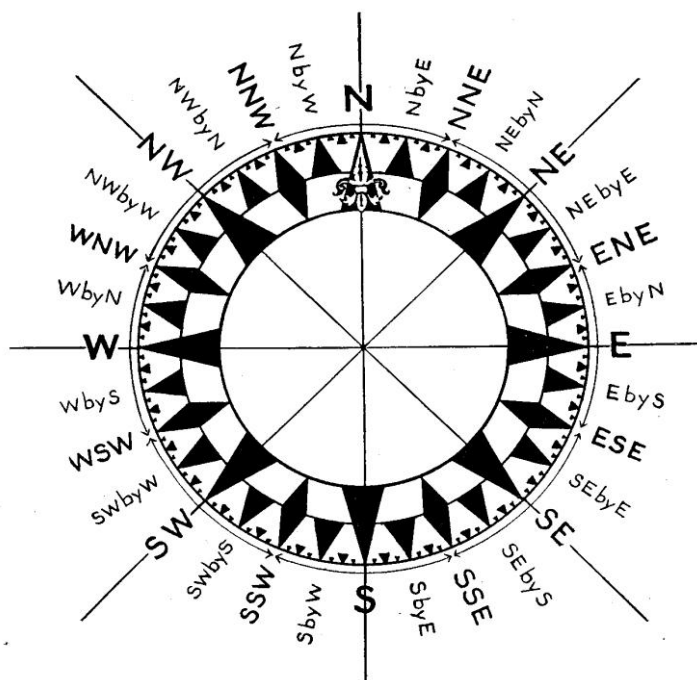




NOVEMBER 2011

ISSUE 68



**SKIPPER/TREASURER:**  
**SECRETARY/SOCIAL ORGANISER:**  
**SUPPLY OFFICER:**  
**ALMONER:**  
**P.R.O.:**  
**NEWSLETTER:**  
**EMAIL:**  
**WEBSITE:**

**TONY ILES 8523 1655**  
**ANNE ILES 8523 1655**  
**KEITH WITHEY 8278 7917**  
**ANNE WITHEY 8278 7917**  
**WINSTON KAY 8362 7027**  
**MICK & JILL SURFIELD 8381 4500**  
[surfield@adam.com.au](mailto:surfield@adam.com.au)  
[sa.vindicatrix.com](http://sa.vindicatrix.com)



## **Editor's Note**

The separate story was sent to us from Alan Creasey who we met at the reunion. We hope that it may give you inspiration to put pen to paper.

We have put a selection of the photos taken at the reunion in this newsletter but as we got a bit snap happy it was difficult to know what to put in and what to leave out. If you have access to a computer there are plenty more to look at on our web site.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New Year, and may Santa bring you a pen or pencil.

## **Next Meeting Sunday January 29<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Mick & Jill Surfield*

## **Skipper's Log**

Anne & I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and thank you for your support and friendship during the past year.

The reunion, which has been addressed as a separate item, was a wonderful occasion and a big thank you goes to our dedicated band of helpers. Thank you also for those of you who attended. We surely had a large contingency from South Australia which was great. I know everyone enjoyed themselves I know I did, but without our wonderful helpers the level of excellency could not have been achieved. We have had many emails from Interstate with glowing reports and congratulations for our SA Branch's involvement. The reunion of 2011 can go down as the BEST EVER.



Queensland has their turn in 2012 and if any of you are intending to go I can assure you it is a great time to get together again with our Vindi friends. As yet the location has still to be decided but you can rest assured it will be well thought out. We will keep you informed.

Our first meeting in 2012 will be on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January at the Seafarers Mission. A diary for the rest of the year will have been put together by then. We would appreciate any input you may have about the way the meetings should go, also new ideas are always welcome for social events.

With regard to Newsletters, as you are aware Mick and Jill Surfield are always looking for new stories and information so once again share your story with them, Jill is sitting by the computer now awaiting your information. They do a grand job with sometimes very little to draw on. Our members are all interesting people with I am sure lots of secrets they could share. You can even write under an assumed name to protect the innocent!

Finally if there are any unpaid subs please pay ASAP so you can continue to be a member of our very special Association.

To those of you who have experienced ill health in 2011 let us hope 2012 brings better times for you.

Once again Seasons Greetings and I look forward to being with you all again next year.

