to a corner of the darkroom and slept his tot off. An hour or so later with a sink full of prints I finally managed to achieve his required matching dozen and got a bollocking for waking him up when I'd finished. Whenever I went into a darkroom for the next 50 years I still remembered it and was just glad 'Multigrade' paper hadn't been invented at the time.

*more about RNSOP and
...the Watson camera, H&D and cockroaches
in tomato sauce ... next issue,
Many thanks to Bob*



Peter Newton
July 1928 - Nov 2006

**Just prior to going to press
news came in of the death of
George Ernest (Yorky) Colley,
aged 68 on August 13th 2006**

The Heroes Return

Ron Bowey, at the age of 86, has recently taken out a subscription to *The Globe & Laurel* and joined the RMA. Ron joined the Royal Marines in 1938 and first became a Physical Training Instructor and then the Corps photographer/film cameraman, recording events for the Chief of Naval Information, Chief of Naval Intelligence, COI, and CGRM at Queen Anne's Mansion.

Injuries to his legs in 1942 and 1944 left him with a pronounced gait when he walked but did not affect his film and photographic duties. He was with the Supreme Commander, Lord Louis Mountbatten, on a number of occasions and also His Majesty King George VI and members of the Royal Family on various other occasions.

Severe cutbacks in the Royal Navy included the closure of the RM Film Unit at Portsmouth. Unable to return to being a Physical Training Instructor, Lt Col D B Drysdale arranged for Ron to transfer to the Royal Navy to join the Film and Trials Unit at the RN School of Photography. At the time of Bowey's transfer, the Korean War had started. Lt Col Drysdale was appointed to take command of 41 Commando and took them to Korea; he tried to take Bowey with him but by then Ron was in the Fleet Air Arm.

On the recommendation of Earl Mountbatten, Bowey joined HRH The Prince Philip on a world tour; he joined the entourage in civilian clothes and made two films for world distribution and for newsreels and TV News worldwide.

Bowey's health was causing some concern and he was surveyed in the RN Hospital and was discharged with a war pension and the King's Silver Badge for Loyal Service. After a number of operations, metal plates, three attempts of metal joints, Bowey lost both legs and his fingers had gone into the fist position, then becoming infected resulting in nine fingers being amputated.

Return from The Heroes Return

by Ron Bowey

My reasons for returning to Burma and Singapore goes back many years to the time when I had access to an Intelligence Summary of HQ, Malaya Command which referred to a report of the circumstances under which three Japanese Officers of 7th Area Army Intelligence Staff committed suicide at Rengam on 28 December 1945, by 'Amiende Honorable'.

They had confessed to the torture and personally beheading of three British POWs, Major Maxwell RM, Sgt Maj Smith RM and a young Naval Pilot, Tomlinson, on 20 July 1945. They had feared that investigations being carried out would unearth the crime and bring discredit to their senior officers.

Major Maxwell RM, who I knew, and Sgt Major Smith belonged to a Small Operations Group (SOG) party that had landed by canoe from a submarine in March 1945 on the Island of Phuket on the West Coast of Siam (Thailand) to get information on the two airfields on the Island, and to get beach gradients and if possible, prisoners. The SOG party had become separated when they were involved in a firefight with a Japanese group, Sgt Maj Smith became badly wounded with Maxwell remaining with him, but the remainder were captured later by Siamese troops and kept POWs by them for the remainder of the war, and treated within the terms of the Geneva Convention. Major Maxwell, Sgt Major Smith and the Naval Pilot Officer, who refused to answer any questions were taken by car to a hill north of Pasir Panjang, Singapore, and beheaded by Japanese Officers Ikoda and Kajiki (Intelligence Summary HQ Malaya Command December 1945).

The 4th person behind the reason for my visit is Major R Ingleton Royal Marines; he joined the service at the beginning of the war and his natural ability as a 20 year old to lead, and his athletic prowess quickly took him from a Marine to a temporary commission, and finally brought him to the SOG. He was loaned to the Australian Services to take part in Operation Rimau, an attack on shipping in Singapore harbour in 1944. In December the Japanese finally caught up with Major Ingleton and during the next few weeks the others were captured by the Japanese police. War Crimes Investigators with persistent questioning found that the ten survivors of Operation Rimau were executed; they had been savagely tortured during their months of interrogations and just prior to being beheaded, gave a display of light banter as they gave their final farewells to each other before kneeling for their decapitation. In July 1978, Australian No 1 Commando Association awarded the men who took part in Rimau a Commando Cross for Valour. Ingleton's Cross of Valour was presented to the Royal Marines Museum in Eastney.

