

S61 Chippies and Clankies Mini Reunion - Scheveningen, Netherlands, 6-8 September 2018



Attendees: Pete & Sandra Bellamy; Eddy Calvert & Lorraine Copping; Wally & Wilma Clelland; Ron & Trudy Coles; Mike & Toos Deveria; Mick & Sandra Hall; Dave Lenton & Carolyn McIntyre; Ken & Jane Morrison; Trev & Lindy Payne; Al Trusler; Pete & Christine Waters

MRU: Richard Wainwright. Health reasons. Get well soon shippers; we missed you!

Prologue

Friday 6 September - 1400

A smile flickered across Iron Mike Deveria's face, as he gazed across his domain. His time had come. He'd show 'em. This was going to be the best mini reunion ever, and he'd organised every bit of it, down to the finest detail. And he had the spreadsheets to prove it! DTG of arrival of each couple/person; where they were staying; what they were eating; date of birth; passport number; children's names; grandchildren's names; inside leg measurements; pets - the lot. Bus times, train times, taxi numbers etc. etc. He'd thought of everything. In his mind he saw himself being whirled around the restaurant on everybody's shoulders, amidst joyous and raucous cheering.

Until his thoughts were interrupted as a dirty, clanking apparition hove into his view, and came to a wheezing, spluttering halt in front of him. A motorhome. Dave Lenton and Carolyn, his house guests for the weekend, part way through their 'See ya; don't wanna be ya' farewell tour of the EU, had arrived. Across the side of the van, etched by an angry finger nail in the mud and excrement, were the words 'Go home Little Englander Scum'. As Mike pondered whether this was a political statement, or a comment on Dave's borderline dwarfism, a lump of gloop slithered down the side of the van and settled on his immaculate Dutch forecourt. He groaned.

1700



A pensive Pete Bellamy

Pete Bellamy, raconteur extraordinary and S61 Treasurer, nervously fingered the package in front of him. His plan had seemed perfect at the time, but now doubts were creeping in. He'd bought the thing thinking it to be the ideal anniversary present for Sandra. And wouldn't it look grand, in his 'me' cabinet, back at dit central!

'Shove it up your arse!' sounds so cruel when it comes from the lips of a loved one, and Pete now needed to offload the damned thing - *and* try to recover some of the £41 he'd forked out for it. A bloody decanter! Engraved with the emblem of the RNEBS, and something about it being the 150th anniversary of the introduction of RN Artificers.

Still, he was pretty certain the other members of the committee wouldn't rumble him, or any of the other members of the class, particularly once they'd scuppered a few. He smiled to himself; 'Yes, I'll pass it off as a much needed purchase out of Class funds, and trouser the cash! I'll tell them it's for class reunions, for, er, er'.

And he racked his brains.

1830

The Committee meeting is in full swing, at Ken Morrison's temporary HQ.

The room was suddenly quiet. All eyes were on the object which had been laid before them. A chill went up Ken's spine. Yes, he thought, the committee may well be composed of a bunch of unelected, self-appointed egotists, like himself, but he was the Chairman for God's sake! Under his guidance they'd progressed from being a bunch of mates, getting together to organise a dinner, to being the central committee, controlling and overseeing every aspect of the corporate body that was S61 Chippies and Clankies. And he was its pulse; its heartbeat; controlling the flow of information from his bunker in Ringwood. Omnipotent; unchallenged!



But what was *this*? A decanter! Innocuous enough in itself, perhaps, but he knew exactly what it represented; a power grab! A blatant piece of initiative on Pete's behalf, designed to impress the class, and pave the way to (gulp) elections! Such cunning! Pete was already the star of the show at every gathering, with his film star looks and his hilarious dits. If he followed that up at the dinner on Saturday with a successful 'Round of Port', in his, oh so clever, new decanter, the silver tongued assassin would be a shoo in for Chairman!

Ken couldn't possibly allow that to happen; he needed a plan!