*Tony.*

## **From the Almoner's desk**

The year 2011 seems to have flown by and the New Year beckons. As members of our special Association, we share and care about each other, and that is very important in the hurly burly of the lifestyle today and so true when coming into the Yuletide season where families gather to celebrate.

Our thoughts are with friends who have not had the best of health throughout the year and we especially remember

with affection members who are no longer with us.

We can look forward to a brand new year full of optimism, friendship, honour and upholding all that is best in the Association honouring Vindi Boys and their ladies.

Merry Christmas everyone, and a healthy Happy New Year.

*Anne Withey*

### **Down Under Reunion South Australia 2011**

What a wonderful event and what a grand show of South Australian Members. Thank you.

The venue for the three days was the South Australian Sea Rescue Squadron West Beach. The Squadron celebrated 50 years last year. This proved to be an excellent location with the Functions Manager Barry Pollard determined to make our stay memorable.

Friday evening we settled in after the registration of 89 people. Upstairs in the Anchorage Room we enjoyed a buffet style meal finishing off the meal with a cake stand for each of the nine tables of cupcakes (250) topped with icing and a chocolate anchor, all made by Jill Surfield. Jill doesn't want to see another cupcake for a wee while!

After dining we were entertained by Pipe Major Ian Small, a very talented piper who after his presentation was kind enough to answer questions about his playing and to explain about the pipes. One certain lady did attempt to look up his kilt. Brian Toogood kindly arranged for Ian to play for us and it was certainly a highlight of the evening. This was followed by raffles, jokes, background music by Winston Kay and a relaxed social evening.



Saturday morning we were picked up by two coaches from Kanga Coach Tours, who proved to be an excellent company. We had morning tea at Mount Lofty, a stroll around Hahndorf and a lovely trip back to West Beach via Stirling and Bridgewater, the smaller of the coaches having an exciting journey around Devil's Elbow. We arrived back at West Beach just after 2.p.m.

There was a rest (for some) then back at 6.p.m. for the formal occasion of the weekend. This was held downstairs at the Squadron in the Barcoo Room. A splendid three course meal was served. Both Friday and Saturday meals were arranged by Lyn, of Homestead Caterers who did a superb job with her very professional staff.

After dinner our special cabaret was Winston Kay, with his talented group playing through the evening for dancing. We had a lot of raffle prizes to get through with an auction as well. At the end of the evening Tony Iles presented each Vindi Boy with a lighthouse candle and Brian Toogood presented each member with a small box which held the Golden Rivet!

Sunday morning our Time for Reflection service was taken by Winston Kay, we then had a BBQ organized by our Functions Manager Barry Pollard. Photos were then taken with the event wrapping up at around 2.30.p.m. Barry did mention that we were a very well behaved likeable lot and he would be happy to have us any time, he even said he would get the boats out for us next time!



Well folks our project has finally come to an end. My heartfelt thanks go to Jill and Mick Surfield, Anne & Keith Withey, Brian Toogood and Valerie McCabe, Shirley Kay and our great artist Winston Kay. Also I would like to thank my dear wife Anne for all her organizing which included many trips to suggested venues, coach firms and caterers. I think she got it right don't you!

*Tony*

PS On behalf of the SA Branch we would like thank our skipper Tony for being an excellent host at our reunion.

*Jill & Mick*



## CHAPTER TWO

### My Friend Tom-Tom

It was completely by chance that I joined the Merchant Navy. Tom-Tom or Tom as I called him was an important part of my early life. It was because of him, and our shared interest in adventure, together with a burning desire to escape our dockland homes that led us to team up – we had much in common. I was eleven years old at the time and it was my first day at Keetons Road school just off Jamaica Road in the London borough of Bermondsey. It was not the school I had chosen to go to, nor did I want to be there. It had a reputation for being a rough place and although I had passed my eleven plus exams to qualify for English Martyrs Central School, my mother and father could not afford to send me there. They had no money for the bus fares and the long list of things I needed to take with me, and certainly not the school uniform, shirts, sports kit and all the other things that needed to be paid for throughout the school year: and so it was I now stood in the playground on my first day at Keetons Road in 1951 looking around me. The first thing I noticed next to where the other boys were playing was a large bombed-out building which I was later told had once been part of the main school, but during the Blitz had been used as a rest centre. A lot of people had died there when the school had been bombed. We were told by the teachers never to go in there – but I admit my curiosity got the better of me and I was to secretly sneak in there for a look. The stairways and floors were still filled with rubble and part of the roof was open to the sky. It must have looked the same as it did shortly after it was hit and now only a third of the school could be used until it could be repaired.

