

Arthur Capener

Captains "Tiger"

HMS Worcester.

Aboard March 61 - June 62



The Steward Boys that trained on HMS Worcester for many years deserve a mention on this site, so, here it is. This PDF contains some words and memories from various ex Worcester Cadets about their obviously hazy memories about Steward Boys and the system of training them on board the Worcester. Unfortunately, I have had to edit some of this pdf to protect the "innocent". It is marked *edited* where words or sentences are removed.

*These E-Mail contributions were dated 1st Sep to 9th Sep 2010*

I received the following from Chris Chipchase yesterday and wondered if anyone can throw some light on the matter.

I do remember a young lad as a steward aboard but whether he was a trainee or not I have no idea.

Regards

Tim Cook

Hi Tim,

I wonder if you can help with this enquiry, perhaps through the Old Worcester's forum. Patricia "paddy" O'Driscoll is an author, seaman, and someone I have known for a long time. She is currently working on a book on the hulks on the Thames, including the Worcester. I'll quote her letter:-

When you were in Worcester, did you ever come across the Steward Boys? I understand that they were trained under John Evans, the Purser. I've not seen them mentioned in Capt. Steele's book or in the one by Brian Beale which you got for me - and which has proved to be extremely useful with information on the more recent history of the establishment, since Capt. Steele's book only takes the story up to 1962, her centenary year.

I had always thought that only the Gravesend Sea School trained cooks and stewards as well as deck ratings, so I had no idea that some training of stewards was also given aboard Worcester. I was told this by someone who worked on the admin. side of Worcester and later the MN College from 1968 onwards, by which time, I was told, the steward boys were on their way out. Just when you think you've wrapped everything up, some more information creeps out of the woodwork. Can you throw any light on this?

So, I wonder if you can find out any information, which I can pass on to her.

Best wishes,  
Chris Chipchase

When I was on the Worcester I was unaware of the Steward Boys. However, in later life we had a daily help whose husband turned out to be one of these boys. The name was Olden and they lived in North Baddesley, Nr Romsey.

Yours  
Paul Andrews 62-65

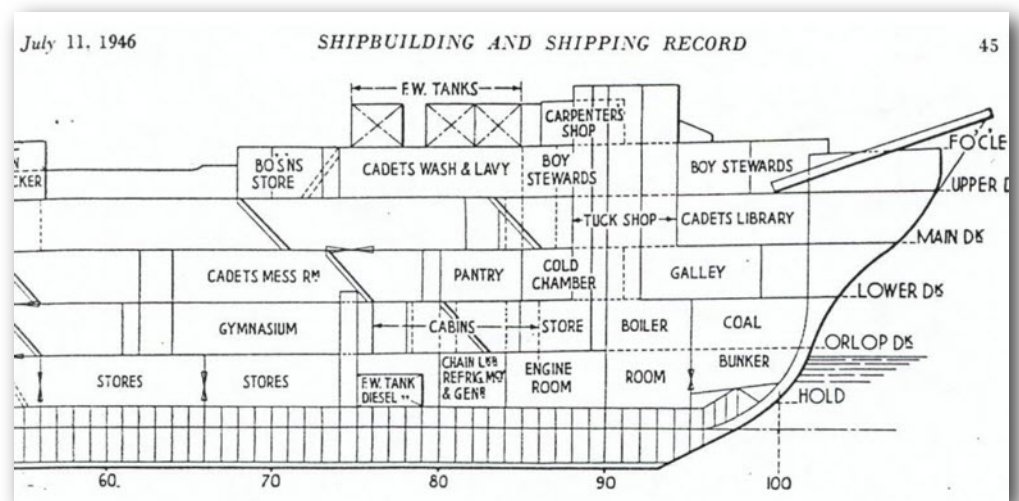
In 1945-1946 they were known as Galley Boys. They helped prepare all meals and were directly under the Chief Steward. They had their own boat. Neither Galley Boys nor Cadets were allowed to mix at all. Arthur would tell you all about them.

Regards  
John Bakewell

Well done John. Been trying all day to put my memory in gear. Steward boys just did not ring true. I do remember them and 'Galley boys' was the designation and I bet Arthur has some good stories.

Cheers  
Tony Child

Paul,  
The attached plans show the arrangements for the Boy Stewards. It is incorrect to call them "Galley boys" collectively. They fulfilled a variety of jobs as has been detailed in the interesting website this morning .... Gun Room, Wardroom, Captains Tiger, Galley and Pantry boys.....



In the era 55-59 they were pretty prominent as the junior lad at a mess table took the food dishes from the Pantry and returned the empty plates to the hatch so you were face to face with them. Muh Windsor was in charge of them at one time .... Barnsey (David Barnes).... he who remembers.

