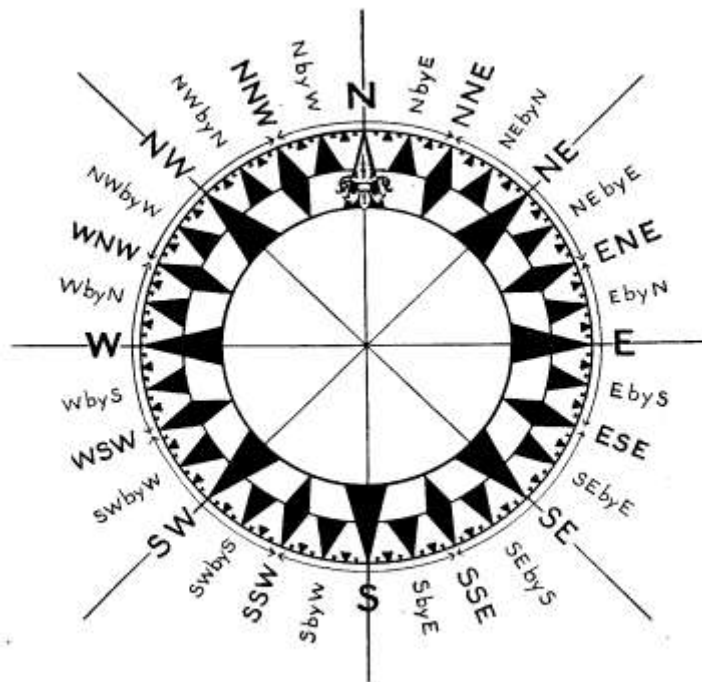




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## Editor's Note

While we were on holiday in the UK we visited the Historic Naval Museum at Portsmouth and took a tour of *HMS Warrior* and thought you would like to hear about it.

**Next Meeting Sunday September 26<sup>th</sup> 2010**

*Mick & Jill Surfield*

## Skipper's Log

Ahoy there Ship-mates and Ship-gals.

Well another AGM has passed, all offices the same, as per usual!

We are always open to anyone taking over offices but no-one seems to want anything changed. So you are stuck with us again.

The July meeting went very well, a smaller group than usual but we had members who were unfortunately sick and then there were those who were overseas. We had a very successful lunch afterwards with 24 attending at the Port Dock Brewery.



After the September meeting will be the end of year picnic in the park in the Botanic Gardens, same spot, opposite the toilets. Always seems a very popular position! The date is Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November.

There is still time if any of you want to attend the Reunion Down Under in Perth on the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> November this year. Anne & myself will be going as will Jill and Mick Surfield.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helps us try and raise funds with their very kind donations for the bi-monthly raffles. We are getting a bit low on prizes so would appreciate anything. As long as it is new. Also Jill and Mick Surfield always need input for the newsletter. Thank you to all of you who have taken the time to write something down. Everyone has a story to tell.

At our next meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September at the Seafarers Mission we will hold a "posh" raffle and there will be a table of plants and cakes to purchase. We look forward to seeing as many people as possible there.

*Tony.*

## From the Almoner's desk

As I haven't heard from any body about their ailments I assume you are all in good health.

*Anne Withey*

Our Skipper and Anne celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2010



Anne and Tony met in South London whilst Tony was home on leave in 1958. They married in St.John's Church, Penge, London on the 10th of September 1960, six months after Tony left the Merchant Navy.

Living in Anerley, South London, Northfleet Kent, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, Bracknell Berkshire and then on to South Australia in 1975.

They have one son Benjamin born in 1978.

Their first Vindi meeting was at the Port Dock Hotel Port Adelaide 1996.

Kenya Castle was built in Belfast by Harland and Wolff and completed in 1952. She was one of three sister ships along with Braemar Castle and Rhodesia Castle built for the Union Castle Line for the South African run. She was renamed Amerikanis in 1967 when she was sold to Chandris where it was intended that she would be used for the Atlantic service. This was not to be as there was an increase in air transport by the time she was ready to sail in 1968. In the early eighties she was chartered to Costa Line, then in 1984 she was back in service with Chandris eventually being laid up in 1996. Her final resting place was in India where she was scrapped.



Eileen and her husband Bob went for counselling after 25 years of marriage.

When asked what the problem was, Eileen went into a passionate, painful tirade listing every problem they had ever had in the 25 years they had been married.