Later That Night - The Oceans Pub/Restaurant

Mike's choice of the Oceans pub/restaurant to be the venue for the traditional Friday night reunion PU was inspired! The setting, right in the heart of Scheveningen's fashionable, yet traditional seaside promenade, adjacent to the wide sandy beach was superb. Inside, in the modern, spacious frontage, facing the beach, we had a large area set aside for our exclusive use. The staff could not have been more friendly, attentive and efficient. As ever in the Netherlands, their proficiency in the English language was impressive, and put us monolingual Brits to shame. All except Mike, our super host, whose Dutch is so good that they're making him a citizen of the Netherlands as I write! Trouble is, Mike was born in Glasgow and raised in Belfast, which means that nobody can understand a word he's saying when he's speaking English!

Above all, we were made to feel welcome, which gives a boost to any such occasion. And it certainly was a tremendously enjoyable evening. Strangely enough, and unlike any previous reunion, the males and females split into two separate groups at an early stage. The ladies chose to sit together at a large round table, where they could be served up great big plates of food, while the chaps preferred to stand, which seems to aid the flow of both dits and ale.



The Lads



The Lasses

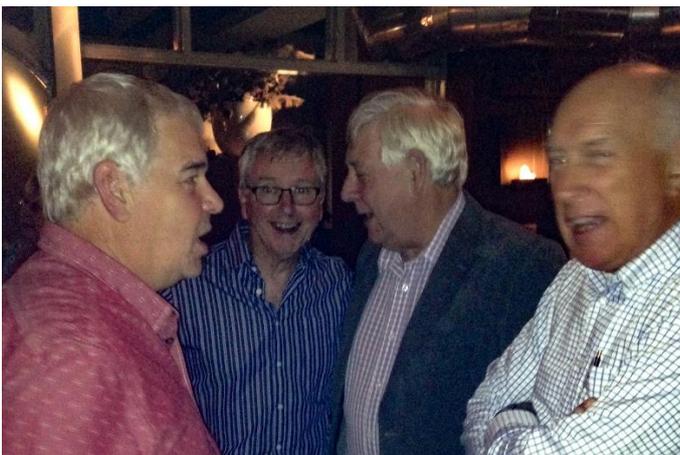
Lindy Payne found herself temporarily stranded amongst the lads, until Trev responded to her pleas and let her join the lasses table. No, Trev's not really a despot, it's just that Lindy was in a wheelchair, and was learning the hard way that as soon as you sit in a wheelchair you become invisible! Poor Lindy had suffered a horrendous accident at home - she'd tripped over a bamboo stick!



Ron & Trudy

It was great to welcome Ron and Trudy Coles as mini reunion goers. And goers they must be; apparently they've got enough grandchildren to man the old Ark Royal!

Over on the men's side, there was the usual loud and exuberant banter, and the never ending flow of dits - though someone did remark that it was eerily quiet without the presence of a certain Joe Dagnino! We S61 Caley boys could never be short of entertainment though, when we have the likes of the arch dit spinner, Pete Bellamy, and the man who must surely be the subject of more dits than anyone else, Eddy Calvert, amongst us!



It was fascinating to hear Mick Hall, who now appears to be a fully certified adrenaline junkie, talking about being stuck, and unable to move, far underground, in a pothole, as though it was an everyday occurrence. I'd have been terrified! As far as I understood it, Mick had to be stripped naked, and smeared liberally with goose fat before they could squeeze him out. I may have got that last bit wrong, but I was in shock at that point!

'Yeah, right' says Mike whilst Steve is shocked at Mick's story (Wally wasn't listening!)

Oh, and Al Trusler has bought a boat! Good grief! How was that allowed to happen! Are there NO rules governing this sort of thing these days? Mind you, a man with a boat might come in very handy post you know what!



'Captain' Trussler telling 'small ships' dits that Eddy and Lorraine find amusing!

Each and every one played their part, of course, in making the evening so lively and enjoyable, and setting us all up so nicely for the main event, on the next evening.

Saturday Evening 7 September - The Westwind Restaurant, Scheveningen

Once again, Mike had excelled himself with his choice of venue. Situated on the seafront, beside the promenade, and a stone's throw from the Oceans, the Westwind restaurant provided a wonderfully relaxed, warm and convivial setting for the reunion dinner. Just as on the previous night, the food was excellent, the staff friendly, efficient and helpful, and the drink flowed freely and worked its usual charms. Happily, Toos Deveria, who had been unable to join us on Friday, due to a painful form of laryngitis, was able to grace us with her presence. Sadly, Jane Morrison was too ill to attend.