Very interesting David. I remember Steele's tiger well. He was a great big Indian. Very smart with a turban. When I went back as 3/0 in 1957, I found poor old Windsor as Sick Bay attendant. What a waste. He had been Chief Yeoman of Signals in the Royal Navy. I quickly got him to help me in teaching signals.

All the best,  
John Bakewell.

They were there during my time 58-60  
Dave Farley

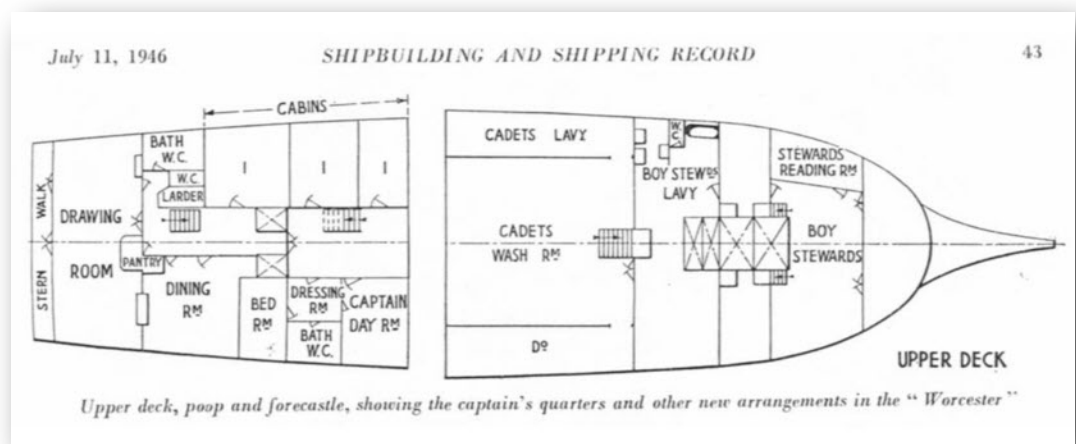
Yes they were Dave and I am ashamed to say to most of us they were invisible.  
Barry Leech

Yes they were weren't they - why was that - seems very odd not to know they were on board - where on earth did they bunk down - ashore??? Paul Andrews

Link provided by Paul Andrews  
A Memory of HMS Worcester in 1953.

I am looking for any of my old mates that worked aboard HMS 'WORCESTER' in 1953. We were 8 young lads training under Chief Steward Danks, Second steward 'Jock' Porter and Chef, 'Ham' Hambrook Moore. For boating craft, ie rowing, sailing etc, we had Bosun, Mr Poppy. For odds and ends jobs when cadets were on leave, the PTI Mr Johnson, found us work, scrubbing down decks and painting the shoreside swimming pool building! These jobs were carried out by the lads that didn't look after the Petty Officers in the 'Gun Room' or the Masters in the 'Ward Room' or Captain Steele in his accommodation. Some of the catering lads on board at the time were: Jimmy Da Groote (Liverpool), Tom Glue (Southampton), Keith 'Con' Jordan (Brixton, London), Arthur(?) Jefferies,(unknown) Frank Walsh (Liverpool), and Colin 'Scouse' Yardley (Liverpool). Many a happy time was spent, when as 'boat boy' when you could 'borrow' the ship's dingy and row inebriated sailors from the Pier Hotel jetty out to their Everard tankers and coasters that were anchored off Greenhithe. What cracking, adventurous days they were!

Neil C MacGregor



I have been reading with some amazement some of the comments re the stewards on Worcester. I joined on as a Pantry Boy, (dish washer) then Galley Boy, (spud peeler) elevated to the lofty position of Gun Room Steward, but too good for the Chippy and engineer/painter or whatever he was and quickly into the wardroom, looking after King, Howell, matron etc.....in no time at all was put into the job of Captains Steward to Capt L.W.L.Argles. and Mrs A. their daughter, occasionally and their two dogs, (corgis)

When I joined the ship, John W. Evans was purser, a fellow named Clanchy or Clancy was connected somehow he looked after the stores and provisions that came aboard. Norm was chief cook and he had a deputy an older guy named Ernie,(chain smoked all day and night) there was also a younger cook called Bernard, who left at some point and was replaced by a guy Dave Smith (flash fella from London) he was given some rooms in the Abbey for a while I think he was a married guy, cant remember too much. Stewards did boat duty when cadets were away on leave, and although we did not row Everard crew to their ships when they were pissed, one of the other stewards and myself did row out in the small dinghy one night in a bloody strong ebb tide to pick one of the everards crew out of the water who had got pissed and was trying to swim to his ship, he was dead if we hadn't got him out. Then his mate who had also got pissed and tired and was clinging on the the post at the end of the causeway, just under the light . We rowed across and got him and got them both back to the platform. At that point King who was on board came up in his dressing gown and phoned for an ambulance, he then fired up the motor boat and we took them over to the causeway to meet the ambulance.