She went on and on and on: neglect, lack of intimacy, emptiness, loneliness, feeling unloved and unlovable, an entire laundry list of unmet needs she had endured over the course of their marriage.

Finally, after allowing this to go on for a sufficient length of time, the therapist got up, walked around the desk and after asking Eileen to stand, embraced her, unbuttoned her blouse and bra, put his hands on her breasts and massaged them thoroughly, while kissing her passionately as her husband Bob watched with a raised eyebrow!

Eileen shut up, buttoned up her blouse, and quietly sat down while basking in the glow of being highly aroused. The therapist turned to Bob and said, 'This is what your wife needs at least three times a week. Can you do this?' Bob thought for a moment and replied, 'Well, I can drop her off here on Mondays and Wednesdays, but on Fridays I play golf.'

## A day out to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, home of the Mary Rose, HMS Victory and the HMS Warrior.

We found ourselves aboard the first Ironclad Sailing/Steamship *HMS Warrior* built in Britain in response to the building of the French ironclad *La Gloire*.



*HMS Warrior* was launched during the coldest winter for 50 years on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1860 at the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company of London. The previous night braziers had been lit down either side of the ship but the *Warrior* remained frozen on the slipway. This necessitated using extra tugs and hydraulic rams to release her, even the Thames was frozen over.

When *Warrior* was completed in October 1861 she was the fastest, and most heavily-armed and armoured warship in the world. With a displacement of 9,210 tons she was also the largest warship (418 feet long) in the world being nearly twice the size of the *La Gloire* outclassing it in all aspects. Her first Captain was the Honourable Arthur Cochrane.

There was no introduction of major new technology, but for the first time sails (covering an overall area of 37,546 square feet), combined with propeller driven steam engines and armour plated hull were incorporated in one ship. When under sail the 26 ton propeller could be raised via a well in the stern, this operation may well have required up to 400 of the 705 ships company to achieve. The original main armament consisted of 26 x 68lb Muzzle loaders, 10 x 110lb and 4 x 40lb Armstrong Rifled Breachloaders. There were also a considerable amount of pistols and rifles. On the gun deck there were 36 messes for 655 men or ratings arranged between the guns, with approximately 18 men to each mess where they ate, slept or relaxed.



1861-64. After her sea trials some minor modifications were required, then she was ready for active service patrolling the coastal waters with voyages to Lisbon and Gibraltar in the Channel Squadron.

1867-71. In November 1864 when her first commission ended she spent two years in harbour, rejoining the Channel Squadron until 1871.

1875-83. Having been in refit since 1871 with masts, rigging and decks renewed, a poop deck was added at the stern as it had been intended to make her the flagship of the Admiral commanding the Mediterranean squadron. However this was not to be and she found herself moored at Portland harbour for the best part of the next six years, making a single extended voyage each summer. She spent the remainder of her career in the coastguard stationed at Greenock.

After 90,000 miles at sea, 22 years service, six of them in full commission and eight as a first line reserve *Warrior* entered Portsmouth on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1883 to be withdrawn from service. She was stripped of her engines, boilers and guns and for many years languished in 'Rotten Row', a remote part of Portsmouth Harbour.

A new lease of life was given to the *Warrior* in 1902 when she was fitted out to become mother ship to the Portsmouth flotilla of small torpedo boats. In 1904 she was renamed the *Vernon III* to become part of the Royal Navy's Torpedo Training School and used to supply steam and power to other hulks moored alongside. In 1923 *Vernon III* moved ashore and once more *Warrior* was paid off and offered up for sale, but there were no takers. As the hull was in good condition the *Warrior* was converted in 1929 and towed to Milford Haven where she was used as a floating oil jetty under the name of *Oil Fuel Hulk C77* where she remained for the next 50 years. She became the home to a shipkeeper and his family. The Royal Navy dry docked her regularly so she was kept in reasonable condition. She became the last of the ironclads built between 1861 -1877 to survive.

*Warrior* was not forgotten and in 1967 there was talk of restoring her. John Smith MP for the Cities of London and Westminster who five years previously had formed the Manifold Trust to restore items of national heritage was prominent in the campaign. His persistence led to a committee being formed in 1968 to discuss the future of the *Warrior*, from which emerged the Maritime Trust. With the oil depot due to close in 1978 the *Warrior* would no longer be required and it was agreed with Sir John Smith that the Trust would underwrite the restoration costs and the ship was handed over to the Maritime Trust in 1979. She was towed the 800 miles to Hartlepool to begin the world's largest maritime project ever undertaken.