I first saw Tom standing alone in a corner of the playground, he was obviously not an English boy – he had jet black wavy hair and brown skin. He looked uncomfortable and a little self-conscious in his brand new school uniform, which few of the other boy's parents were able to buy. I was looking for someone to talk to and as it looked like it was Tom's first day at school as well I walked over to him. 'Hi!' I said, 'Are you new as well?' 'Hello', he said, looking away from me in a sad but hostile way, 'Pretty new – Yes, his eyes now scanning the playground to see if someone else was with me and might have put me up to the unexpected approach to him, then two rough-looking boys who looked far too big to be attending the school, came towards us. 'You all right Tom-Tom?' asked the older of the two, looking at me suspiciously as he spoke, and who I later learnt was named Rowley, but Tom ignored him and turned away. The two bullies looked at each other mischievously and one of them poked Tom in the ribs, but he still ignored them. 'Who's this?' said Rowley, looking at me fiercely. 'I'm Colin,' I said in a not too friendly voice, at the same time looking him straight in the eye and showing no fear. 'Sod off,' he said, looking away, 'Come on Terry, we'll leave these two idiots alone with each other' and they walked away – probably looking for someone else to annoy, and I instantly made up my mind to avoid those two in future. 'Who was that?' I said to my new-found friend – as I had already made up my mind that is what Tom was to be, even though we had only just met. But he stayed silent, ashamed that he had allowed one of them to poke him and had not fought back. 'Is that your name, I mean Tom-Tom?', I asked him, trying to change the subject. 'No it's not', he said sharply, 'And I'm fed up with people calling me that!' 'Sorry,' I said, having touched a raw nerve. 'It's not your fault' he said, looking at me more intently and sounding dejected, and we stood together in silence for a while. 'What would you like me to call you?' I asked, trying to break the ice once more. 'My real name is Anthony White, but you can call me Tony or Tom if you like, but not Tom-Tom, I hate it ' and soon we were chatting together as if we had known each other for years. We talked about everything: his family, my family, the things we liked to do and the things we hated and I knew then we would be friends for a long time.

Tom told me he was an Anglo-Indian – a people I had never heard of before. He wasn't a Red-Indian from North America, like a Sioux or Apache or any of the other tribes that might bang a tom-tom drum and fight against the U.S Cavalry – as everyone at school thought he was. They simply didn't know he wasn't that kind of Indian, in fact they were happy to call him Tom-Tom and nobody cared whether it was his real name or not, but nicknames are hard to get rid of and the name would stick with him throughout his school years. But Tom did care about it – he cared a lot and one afternoon in the playground I found him standing in a corner, hidden away from the other boys and went over to him to find out what the problem was. 'Why do they keep calling me that?' he asked: his big brown eyes filled with tears – he wanted so much to be accepted at school for what he was, but the school bullies would have none of it and tormented him constantly, knowing he hated the name, and now even the new boys were joining in. Bermondsey and Rotherhithe were tough places to live and it was important to be able to look after your-self. 'Don't worry Tom they'll soon get tired of it,' I told him – more in hope than expectation. 'But why do they do it?' he pleaded, 'I never do anything to annoy them!'. Seeing Tom like this hurt me as much as it hurt him. Bullies like to make others sad because they are sad people themselves, I thought. 'Come on Tom,' I said, putting my arm round his shoulder, 'Don't worry about them – you and me will stick together – anyway, they'll soon pick on someone else' I added, trying hard to comfort him as we walked across the playground together, each with his own thoughts. But I really wasn't sure how I could help my friend, he was much more sensitive than I expected and all I could do was show him he had someone to talk to. But Tom just looked down at his feet, gently kicking out at a small stone as he went, and I wondered how Anglo-Indian families dealt with such things. Tom came from a completely different world – unlike my own. His family in India had once been in the service of the Maharajah of Mysore where his mother was Governess to the children, but many Anglo-Indians lost their jobs when India became independent and were forced to leave, many of them choosing to go to England. Tom's father now worked as a Postman Higher Grade in the Borough Post Office. But eventually things settled down a bit more and Tom was able to cope better, and stand up for himself. He had a fierce temper which I hadn't noticed before. The whole class saw he was also very talented – good at all the academic subjects and also Art. His drawings of tigers and elephants were particularly good and our teacher Mr Francis would pin them up all over the classroom walls for everyone to see. I liked art too and Tom taught me a lot, but I was nowhere near as good as he was. He promised to take me to his home one day to meet his family and show me more of his work.