Of course the local newspaper had a small article reporting how Commander King had rescued these two etc etc etc ....bloody typical.

A few cadets of the time did notice the stewards and galley boys etc as they smuggled cigarettes etc for some of them, but in general we were invisible only a few of the cadets behaved as though they believed they were something special and were out and out snobs, the vast majority were decent young men.

Officers mostly OK. (*edited*) - (a lot)

Yes, Stewards did exist and did work bloody hard, we did all sorts of maintenance work as well as Pantry Galley and Tables etc .....those of you who didn't bother with them wouldn't have known the half of it. Oh and there was a CPO name of (*edited*) I think, he took stewards out for a rowing lesson in a cutter during the holidays/term break and in an ebb tide, two blades broke, there was no replacements and we drifted towards those bloody barges that stood high out of the water when empty, he was screaming and raving like a bloody idiot , panic stricken, what a leader he turned out to be, we survived.... obviously but no thanks to him.

As for other matters, (*edited*) stewards knew and saw quite a lot. (*edited*)

Those were the days.....

Arthur

Arthur,

I was waiting for your reply and very interesting it was. Thank You.

You mentioned a David Smith. In message number 44561 May 2006 Mike Bartlett forwarded a message from David Smith 1957-58 obviously not the same. He sent a copy of his leaving certificate and on it he was classed as 'Boy Steward'.

One of your paragraphs brought back a memory of when Jerry Cahalane went off sick in 1947. The PTI appointed forbid the wearing of swimming gear in the baths. His excuse was that swimming costumes were affecting the filter system. The ban lasted about one term due to objections from parents.

When Jerry returned as PTI this chap took up duties in the sickbay until a cadet made a complaint. He was gone the next day.

We had a similar incidence to the one you described about galley lads trying to swim back to the ship at night. No ambulance called this time though They were carefully attended to on board by Steele's daughter. We did not have such things as a Matron or Purser. Windsor was sickbay attendant for a while. But that is another story.

There used to be some contact between cadets and catering staff, especially with the Captains tiger. I think the shortest route from aft to for'd accommodation was along the lower deck and as I was in f'csle port they passed through our area. I remember one who used to be in full uniform complete with turban. I think he left because Steele objected to the turban. Another one was a smart lad and good to have a chat with. Steele wanted him to stay on but he was anxious to go to sea and left at the end of his training period.

I best shut up

David Bell 47/48

Arthur,

I have shared your amazement and very many thanks for that very edifying description of your time aboard. Certainly revealing things that I never suspected but I suspect that in some instances I was an innocent abroad. I remember some of the names that you mentioned and also the availability of a "light" if a fag was poked through a small hole in the closed up door between your accommodation and the drying room. On one such occasion when I didn't get a light but could hear voices I looked through the hole to see Bubbles standing there, turn around and go quickly down the stairs doubtless to try and catch me !! I escaped

Martin Tregoning

Arthur

Thanks for telling how it was, warts and all. We have all probably chosen to ignore some of the aspects of our lives on the ship.

I recall Clancy and his offsider where nicknamed Zak and Zeke or something similar.

Bubbles Howell and King were as thick as thieves, it was as if one brought the other along like the old retainer.

My recollection was that Ernie was chief cook and Norman was 2nd cook who took over from Ernie. I believed it was Ernie wearing a trilby who was pelted with leftover food one dark night from the focsle head as he went ashore in the tier boat, the crew all rigged in sou'westers and oilskins seemed to bring the boat within range! Rather than setting off across to the causeway.

Was Muh Windsor in the galley in your time or was he back in the Gunroom?

As far as the Sick Bay was concerned I believe some are still alive so we are probably not able to name the names (*edited*) We look forward to the next episode.

Cheers

John Taylor

Thanks for this, John. Some of the names brought back memories. I remember rowing down to a Norwegian ship moored at the Reeds paper mill just below the "Worcester". I'd met the captain in the army during National Service and bumped into him in London. He invited me back to his ship and put a bottle of

rum in front of each of us with a biscuit tin full of sugar in the middle of the table alongside a water jug, which the steward replenished from time to time - but not very often.. If I remember aright John Turner, Dick Mirehouse and myself rowed out and stayed too long. The tide had turned and we'd a hell of a job getting back to the Worcester about 4 o'clock in the morning. Mirehouse lost his slippers when he caught a crab and fell over backwards in the boat. He was sloshed out of his mind. The next day when I went to teach in the classrooms I still wasn't fully sober and as the ship lurched, my handwriting went in arcs across the blackboard, much to the amusement of the cadets.