The restoration was to be undertaken at the Grays Shipyard in Hartlepool, at the time of her arrival she was little more than a hulk. Restoration began with the removal from the deck of 80 tons of rubbish along with 200 ton of concrete to reveal the original deck of rotting timbers and rusting iron. Photographs were taken of each area to determine the position of the original fixtures. A few Downton pumps and a Capstan were the only original fittings left in place. The areas found intact were mid-ships shell and after magazine rooms, apparently untouched since her second or third commission. With painstaking work many details were exposed that were a vital aid to the aim of restoring her to the condition she was in at the time of her first commission.

Researchers on shore strived to find information from museums, libraries and even private collections. Of even greater value were the original ship's plans, also the diagrams of each item on board drawn by a 14 year old midshipman in his log book who served on the ship in 1862. Work on the upper and main deck was underway by 1982 along with the renewal of the bulwarks.

20,000 square feet of pine planking was acquired from a demolished warehouse in Bradford for use on her decks. 1983 saw the task of laying the planking on the upper deck almost completed. Below decks paint and rust was being removed and in some areas some 120 different coats of paint were found. This was then cleaned and preserved and repainted.

As the work was being carried out on the ship thousands of items required for the completion of the project were underway.

Progress in 1984 was steadily being made with the installation of the main and mizzen masts, the largest section being 120 feet long and weighing over 30 tons. Meanwhile in Portsmouth preparations were being made for the arrival of the *Warrior*, but work on the jetty would not commence until March 1985.

The engine that was removed from *Warrior* in 1889 had to be replicated and this began in 1985. By the end of 1985 the boiler rooms, engine valves and condenser had been replaced. *Warrior*, no longer a chrysalis had changed into a butterfly.

The original figurehead of a Greek warrior was lost in 1868 after a collision with the *HMS Royal Oak* and its head was claimed by the midshipmen of the *Royal Oak* as a prize. The replacement one was taken off *Warrior* and displayed in the Portsmouth Dockyard but was later damaged and subsequently destroyed. The present figurehead was positioned outside No 5 Boathouse Portsmouth Dockyard and later transported to Hartlepool before being put into place where it belonged.



It had taken the 140 strong workforce in Hartlepool six years to transform the *Warrior* to her original glory as a proud battleship of the Victorian navy.

*HMS Warrior* was pulled from her moorings on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 1987 by tugs to commence her four day journey back to Portsmouth. She was greeted by tankers, ferries and trawlers as she made her way down the east coast. As she entered the English Channel the Royal Navy's newest vessel *HMS London* signaled the message 'The Navy's newest ironclad is in company with the oldest...I hope we look as good as you at your age.'

It was 58 years since *HMS Warrior* left Portsmouth and on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1987 she returned triumphantly to her new berth in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

*HMS Warrior* was the pride of a nation, a forgotten hulk and a national treasure restored for generations of visitors to explore

*HMS Warrior*, her Red Ensign flying, is a tribute to Victorian innovation, the skills of her restorers and to the Warrior Preservation Trust.

By the way she never fired a shot in anger.



### **Horses Adrift** **Malcolm Heron**

I left school at sixteen to attend sea school for three months and joined the Port Line ship mv Port Adelaide as deck boy on January 9 1949. Two voyages later I was Ordinary Seaman in the mv Port Wellington which was loading general cargo in King George V Dock, London. Our destination was the Australian coast via the Canary Islands and Capetown.

The day we sailed from London, deck cargo in the form of nine racehorses, including one stallion, one Hereford bull and one heifer was loaded. The horses and cattle were contained in very strong, wooden loose boxes made of two-inch timber, braced in all directions, and fastened to the deck with bolts with wire strops passed right over the top of the boxes and secured taught by bottlescrews. The boxes took up the whole area on the starboard side of the after well deck between the central accommodation and the poop, with a narrow walkway between the two cargo hatches and the loose boxes themselves. The port side was still the preserve of the crew's deck golf course.

The bosun, McRitchie, was in charge of the stock, but delegated the cleaning out, feeding and grooming to me, which was to take no more than two hours each morning, Saturday and Sunday included.

