



# Member's Profiles



## Dave Jennings

Born David John Jennings at Mayday Hospital Croydon, the only child to George & Lois on the 5 July 1949. My parents had first met whilst serving in the RAF in Palestine during WW2, we lived near West Croydon railway station but the house was demolished a long time ago to build a flyover. In 1952 we moved to Banstead in Surrey, I went to the village infant and primary school but after failing the 11+ exam I went to Piquets Way Secondary Modern, leaving in 1964 and within a month joined **HMS Ganges** on the 24<sup>th</sup> August as a JS2 but I volunteered (for the last time!) to join the comms branch, memories of Ganges are quite vivid as I am sure they are for many of you, so I won't go into detail here apart from mentioning Faith, Hope & Charity, with whom I had many a fling then onward for part two training to **HMS Mercury**.

**July 1966 HMS Defender** as a lowly JRO, she had been in Portsmouth a week earlier but (of course) I was sent to join her in Rosyth (a hell of a train journey in those days) where as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> destroyer Sqdn we were in the very last Home Fleet gathering. Fantastic accommodation\*\* in the jungle mess directly over the screws where I slept on two collapsible (which they did very often) benches tied together and strapped to a stanchion, but what a draft nine months in

the West Indies/Bahamas, based in Bermuda one of two ships permanently on the WINDIES station. This was also the only time I was shot at, when we hit the beach using a Gemini with me as the radio op; you've never seen so many matelots bury themselves in the sand so quick, after Defender back to HMS Mercury more training.

**March 1968 HMS Caprice** – now as an RO2, by far my best tour in the RN in fact so amazing that we all gather every Sep/Oct to celebrate and remember!



**A grainy photo from 1968  
(The other likely lads not identified)**

**Feb 1969 Mercury** again for sub-spec course, then as RO2 (G) and joined **C in C Portsmouth** staff working in the comms center at Fort Southwick buried deep inside Portsdown Hill, not the best environment damp and smelly, still had the WW2 war room, kitchen and telephone switchboard (but we did have the Wrens and some civvies down there with us). Working 48on/48off watch system great, except that the final watch was thirteen hours from 1800 till 0700 then you had to climb back up over 300 steps to get out, well knackered.

**Jan 1970 Mercury** for another course passed for LRO (G) but the points list was enormous, then a very unusual draft to a RN



UNIT based on the perimeter road of **RAF Tangmere**. This was where the "S" branch communicators were language trained in either Russian, Arabic or Chinese, then these guys went in Subs under the North Pole listening for wireless transmissions from the eastern block countries. I had the envious job of driving a Tilley wagon from RAF Tangmere to Faslane and back collecting their paperwork, the good thing was I had three days to do it, which meant that, using my initiative, I managed to take the second of the three days at home! Nice little number that draft. I also vaguely remember during the dock strike in the early 70's getting a draft to **RAF North Weald** to operate a telephone exchange amongst thousands of Pongos ARGH!!

**Jan 1971 CinC Far East Fleet** working in Singapore COMCEN back into **HMS Terror** again, but not for long it was about this time the powers decided to let single men live out so three of us sparkers got a bungalow, 7 Jalan Periwa, Johore Bahru. We had a great time commuting over the causeway in my Aussie built automatic Ford Falcon car petrol at 2/6 a gallon to Singapore Dockyard, great memories.

**Jan 1972 CINCNAVHOME** Back to Portsmouth up and down those bloody steps again! but not for so long this time.

**May 1972 HMS Blake** - a big ship - never had one of those before, it was testing one of the first satellite communications systems in the RN, didn't do much potted around Norway, Sweden, Denmark and they stuck me on a Jetty off Loch Erriboll with a radio for hours and hours in a blizzard *f r e e z i n g*, the ship lost its anchor there too (not my fault), had a big 6 month refit in Pompey and a fire (I think the QM on watch got locked up for it).

**Dec 1973 Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships (FOCAS)** staff, shore based and funnily enough on the opposite side of the road to Fort Southwick, all office work watch keeping again.

**Oct 1974 HMS Fife** one of the so-called super destroyers, which were really cruisers and by far the most modern ship I ever served on - mind you *everything* was new compared to Caprice, where we had to stand on a rubber mat to tune the transmitters. Everything had push buttons instead of handles.

**Sep 1975 Mercury** again but not for long because I was sent to **HMS Yarnton**, Hong Kong Squadron, canteen boat but as a Killick and actually in charge of the comms dept. With sweeping gear removed and replaced with a gun, we assisted the HK police patrolling the straights against the Chinese coming across but the nasty side was occasionally picking up bodies, sometimes families roped together, bad times.

**Mar 1976 Mercury** for pre release then Vicky Barracks for release in June 1976 during the looong **HOT** summer.

After leaving I had a varied career starting as a **Driving Instructor** with BSM but then in '77 joined **Portsmouth City Council Transport Dept** as a lowly conductor on the buses, I spent thirteen years there eventually becoming the Training Officer, having been a Driver and Inspector and then accepted voluntary redundancy in 1990.



I managed two pubs during '90/'91 the "Three Crowns" Cowes, Isle of Wight and the "Half Moon" Warminglid, West Sussex, working self-employed for a management company and then at Whitbread Solent Inns taking their management course.

From '92 to '96 I had various jobs, mainly selling insurance and then exterior wall coatings. Then in '96 started my own business as a minibus operator, holding an "O" licence and operating 16 seat minibuses, having contracts with three Local County and City Councils, also private hire and various functions.

In 2005 after the breakdown of my marriage I wound up the company and started to work for Stagecoach Portsmouth, this lasted about two years but in 2007 due to my mothers poor health I decided to move in and care for her in Banstead.

I worked for Epsom Coaches until 2011 but was then retired due to my poor health, at the reunions you may see me zooming around in an electric buggy as I have breathing difficulties - *so beware no "L" plates!*

I have two of each, sons and daughters, I see the girls most weeks but the boys are in the RAF and in their thirties stationed away, at present I have thoroughly enjoyed watching the 2012 London Olympics, absolutely brilliant COME ON Team GB.

My first reunion was Bristol but I'm still getting to know everyone and that's the best enjoyment of all, looking forward to seeing you at Portland again.

**LIKES:** Socialising, I am secretary of a local social club, which takes up my spare time.

**DISLIKES:** people who no matter how much you explain the reason for something they refuse to listen **\*\*argh\*\***