Hope your op is healing well.

A aye John Waddington-Feather

I had forgotten the History Master/Matron link but bearing in mind his age [if not promoted to glory] he might like to be reminded of his former prowess !! I think Matron was the subject of many fantasies some real others imagined. But Arthur is I am glad to see being like the 3 wise monkeys - well almost !

Martin Tregoning

Hi Barry,  
they are only a few recollections, I can't recall the grey meat you mention, I do recall porridge.. as one morning when I was a galley boy I was carrying out a large oval pot of the stuff with another lad and he was in front as he stepped over the combing he slipped and the porridge pot went up in the air, my hand was wedged in the other handle as it was hot so I had a kitchen cloth in as well as my hand, up came the pot and tipped boiling porridge over my arm, which resulted in many visits to matron for dressings, *(edited)*.  
Arthur

Art.

Chris Chipchase has asked me to find out how long the Steward Boys served aboard in order to become qualified.

Can you help.

Regards

Tim Cook

Hi Tim,

It varied according to the boys, I suppose there would have been a set pattern , so long in the pantry and the galley , Gun Room etc.....I however was very quickly through the basic stuff and did most of my time in the Captains as Captains Tiger, both the Captain and Mrs Argles would have liked it if I had stayed on longer and I would have been happy to, but other lads needed the opportunity . I would say about 12 months all up would have done it.

Arthur

Many thanks for that Art. Will pass it on.

Regards

Tim Cook

Tim,

I have attached a copy of David Smith's certificate. Sorry about the quality.

You will see he did 5 months. So it appears no laid down definite period of training was in force.

David Bell 47/48

David,

you are quite right to suggest that there was no 'fixed' period of training. It was very much a personal choice and or one of your ability and the fact that some lads got ships to go to sooner than they expected. My aunty wanted to pay and put me into Worcester or some other establishment so that ultimately I became an officer in either the merchant or royal or Army (that was because she had pots of money), I chose to go the way I did, don't know why as I never took up a 'career' at sea.....in any form. I left school with 7 GCE's is another reason she felt I shouldn't waste my education. In hind sight she was right of course. But I am very happy living as an artist /whatever in New Zealand.

Arthur

Just been reading through these e-mails. It is strange isn't it. I have no recollection of any Steward boys either. I vaguely remember people slopping up behind the serving hatch but that is about that. I certainly have no recollection of any Stewards mucking about in boats. It's amazing what you don't see when you are young.

Colin Thurlow 62-65

Wakey Wakey Colin, did you imagine that Capt Argles and his wife and all the Wardroom, looked after themselves when it came to meals .? As Captains Steward I even had a lady come on board each day to assist with cleaning and occasionally serving if we did a dinner party. Her name was Mrs Croucher. Its a good job you weren't skipping anything when you were young, you'd have run aground.  
Arthur

Hi Arthur,

I do realise that now of course. But sometimes I don't know if it is my memory of times so long ago or I just did not notice much when I was young.

By the way, can I stick all your rambling on my site ? I warn you, there may be a picture of you as well. Got any pics of you when you were young on the Worcester?

Colin

Colin

Unfortunately I do not have any pics of me when I was on Worcester, sad to say I only had a couple which were taken when I was in uniform. Our uniform was very similar to the cadets , hats and everything. The difference was that it was a battledress style jacket and not a coat style. Its a pity I don't have one because my mother who kept all the pics of lots of family etc, lost them when she moved into a rest home many years ago and has since died so there is little chance they will ever be recovered at all..

There are of course pics of a younger me, but of no relevance to the Worcester.

Any ramblings are destined for the e-group not for general publication if they contain 'opinions' about any individuals.