The trip as far as Cape Town was uneventful and having been brought up on a farm I soon settled into the routine of looking after the animals without fuss or bother. Leaving Cape Town bound for Adelaide the skipper took a great circle course and we headed for fifty to fifty-five degrees south. About six days out of Cape Town the weather deteriorated and one night was particularly bad. The great grey beards of the Southern Ocean rolled on unceasingly and appeared as high as the vessel itself. The wind was at gale force and green seas were coming aboard the starboard side with regularity. The vessel rolled, pitched and shuddered as she shook herself from the huge waves. Life was generally uncomfortable. It was impossible to sleep and one had to hang on to prevent rolling out. About 4am, all hands were suddenly called and told to muster on the after deck as soon as possible as cargo was adrift. When we arrived on deck the seriousness of the situation stopped us in our tracks. Three horse boxes were smashed to pieces, it was pitch dark and the horses were nowhere to be seen. The other six horse boxes had been shunted aft and piled against each other, their horse still inside them. The cattle boxed were not affected.

As our eyes became accustomed to the light we saw the three horses, one was by the after rail, one by the mainmast deckhouse, and the big black stallion was standing quivering in the engine room recess at the far end of the well deck. We secured all three horse with a halter and tied them to the fore end of the well deck where it was relatively sheltered. By this stage the "Old Man" had been advised of the situation and he immediately hove to in order for repairs to begin. The carpenter ordered the tonnage hatch to be opened allowing us to obtain dunnage (timber), wire rope and new bottle screws.

Being hove to the ship was now relatively comfortable and reasonably steady. Spray still came aboard as the seas were huge and the wind still at gale force, but she was no longer shipping green ones. It was bitterly cold and my first job was to feed the horses where they stood and rub them down with straw wads to warm them up.

Eight ABs, two ordinary seamen and four apprentices under the guidance of the bosun and carpenter then set about building three new horse boxes, straightening the others up and bringing some form of normality back to the after well deck.

We worked steadily all day, drenched with spray and in temperatures not much above freezing and by six o'clock that night all the horses were re-housed. Apart from the odd wound which we had dressed they were none the worse for their ordeal.

A lot of rum was poured for all hands and we went to dinner a crew well satisfied with the day's work. On arrival in Adelaide the horses, all in very good health, were handed over to their new owners who never knew of the ordeal they had been through. The bosun no doubt received his gratuity over a whisky in his cabin while I resumed the normal duties of an ordinary seaman on a general cargo vessel in the fifties.

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Kindly submitted by Vince Vincent.

## **WHERE IT ALL BEGAN CHAPTER ONE**

Having sat down before to try out my story for inclusion into our magazine I always failed to find a suitable part of my life by which to begin. However having looked back on other stories that have been shared by other Vindi Boys I decided to start my story with just two words, 'Uncle Harry.'

Uncle Harry lived in a town in Lancashire called Padiham he was an old salt who had many adventures during his time at sea, I only wish I could remember all the ones he told me as a young boy. However I did enjoy listening to them from about the age of eight until I eventually joined the Vindi at the age of sixteen.

He was a hero of mine at this time and I was very proud of him because he had a genuine wooden leg and after a session listening to tales of his travels sitting on his one good leg he would usually buy me an ice cream or some sweets and then he would put on his old, what looked to me like and old army great coat, grab his crutch from under the staircase and hobble down to the local pub. What made it more fascinating to me as a young boy was the fact that the streets were all narrow and made of cobblestones. To see him limping down that lane with his crutch always reminded me of Long John Silver of Treasure Island fame, in fact I remember telling my friends that my uncle was Long John Silver.

When I eventually decided to join the British Merchant Navy uncle Harry was thrilled, to say the least, and then he started to speak to me in earnest about the things I should know before I sailed on my first ship, 'Make friends with all your shipmates, they will be your family while you are on that ship,' 'Do your job well and keep your nose clean,' 'Don't forget your family at home,' Write to your mother, she will always be worrying about you,' and many other instructions he gave me long before I ever heard of the Vindicatrix.

It was when he was giving me all these orders that I started to have doubts about joining the Merchant Navy, however the doubts didn't last long when uncle Harry started to tell me what to do and say when I got to other countries, but alas once again my memory fails me except for one, and strangely enough it was the most mysterious of all. 'If you ever go to South Africa and you meet a Zulu say to him Boomalakashakabono' (not sure about the spelling of that word dear reader but it's the one I never forgot). He also mentioned The Valley of a Thousand Hills but I can't remember in what context but I do know it stuck in my head and I didn't forget it.

