



# Member's



## Profiles

### John Bishop

Born in Bournemouth 1942 I grew up in the delightful little town of Wimborne Minster Dorset. Passed my 11 plus but never went to grammar school as I told them at the interview that I was joining the RN as soon as I was 15 - no way I was staying on at school until 16. Was educated at Pamphill secondary modern school and thoroughly enjoyed my school years.

Left school in April 1957 and joined **HMS Ganges**. Bit of a culture shock that was. No dreaded health and safety or PC in those days. I remember the whole mess being tipped out of bed one night, on oilskins (back to front) boots on (laces out) and wearing respirators then made to go up and over the mast, but only as far as the devils elbow! And just because someone cracked a funny, everyone giggled and the instructor overheard us. I don't recall anyone being injured or insulted though. One of the biggest culture shocks at Ganges was teaming up with 'Soapy Watson'. There we became good mates and ironically never met up again till our last commish on Caprice.

Left Ganges in 1958 and got sent to **HMS Dryad** on an RP's course. Not something I wanted to pursue but I'm convinced that because I could do joined up writing is why they put me in Radar. After the RP's basic course I joined **HMS Llandaff** as a junior

seaman at Guz. Horrible ship, my worst one ever, however 12 months in the Far East as a teenager was good compensation.

Left **Llandaff** in April 1960 and drafted to **HMS Osprey** at Portland as part of the FOST's barge's crew. This was a good number, but after only 5 months I was drafted to **HMS Shoulton**. She was the first of the mine hunters and we spent a lot of time in the Scandinavian fjords, where there were no thermal layers in the water so that the ship could carry out mine detection trials. On board **Shoulton** I became interested in diving (anything to get out of radar) and the 'bubbleheads' took me under their wings (or should it be fins). Our base was South Queensferry Edinburgh, a great run ashore. I remember the '**Shoults**' with fond memories. October '61 I joined **HMS Lowestoft**, a great ship with a superb skipper, Ray Lygo who I believe went on to become an Admiral. Highlights of that trip were a visit to the Caribbean and an extended visit to the East coast of America.

I finally got to do my diving course at **HMS Vernon** and **HMS Drake**. June 1964 flew out to Singapore and joined the survey ship **HMS Dampier** in charge of the ships diving team. Although an old ship and very uncomfortable it was an interesting time. We carried out a full survey of Hong Kong Island for several months then were chartered by the Americans to carry out surveys of the Indian Ocean. As a diver it was great just going down in the warm waters collecting coral, sand, plants and fish for the scientists to look at, you could pay a small fortune for a holiday like that. The ship also did pirate and terrorist patrols off of Borneo and Singapore, yes survey ships did carry guns!

In June '65 I was casevaced home by 'crab



air' and spent a short time in Haslar before getting a dream draft. Back to **HMS Osprey** with a diving team working for **ASWEE** recovering experimental torpedoes in Bincleaves Cove and also postie for **Osprey**. What a draft, L&RA in Weymouth and no bosses within shouting distance, now I was even more convinced that I had made the right decision back in '57. My Parents had bought a pub in North Dorset; only about 30 minutes drive from Weymouth, so it was plenty of 'up homers' time. There I met, and fancied a girl who was to be my future wife, Jean. The problem was that she was married to someone else at the time, however as they say 'love conquers all in the end' and we are still together now after 40 years.

In 1967 I got a horrible shock, called to the 'Jaunties' office at **Osprey** and told I was drafted to **Caprice**. What the hell is Caprice I asked? You will find out when you join her in Aden was the reply. So I flew out to Aden and joined her late at night and was reunited with 'Soapy'. Gib was the stop on the way home, the two of us had a good night in the casino, were late back on board, missed 'hands to muster', trooped and told by the skipper that as 'killicks' we should set an example got 14 days so when everyone else went on return leave we stayed on board. Nothing new there then!!

In 1968 I got trooped in Hawaii as I allowed the beautiful young ladies young ladies at the end of the gangway to change my uniform for the garlands when I should have been collecting the mail! (see pic). However Mark Ruddle saw the funny side and it went no further. My time was up when we reached Puerto



Rico, San Juan, so I was flown home from there. **Caprice** was a great ship, with a great voyage, a superb crew and certainly memories that I will never forget. Having been with FOST I don't think that they ever had to handle a ship like **Caprice** in their sterile world.

I left the RN in February 1969. Jean and I lived in Bournemouth and I got a job with the British Aircraft Corporation assembling the BAC 111 plane. I could not settle to civvy life, even the diving jobs didn't appeal, so I nearly applied to go back to the RN. I then saw an advert to join the London Fire Brigade. I applied and was accepted for training. However I couldn't afford the accommodation in London (short of sleeping on Waterloo Station between shifts) so I then applied to The City of Southampton Brigade and ended up as a fireboat cox'n in Southampton Docks and the Solent.

I did 30 years in the Fire Service and had a varied career structure. For a time I ran the specialist fire training centre delivering training for oil rig workers for Shell, BP, etc and also other major companies such as Woolworths, Marconi and Estelle Lauder and also had a close liaison with the Royal Naval fire-fighting school at Phoenix. My final job was as Station Commander at Southsea Fire Station, which included the post of Port Liaison Officer to the Royal Navy HM Dockyard so I was able to renew my ties with the RN by visiting the ships, arranging exercises and socialising. But boy did I find a different navy to the one that we used to know.

I retired from the fire service in 1999 and went to work for Hampshire County Cricket club in Southampton as Safety & Security Officer. When the club moved to its new stadium on the outskirts of the city I had the task to bring my section up to the requirements of an international sports and entertainment venue.



I went back to studying and got various qualifications including doing a degree course on stadium and spectator safety, which has opened many doors for me. I have been involved in delivering the safety of International cricket matches, Premiership football games and Pop concerts, including among others Oasis, Billy Joel, David Bowie and the Sugar Babes. Having to brief these stars, their agents and managers I have met some very interesting people over the years.

I have almost retired from that scene now although I do some consultancy work for the England and Wales Cricket Board auditing Cricket grounds for Safety and Security which I still enjoy very much and it keeps the grey matter ticking over.

I have two children, Mandy who is a company office auditor and Darryl who has just been promoted as an instructor at the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service training school and not forgetting my pride and joy of my two grandchildren Livvy and Joe. I have thoroughly enjoyed my life, there are still things I want to do but my main intention

is to draw my pensions for as long as I have paid into them. I am very grateful to those who have made the Caprice 1968 Association so successful, as it is great to renew old friendships and meet acquaintances, it seems every year a blast from the past turns up.



**John & Jean Bishop**

**Likes** - Golf, Cooking, Travel, Wine, enjoying my grand kids

**Dislikes**- Politicians, tabloid press, (especially the Paparazzi), Political Correctness and Health and Safety Guru's who have never got their hands dirty.