



## Weymouth Reunion Report – May 2016

### Friday –

On arrival at the Premier Inn, later than planned, we found Don & Jeanette Maciver, along with Ian Duckham and his sister Doreen had made their long journey on Thursday. There was an immediate problem at reception for Terry & Carole Winnett to address, finding they had made a booking into a Premier Inn six miles away – something easily done when googling! With no further rooms available, they were stuck with their booking; it was not a good arrangement for them, or for the rest of the group!

The group quickly gathered for a drink in the adjacent Brewers Fayre, which was to become our primary eating and drinking watering hole throughout. Before dinner, which we had arranged for 1900 hrs, dinning on one table, some of us decided to walk along the Prom towards Weymouth Sea Front; the weather was quite good at this stage, although sadly that was not to last!

The evening meal, after a suitable drink at the bar, seemed a long time coming, although complicated by some of us having meal-deals, with others pay as you go. Drinking in the small bar area afterwards talk was of absent 40<sup>th</sup> Reunion friends, some sadly departed, others who could not make it. Along with this, the talk was of holidays and safe places to travel abroad: Malta, where we held a Reunion 4 years ago was now, according to the papers, one of the safest places to go. Some of the group headed for bed early, with the rest of us not too far behind. It was strange, thinking back to those early Reunions, as some of us commented, when we would still be in the bar at stupid O'clock in the morning – although, in our defence, this bar closed promptly at 2300 hrs, even earlier on the Sunday night, something to do with child friendly areas....

### Saturday –

On Saturday morning we paraded at 1030 hrs, despite the gloomy and wet weather, and made for the nearby bus stop to travel to Weymouth Town Centre, then on foot to Nothe Fort. Those with bus passes were delighted to find they could be used, others of us who had forgotten them, not so! It was a pleasant walk, although a good fitness test, to the Fort, passing the delightful harbour, via the twice a day lifting bridge. As a group, the entrance fee to the Fort was £6.50 each. Quite a few of the group said their first impression the Fort was: Not too much to see, a bit expensive & it would be a quick whizz around and out to the nearest pub. This view all changed when we saw the many fine exhibits (especially the WW2 NAAFI exhibit), along with free access to all underground areas of the Fort. We quickly learnt that this coastal defence Fort was built between 1860 and 1872 by the Royal Engineers to protect Portland's harbour, which was then becoming an important Royal Navy base. The Fort played an important role in WW2, when the harbour was used as a base by the British and American navies. The Fort was finally abandoned in 1956, and last used as a Radar Station. Everyone agreed that this was a well worth-while visit, with Dave & Maureen Pottage planning a further visit in a few days with old friends. Some of us, it was noticeable, were careful not to step on the parade square!

After this, we walked back into Weymouth Town, visiting the Black Dog Pub, reputed to be the oldest pub in Weymouth and quickly found by Don & Jeanette Maciver our early arrivals. In the pub, we were privy to some impromptu pole-dancing by a group of noisy young ladies out to enjoy themselves, not taking account into how loud they had become, giving away some of their intimate thoughts & secrets, shock, horror!

## **Saturday** – (continued)

After the evening meal, which turned out to be rather good, with excellent service; this despite the mix of meal deals and cash payments. After this, we retreated to the bar area. Talk centred on gardens, religion and the need for men who were having any problems peeing to get their prostate gland tested. This was good advice from Don Maciver, making us all (men) aware not to ignore any problems and confront them promptly. Once again, sadly, the bar shut on time, but not before some of us made use of last (double) orders!!

Sunday – It was a shock for Rose Stinson to get an early morning text from Carole Winnett saying they were returning home unexpectedly. We just hope they will make it next year to Berwick-on-Tweed. It had already been planned, after breakfast; we would head out in several cars to Lulworth Cove, some 12 to 15 miles away. We left at 1045, with a pleasant drive through the countryside to our destination, which was quite crowded, with a huge car park filling up quickly. It was a five minute walk from the car park down to the Cove. Lulworth Cove was formed approximately 10,000 years ago by the powers of a river and the sea. It continues to evolve behind a narrow Portland stone entrance as the softer inner Chalk exposures are eroded. Some of us decided to climb up the surrounding slopes to get a better view, with Dave Pottage going off Piste, only to find his camera becoming inoperative – we nearly called the Coast Guard out! Others sat close to the shingled beach, until we all returned and made the walk back up to a nearby pub, although this time only for tea and coffee. The pub was rather busy serving meals, so it was some time before our drinks arrived to the garden area where we sat.

Our next schedule was Chesil beach, just outside Weymouth. The beach was of interest to many in the group as the Dambusters Squadron had used this area during WW2 for perfecting their famous bouncing bomb. It was to be an extraordinary journey to the Chesil beach for Steve Lister, with his passengers Ian Duckham & Doreen, his sister, in his 4-wheeled built for anything vehicle, along with myself, with passengers Rose, Don & Jeanette Maciver in my Fiesta. Steve Lister used Co-ordinates for navigation and we eventually ended up down a heavily rutted cattle track going nowhere near Chesil Beach, and said so on one sign! We eventually turned the vehicles around, with great difficulty, under Don's skilled marshalling. I stopped, got out of my car, and waited for Steve's vehicle to catch up. It was at this point, bearing in mind the cows in the adjacent fields had gathered to laugh (so it seemed) and stare at us, that a farmer sitting on a nearby fence said he had not seen vehicles like this come up the lane for 30 years, wait till I tell the lads at Dorchester market – I am sure that would be worth a beer to him! How we all laughed later at this, something the cows had done much earlier!

Eventually, we reached Chesil Beach Visitors Centre, much to the amusement of the Pottages and Rosentalls, who already had time to clamber across the pebbled Chesil beach, when we related our tale. The Centre was very informative; especially about a WW2 Spitfire Pilot who got shot down over the beach and was arrested by the Home Guard in his blue underpants (RAF issue?). His report said it had started as a good day, with a fellow pilot returning £5 (a lot of money then) that was owed to him - it was all downhill after that. Some of us wandered what eventually happened to this young pilot.

On return, the Pottages and Rosentalls decided to visit Weymouth (courtesy of bus passes), with a certain harbour pub in mind. The rest of us made use of the Brewers Fayre bar on sight. The evening meal was once again rather good, with our usual parading in the bar area afterwards. Talk was of Berwick-Upon-Tweed next year. The bar shut early and most of us were ready for bed, especially the farm track explorers!

## **Monday –**

After breakfast the departures began, with Don & Jeanette Maciver leaving for Southampton airport for their onward journey to Stornoway. Dave & Maureen Pottage, along with Ian Duckham & Doreen, had booked further days at the Premier Inn. The spirit of the 40<sup>th</sup> was still in evidence, even with such a small gathering at this year's reunion. It was agreed, it would be uplifting if we could exceed this year's numbers at our next reunion in Berwick-Upon-Tweed, where there is so much to see. Hopefully, then, we would get to wear our DJs, something we were unable to do this time because of the unsuitability of the dining area.

Many thanks to all those who attended, please return next year – with fingers crossed, many others to join us.

*Steve Lister/Dave Stinson*

**40<sup>th</sup> 'Together We Serve'**