*Colin Crawley*

My wife and I were sitting at a table at her high school reunion, and she kept staring at a drunken man swigging his drink as he sat alone at a nearby table.

I asked her, 'Do you know him?'

'Yes' she sighed, 'He's my old boyfriend.....I understand he took to drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear he hasn't been sober since.'

'My god!' I said, 'Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?'

And then the fight started.



West Beach 2011



West Beach 2011

## ZULU'S AT LAST

When we got to Durban, to my delight I discovered that all the wharf workers were Zulu's and guess what ran through my mind. Of course I went back in time to my Uncle Harry and the day he said to me 'If you ever meet the Zulu's, you must say to them Boomalakashakabono.' Now bear in mind I was at that time a skinny young lad and I was looking at these very big men that were all muscle and wearing feathers around their legs and arms. To say the least I was a bit apprehensive about saying anything to them, let alone a phrase that I had no idea of what it meant. I went back to my cabin to ponder this fact and I noticed a good number of them were working aft doing something and occasionally they would go below to get a drink of cold water and to get the water they had to pass my cabin, and that gave me an idea. I stationed myself at the door of my cabin and waited. I didn't have to wait too long before the biggest one of them all came walking along the gangway, or at least he appeared to be. I had my door open about six inches and when he got to my door I sort of blurted out that strangeword 'Boomalakashakabono' It was at that moment I thought I was going to die. I remember thinking Uncle Harry probably wanted me to say that word to make a man of me, its more than likely an insult and they will now want to kill me and by the look on this chaps face I was right in this deduction. But I was wrong, the look on his face was one of shock I think because he could not believe this little white boy had said this. He spoke good English and first of all asked me how I knew this word and then I told him the story of dear old Uncle Harry. I don't know whether he understood it all because I was still rather nervous but he was smiling and that gave me confidence. He asked me to go back on to the deck with him I said I would, then he grabbed some water and I followed him back up on deck. Once on deck he started chatting to his mates in their own lingo but I did keep hearing that mysterious word 'Boomalakashakabono' or an abbreviation of it 'Shakabono' and wondered what they were saying. Anyway I recall each one of them came over to me and placed his right hand on my left shoulder ( or was it the other way about, I can't remember to be honest) but as they did they gave me a bright smile, they didn't shake my hand it was just the hand on my shoulder. The chap that I first spoke to outside my cabin said a few more things to me and then they all went back to their jobs so I went down to my cabin. I hadn't even asked them what that word meant. Later when I had to take something up to the bridge a good number of the Zulu's shouted at me that word or the abbreviation of it, so I politely waved back at them and said 'Hello'. I remember Taffy saying to me 'Look at Mr. Popularity.' It got to the stage that I was afraid to say to the Zulu's that I didn't know what it meant, but the next day blew me away.

I got up and had my shower, shaved, cleaned my teeth etc, went to the galley as usual to check the menu for breakfast then to the pantry to get all the cutlery and crockery to make up the saloon for the officers breakfast. When the officers came into the saloon to have breakfast a few of them said 'Winston there's a few of the Zulu's asking for you on deck'. It became a bit of a joke when they said 'they are going to eat you Winnie' 'They like white boys Winnie.' Well after the breakfast was over I had to go once again up to the bridge to collect used crockery etc and as soon as I appeared on deck there was a great shout of 'Boomalakashakabono' from just about all the Zulu's and then they all started to head towards me. They were all smiling which calmed my nerves otherwise I would have turned and run. Many of them had brought me gifts of lizards, parrots, insects and even a monkey. I could see the captain and some officers looking at me with a bit of concern. Probably thinking 'What has Winston got himself into this time'. It really appeared as though all work on the ship had come to a stand- still. When the skipper saw all the insects and gifts he ordered them cleared off the ship, but after I had explained to him all that had happened, including Uncle Harry's instructions so long ago he allowed me to keep one pet only and I remember him saying 'And not the monkey.' Of course that was the one I really wanted but he wouldn't bend so I chose a little green parrot. But what started all this and what did that mysterious word mean?

Winston Kay

### We missed you at the picnic