It was a wonderful evening, and as the night wore on, everyone was happy and comfortable to be in the company of such a lovely bunch of people. We enjoyed a leisurely meal, and a relaxing drink in a spirit of friendship and togetherness; that heady mix of closeness and informality that makes the mini reunions such special occasions.

Remember Pete's decanter? Somehow, by a process of evolution, a procedure was formulated, whereby the incumbent host would make a brief speech and hand over the, by now ceremonial, decanter to the person hosting the following year's mini reunion, who would make a brief acceptance speech.

Mike rose to his feet and performed his duty with aplomb, just as he had throughout his entire spell as host. His handover speech comprised a brilliant rendition of 'The ballad of Sonia Snell', and some appropriate words to suit the occasion. Considering the extremely short notice, this was no mean accomplishment. The bar was set high!



The Decanter Handover



Pete in full flow

Bars, no matter how high, have never been an impediment to next year's host, however! Pete strode onto the, er, stage like the colossus amongst yarn spinners that he indubitably is. So well received was his dit featuring our much loved, and sadly missed, shipmate Del Hughes, that he gave an encore, which he concluded to rapturous applause.

Ken squirmed uncomfortably in his seat, but he had his plan, and watched with satisfaction as it began to unfold.

Confusion arose, and the Round of Port was delayed, when it was discovered that some unknown person had filled the ceremonial decanter with red wine. Only when this act of sacrilege had been rectified could the solemn, and time honoured, process of the 'Passing of the Port' begin.

Every man and his dog (no reference to the ladies intended there!) claimed to be an expert on the strict rules governing the POTP ceremony. Unfortunately it seemed that no two people had learned the same set of rules!

Eventually, however, a consensus emerged, and the precious container made its stately progress along the sides and around the top of the first of the two tables, and then to the person on the end of the second table, where the process began again. Pete's face was beaming; what a great idea of

his this had been - his secret was safe! All was going swimmingly; until it reached the one person who should have known better!

Commander Ken Morrison RN (Retd), ex Royal Yacht, and clanky to the Queen (God bless her!), inexplicably cocked the whole thing up, by not only sending the decanter across the table, instead of along, but by filling the glasses of all the people in his vicinity! The whole process descended into anarchy and farce - ruined!

Ken smiled inwardly; his plan had worked beautifully!

Sunday 8 September

In what has now become a tradition on mini reunion weekends, just before the reunion dinner came to its conclusion, a time and a place for an informal gathering on the Sunday was agreed, and was subsequently attended by the majority of the reunion attendees. It seems that everyone enjoys themselves so much over the, oh so brief, period of the reunions that they are reluctant to part company when it all comes to an end!

And so it came to pass that Sunday lunchtime found Eddy, Lorraine and Al imbibing a drink or two, beside the beach whilst anticipating the arrival of the mob. They didn't have to wait long, and it really was quite a mob that arrived, as almost everyone was able to attend. Once again, a great time was had by all, amid an atmosphere of togetherness and good humour, and many an old chestnut was brought out, dusted off and shared amongst friends!



Almost reluctantly, as the afternoon wore on, classmates bid their fond farewells and drifted away, with happy memories made, and promises of future meetings fresh in their thoughts. Perhaps we're all getting to the age where such promises become hopes, which is why the reunions seem to be more important and meaningful each year.





Just to finish on a cheery note, and to prove that there's lots of life left in the old sea dogs yet, I have to report that, at 1911 on the Sunday night, I received a text message from Al Trusler that he and Eddy were still at the seafront, and still celebrating, in time honoured fashion; bloody marvelous!

And Finally

Special mention must be made of Wilma Clelland and Jane Morrison, both of whom have taken a real battering by life threatening illnesses in recent times, and who are still fighting their way back to normality, after what must feel like an eternity to both of them. In the face of real adversity, they turned up, and made a genuine contribution for us all. I'm sure that everyone will agree that they deserve our heartfelt admiration and thanks, and would want to join me in wishing both Wilma and Jane the fullest, speediest, and happiest recovery.