Arthur

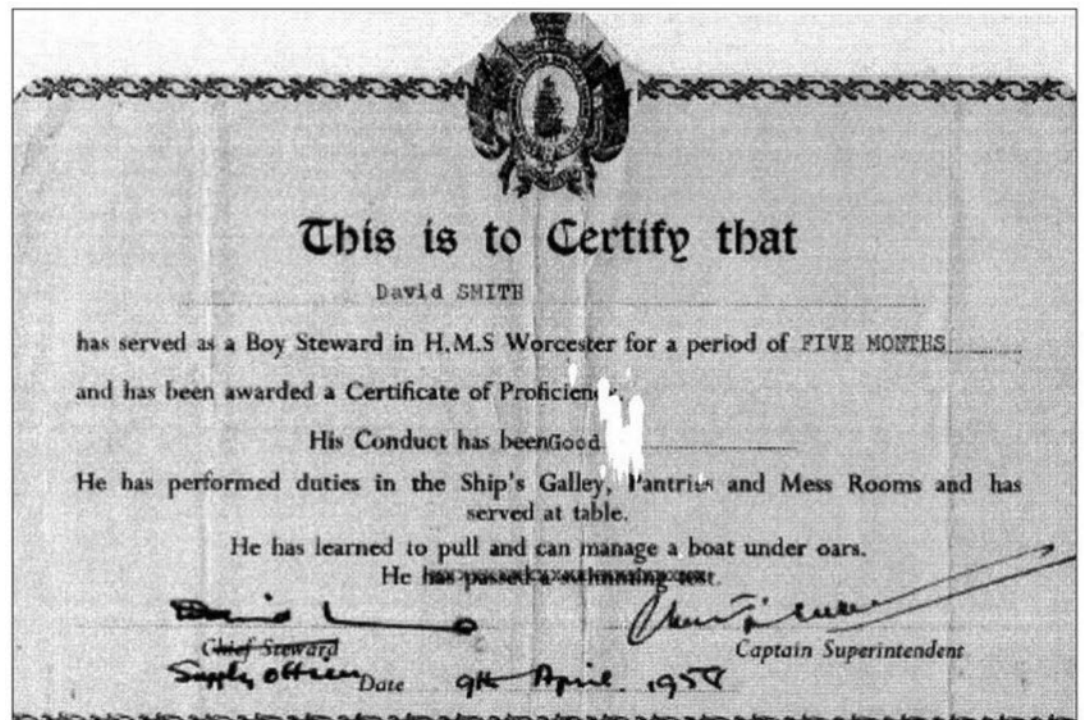
Hi Arthur,

Shame about the lack of pictures. It is a shame when family pictures get lost although sometimes relatives feel "what am I going to do with that lot" Still, if it wasn't for pictures history would not be so Interesting. Take your comments about e-group ramblings. My editor pen will have to come into action !! It's a shame to loose a lot of them though.

What was the Captain's quarters like then? He had a fair bit of space according to the plans.

Colin

9th Sep 2010



Colin,

Capt's quarters were quite spacious compared with all the others. He and his wife had a reasonable sized 'lounge room ' and we had a small galley kitchen with warmer drawers etc to keep food hot as I had to get it all from the galley ahead of their meals including Dinner parties . They had a separate dining room, Their bedroom etc was a pastel green, with matching bathroom and there was a pink bedroom and bathroom for guests important or not.

I recall all the preparations for the Queens visit in 1962 , their quarters got very detailed attention, for obvious reasons. For example there was a stair rail that ran in part alongside the bulkhead, the painters had small mirrors on sticks so they could see the back of the stair rails while they painted them . Now who was ever going to be able to look round that side and see if it had been done.? The attention to little details was amazing I thought.

Capt Argles sometimes went ashore, and I recall the first time while I was with him on board that he said, You can have a sherry and you can have two cigarettes if you wish, he told me he was telling me that so I didn't feel tempted to pinch one. He had a couple of silver cig boxes in his living area with Guards cigs to the brim.

I remember the Steward before me I think his name was Paul Breeding, saying something similar. King would never have done that .

Arthur

David ,

I call a 'battle dress' top the sort of top that was common in the Army uniform of the 50's not like the one they have today.

The Stewards uniform was Navy Trousers Navy Top and White peaked cap with the same badge that was on the cadets , white shirt black tie. black shoes and socks. It was very smart really. The lad in the photo looks more to me like a young cadet in 'working attire'

Arthur.

*A few more comments from Arthur :-*

Hi Colin,

I am sorry I have no pictures as those I had were lost many years ago..... I was aboard Worcester from March 61 to June 62. Stewards shared accommodation when they started as Pantry boys, then galley Boys.....I did brief stints in both , then into the Gun Room for a short time then the Wardroom and Then Captains. As Wardroom Steward and as Captains Steward I had separate sleeping accommodation, this comprised of a more or less separate cabin but there was no door it just had a large curtain across the doorway. We were right up forward and had windows looking out over the river. My 'cabin' was on the Port side .

One of the 'perks' if you could call them that was the improvement in food, so in the Wardroom and Captains I ate quite well.

No further stories, my lips are sealed.

Arthur