Well I wrote away to the Merchant Navy and after what seemed an age I heard back from them telling me I was too young at that time because I was only fifteen, they did say that they would contact me again when I turned sixteen. As soon as I turned sixteen I wrote to them again and this time I was accepted and after another short period I was told to have my medical and send the results back to them, which I did.

This all seemed a long drawn out process to a young boy anxious to get on his first ship, but what a feeling when I got my orders to follow the enclosed instructions, catch the various trains on a certain day and report to the Vindicatrix moored in Sharpness. A feeling of fear, apprehension and excitement but the excitement was much stronger than the fear and apprehension and I looked forward to the day when I would go into the unknown and begin the biggest adventure of my young life.

I never gave a thought to my friends at this time who had started apprenticeships as electricians, plumbers, bricklayers

etc, I just wanted to get on a ship and sail into a whole new world. Two of my friends were originally going to join the Merchant Navy with me but they pulled out when it came time to sign the papers. I never gave a thought to the fact that I might have been brainwashed by my uncle Harry but really I didn't care and to this day I am grateful to him for encouraging me to take that step and instilling in me a sense of adventure which has enriched my life to this day.

The big day finally arrived and having said goodbye to my friends, relatives and dear old Uncle Harry, I was left with just two people to say goodbye to, mum and dad. This was the hard part because I knew mum would take it bad, but like many young sailors before me with my mother's tears on my cheeks and a heart like lead I left the house with my father who walked with me to the railway station where we said our goodbyes as I got aboard that train. It was then as the train pulled away and gathered speed and I watched the filthy factory buildings and the cotton mill chimneys passing the window that I felt so alone and lost, I was now, on my own with my little suitcase.

## THE VINDI

The train journey took just about all day, but in one way that was good because when one is changing trains and chatting to people it helps to take your mind off the sorrow and heartache you have caused to your family and to yourself simply by leaving home to join the Merchant Navy. People seemed overly friendly on the trains and in the railway stations at that time, or was it just my imagination because I felt sad and lonely. As I got closer to my destination I began to see other young boys about my age boarding the same trains and we quickly established that we were all heading for the same place, The Vindicatrix.

The sadness and loneliness didn't last long after that as we all chatted about where we had come from and what we knew of where we were going, which was virtually nothing. All the old excitement came back as I thought once again about the great adventure that lay ahead of me. Excitement quickly turned to fear when we eventually pulled into Sharpness Station and officers were there to hear us together and walk us in double file from the station to the Vindicatrix Training Camp. It appeared that they had no people skills whatsoever, no smiles, no handshake just shouting orders and barking out our names and eventually lining us all up to march to the camp carrying our worldly possessions in our suitcases.

I remember as we walked no one spoke. The officer at the front just kept turning around to make sure that we were all there I suppose. Eventually we arrived at the gates of the training camp and experienced what all Vindi boys had to experience, the taunts, the jeers, the comments of other Vindi boys who had been there for a few weeks and felt that it was good fun to shout things at the new arrivals such as, 'Hey new boy, welcome to hell.' 'Hey new boy, your never going home.' 'Got any fags new boy?'

I can't recall all that happened on that first day, it all seems so long ago now but we went to the supply hut to be kitted out with our uniforms and work clothes. Then we were led to our billet and shown where we were going to sleep for the rest of our stay. I recall it was a hard bunk with a thin mattress and along side a metal locker in which we kept all our worldly goods for the length of our stay. When we had sorted ourselves out and put our clothes away we were advised a meal was being served for us so we all brightened up in great expectation of our first meal in our new home. Unfortunately we were in for a great disappointment. They walked us down the side of the camp to the Sharpness canal and when we reached the steps to go down to the canal we had our first glimpse of the Vindicatrix just sitting there like a giant mother duck with all her babies heading towards her. Before we reached her we knew all was not well, other Vindi boys were saying 'Eat the bug's new boy, there's more nourishment in them than the food'. 'I will sit next to you new boy, what you don't eat I'll have.'

That first meal was one I could not eat and I can't tell you what it was but the lad who had stated he would eat it devoured it as though it was Christmas dinner and it wasn't long after before we were eating our meals the same way, amazing what hunger does especially if you are a little fussy about your food.