My long trip to Singapore was quite pleasant. I was seated clear of all exit routes which is normal, to maximise evacuation if the situation arises; and the cabin staff were excellent.

The trip to the war graves cemetery at Kranji was in the morning and passing through the gates brought about a strange transformation; the noise of traffic and the bustle of humanity had vanished; in front of you as you passed through the tastefully designed architecture of the entrance you were confronted with a sea of white crosses; if you looked ahead the lines of the crosses were precise and looking left or right the lines were still there in a geometric correctness and broken only by dedicated workers of the Commonwealth Graves Commission. We reached the graves of the three Marines, they were well down a fairly steep slope and as they turned the chair to face the graves, my wheelchair tumbled over backwards and I tumbled out; almost immediately five of the workmen appeared, gently picked me up and put me back in the chair and insisted on taking care of me while we remained in the cemetery.

Major Maxwell and Sgt Maj Smith were together, but Major Ingleton's headstone was some distance away. I carefully took a photograph of each grave. I faced each headstone in turn closed my eyes and said a short prayer; I felt the years slip away back to my early 20s, which was the average age of every person here, some much younger and some much older. They had been gently recovered from the jungles, swamps, and the Changi Jail and brought to this cemetery, but sadly so many had their ID tags blown away.

They were no longer in isolation scattered across the battlefields and wherever else they fell but now they were all

together, in serene peace and harmony, with the loving care and dedication by the workpeople of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

I managed a brief visit to Raffles Hotel, it was there that South East Asia Command Radio and Newspaper set themselves up on the first floor. Close by at the WMCA, the Japanese carried out some of their deadly work.

We were now on our way to Rangoon, and once again the cabin staff were excellent, but I was about to find out why I was not covered to fly with other tour operators for my visit Burma. After all the passengers had left the aircraft I was strapped in my wheelchair and every member of the plane's staff looking very serious gave me a polite farewell; I was pushed through the aircraft door on to what I thought was a platform, but quickly realised that I was about 40 feet above the ground and the platform was part of steel steps out on the apron of the airport. Five very lean Burmese men stepped forward, two each side of the chair and one in the front, something told me that come what may they were not going to let go of their grip; the movement of the chair as each independently found his step begs description, the chair took on a strange roll; I closed my eyes for a moment waiting for that sudden jerk of the fall of a chute opening, then a sudden crazy thought struck me; is this how the Kamikaze pilot feels when he sees his target.

In Rangoon my feelings were very confused at first, I was looking at dozens of Japanese 3-ton lorries moving around the town, the last time that I had seen them they had been abandoned; it was explained that they were the normal bus transport, three low benches to sit on and the rope at the rear is for the conductor to hang on. My nurse and I tried to go round some of the shops to buy a few souvenirs but the wheelchair was making bad weather, the roads and pavements were in very poor shape, the curbs were set high for the monsoon rains; every time we tried to cross a road, or get up or down a pavement, the people would surround us stop the traffic to get us across the road, or lift me up or down the pavements. One dear old lady who had great difficulty in walking herself, insisted on taking a hold of the chair.

Our trip out of Rangoon to the Htaukkyant War Cemetery was unchanged from 1945 but the cemetery was quite different; the architect had designed an impressive entrance in white marble and at each grave, not a cross headstone but a base stone with a metal plate with the name, regiment and country, and once again so many unknown heroes; each grave had a flowering shrub; the people working there showed the same dedication and care; when they saw me arrive they insisted on keeping a parasol over me to shelter me from the sun.

The Schwedagon Pagoda was in perfect condition, the area had been made disabled friendly and the sun catching the gold dome and the brilliant and vivid colours of the Pagoda and the caring and loving respect of the Burmese is perhaps an indication of their tending the Commonwealth Graves with such compassion throughout the country.

The time for my stay had run out. I would have liked to visit the Death Railway, Mandalay and Kohima but I must be thankful for being able to have managed this trip.

We arrived back at the Airport and they decided to put me on board first, which gave everyone a ringside view; the five men came around me, they gave me a smile, they were confident and that made me feel much better, it gave me assurance and I was able to study the faces of concern as I came waltzing up the steps; sadly there no photos taken.

If I could have a wish after my visit to Burma, I would wish that Burma could overcome all the serious problems that they have and obtain world status and wealth similar to Malaya and Singapore.