

# Ships that Pass in the Night!

**As we get older** we all fall prey to a remembrance of things past. In my case it came about when a fellow pupil of the early 1920's at the Church School in Queen Street asked where Harry Moor went after Grammar School. That set me off. I didn't know, I don't know, and then.....

for no apparent reason except that the book, Barton Remembered. 1939-1945. "Part Three". Entitled "Those who came Back" was in front of me. I then thought about the two Barton men that I met in the WW II years, 1939 to 1945. I also remembered Wilfred Codd telling me that he, a regular airman, was in the RAF in Habbaniyah, Iraq, in the troubled years just before WW II. The details of this are on p. 57 of 'Barton Remembered'. It tells us that Wilfred went with his Squadron to RAF Ismailia, nr. Cairo, and later into the Western Desert. Wilf. told me that he was given leave or a day or two off duty, for want of something memorable to do he climbed one of the Pyramids. On reaching the top he saw one other man, and he was amazed to find that both were Barton men, the other was a soldier, one of the Cox family. Wilfred told me his Christian name, which I forget! Was it Ken or Walt? That to me, was coincidence of the highest order. Were there any more like that in those years? At pp.31-32 of 'Barton Remembered' - Part Three Chris. Braithwaite tells us that he met Ken Cox of Barton at Djidjelli in North Africa during that Campaign. At p.18 (ibid).Ted Appleyard tells us he met Ron Clayton and Clarry Grimbleby in Groppi's Ice Cream parlour.( In Alex?) They were all three recalled to their ships and, unfortunately, both Ron Clayton and Clarry Grimbleby were lost in subsequent naval actions in 1943, in the Mediterranean. See Part 1 Barton Remembered.- Lest We Forget. In Part Three at p. 61 a 1946 photograph shows Ken. Cox and his brother Walt. in Salonica; at p.115 Arthur Newbitt and his brother George are pictured together in Ceylon in 1944 and at p.129 there is a photograph of Allen and Philip Thompson taken in September,1945, in Deolali , India.

I met two men from Barton but these encounters were not entirely by sheer chance, not by any means. I had gone into the RAF in 1940 and after some ground training in England was sent to Rhodesia. After training on Tiger Moths at Mount Hampden, near Harare, I went to Heaney, near Bulawayo for Service Flying Training on Twin Engined Oxfords. On November 1st, 1941, I flew a solo triangular navigation exercise from Heaney to a point in the Bush to the East of Bulawayo.

My instructions were to land back at Thornhill, where Harvard pilots were trained, refuel and return directly to Heaney. I knew, maybe from letters from home, that Jack Nurse was at Thornhill, he was an engine fitter. His Mother, Mrs. Nurse, lived at and was the licensee of the White Swan, Barton. After landing I shouted around the hangars and found Jack. I think we had a mug of tea, a chinwag and that was it.

I flew back to Heaney and may have mentioned it in a letter home but by the time it got there I might well have delivered the news myself. After qualifying as a pilot I was put on a reconnaissance/ navigation course in South Africa, then returned to England; some others went to the Western Desert or wherever they were required.

In the UK, 1942, I was posted to Operational Duties flying Sunderland Flying Boats and from June 1943, I found myself operating out of Bathurst, now Banjul, West Africa.

One day I was told that someone had asked if I would meet him and doing so I found that the man who had enquired was Ernest Parsons, another Barton man. He was working for Cliff. Smith, the Butcher, when I left for the Forces. Ernie knew I was in Bathurst, so, once again we had a chat, said what we knew was happening, if at all, at home in Barton. We had a photograph taken, I had two copies and I gave one to Ernie's sister, Mrs. Ben Sharpe. There are several other instances.

George Eyres, a Barton sloop skipper, was one of the Barton men who volunteered for duty with converted Thames lighters which were engaged in landing supplies to the invasion forces on and after D Day +1, 1944. One Barton man, Arthur Gouldthorpe of Waterside Road, was awarded the DSM for his actions on Gold Beach, a British invasion beach. That is another story. See Part Three. Back to George Eyres. He told me that whilst he was off duty one day, he was in Woolworth's Store in Paignton when a lady in Woolworth's uniform tapped him on the shoulder and said 'You're a long way from Barton, Georgie'. When he turned round she was gone, among the customers and he never did know who it was! These are humdrum sort of stories but there could well be others, some with real significance in a wartime context. So, Come on Barton, tell us about it!

I do remember my Uncle, George Watkinson, who was a Hull docker, telling me that the Dockers Units followed the troops into Sicily, Syracuse I think, and there he met Stan Johnson of Barton, who he knew well. The Dockers followed up the advance in Italy and he was in Naples when, he told me, he 'encountered' Captain Mark Pickard of Barton. I use the term 'encountered' because he did not amplify or explain anything. None of these three are in 'Barton Remembered'.

*Article kindly supplied by Charles Watkinson*