After our meal on that first night we all were given a prep talk and told to go and check out the shower block and the parade ground where we were going to do our exercises early the next morning, after this we were told to go to our billet and lights out at 9.30pm sharp. When we arrived at the billet and we had all changed for bed well before 9.30pm we had a visit from the chaplain who arrived just before lights out. He came with a couple of other chaps who called us all to order. When we were all settled the chaplain welcomed us to the Vindi and after a few chosen words from the great old hymn For those in peril on the sea he got us all to recite the Lords Prayer. Well of course I wanted to make a good impression from the word go so I made sure I was in the front row. Halfway through the prayer I heard giggling so I opened my eyes and the minister and his assistants were running for the door, they were just a few Vindi boys from another billet wearing dog collars, having a bit of a laugh at our expense. We all had a good laugh as we climbed into bed as the lights went out at 9.30pm sharp.

That was my first day away from home and after all the emotions that I had experienced during the last fifteen hours or so it seemed that I was now part of a team and I was no longer on my own, and I slept well that night.

### THE VINDI CONTINUED

Well having spent my first night at the Vindi I was awakened with a rude shock. At some ungodly hour a trumpet began playing followed by an officer running around the billet rattling a cane on the bars of each bed, it was still dark outside so we had not got a clue what time it was, I only knew I was so tired. We were told to dress ready for exercises on the parade ground. The last thing on my wish list at that time was to do exercises in the dark feeling tired, cold and hungry, however we all seemed to draw strength from each other and slowly we began to dress for what was to become routine at the start of each day. We must have been far too slow getting dressed because another officer came running in and said the whole camp were waiting for us, so we rushed like idiots down to the parade ground only to discover we were the first ones there. Within ten minutes the whole camp had arrived and exercises were carried out. We almost had to be carried back to the billet after that and as soon as we got back most of the lads dropped onto their bunks. The first words I heard after a few minutes were from a chap almost opposite me laying on a bunk who quietly said 'Bloody Hell' it was then we all started laughing which soon stopped when someone came in said we only had fifteen minutes to have our showers and get down to the ship for breakfast so then it was a race for the shower block.

We then discovered that the water was cold in the showers but hot water was supplied for shaving (for those who were shaving at that early stage of their life) in the wash basins. It was funny to watch the naked bodies darting in and out of the showers, none of us could stay under the shower for too long because it was so cold so we made small lines for each shower cubicle and just like birds flapping around in a sprinkler and flitting out again that's what we did. Having done the best we could at trying to cleanse ourselves we headed back to the billet and got ready for breakfast, the officer in charge then led us down to the ship and into the dining area.

I suppose we were all a little suspicious of what breakfast would be like but quite honestly I think I enjoyed it, eggs, bacon and sausages with toast followed by coffee. Not as good as mum used to make but very pleasing when you are hungry. I can't remember much of what else we did on that second day, or even what happened later during my time at the Vindi, only bits and pieces which I will endeavor to tell you over the next few paragraphs.

Food parcels were the order of the day because even though I enjoyed the breakfast I can't say the same for the lunches and dinners, I suppose they could not mess up bacon and eggs but heaven knows what we ate at some of those meals. The boys in my billet all sat down about the same time and wrote to family members to send us food parcels and when eventually they arrived were we popular with everyone who tucked into the cakes and goodies that were sent to us.

We were told that to be a true Vindi boy one had to cup Mrs Drysdale's left breast in one's right hand, and just to settle down any ladies who are wondering who Mrs Drysdale is she was the figurehead on the bow of the ship and to get to her was a perilous journey and when one got to her it was even more perilous to reach under with your tight hand, you had to hang on for grim death and then you counted ten slowly and when you got back safely onto the deck you were a fully fledged Vindi boy. I don't know if any other Vindi boys had to go through that or whether it was something that someone thought up at the time we were there but anyway we all did it and nobody fell in, much to the disappointment of many other Vindi boys who thronged the deck to watch the proceedings.

The Vindi was too much for some of the boys and some left the camp in the middle of the night and hitched their way home. A couple of lads in our billet decided to do that and it was rather sad really because we had become a team by then, we helped them of course, keeping watch for them and having a collection to help pay for some of the journey home, some lads even went as far as the fence with them carrying their bags. I often think of those boys and what they ended up doing with their lives, they promised to keep in touch but of course never did.

The rest of us stuck it out and looking back I'm so glad I did although it was tempting sometimes to disappear at night and go home. About six or seven of us became very close and we always went in Berkley together when we got leave (Berkley is a local town not far from Sharpness) sometimes to the local dance that was usually put on by the Flying Angel or is now known as the Seafarers Centre. I remember walking back to the camp many nights singing good old Vindi songs that were very popular at the time by now are lost unless some other Vindi boys can remember them.