

Here are some notes that Richard made before speaking to the PROBUS Club, Milford. They are handwritten, and dated 3/12/1992.

First Recollections - Ohaewai Father Doctor- Model "T" Ford.

Whangarei

First school - watched Russian Amphibian land and remembered the school being taken to Onerahi to see first aeroplane. Walsh Bros flying boat from Kohimarama came in to the beach. We came by train.

Auckland

We loved on the corner Rangitoto Terrace, close to where I now live. Walked down the hill, across wooden bridge to board a steam tram to Belmont School. Later we shifted to a house off Muritai Road and got ferry to town, electric tram to Khyber Pass and walked up Mountain Road to Auckland Grammar. Cows were grazing on site of Takapuna Grammar. We kept a canoe on the rear of a property in Caig Road. There was no road on offside and no swimming pool, no groyne.

Latter part of 1926

I went with my Aunt to Napier and joined the "Port Hobart" for London.

January 1927 joined HMS "Worcester" moored off Greenhithe. 3 Masts, Yards - like HMS "Victory" but smaller.

In those days we had Royal Navy, P & O and Merchant Service - at that time all P & O officers passed through "Worcester".

P & O had a lot to do with Management and Lord Inchcape was Chairman of the board. Discipline was quite a cultural shock from N.Z. schools. Administered with "ropes end".

Early 1929

Joined C & D Line, later Port Line, apprentice, 3 years 30 pound fee and NO wages.

Passed 2nd Mate's Exam and asked Marine Superintendent for job. Offered

A.B. on "Port Gisborne" Wanted job on bridge, not in focsle- six months out of work, NO dole because had not earned wages, Offered job A.B. "Port Gisborne" .18 certificated officers in focal. Two and a half years spent as A.B. than Bosun.

Our recent speaker John Crisp had a spell on her.

March 1935

Appointed 4th Mate "Port Sydney"

Married July 1935

4 months on vessels laid up, moored on swivels in Blackwater Estuary.

2 pounds per week, oil lamps, oil heaters, cooked on a Primus stove.

Back at sea to June 1937.

Joined G.S.N. Co.

Intended at later date to apply for Trinity House pilotage - Gravesend to London.

Trading British Coast, Continental Ports, Portugal and Mediterranean ports.

Inward bound from Antwerp to West India Dock passing Tilbury- Heard Chamberlain on radio said "We are now at WAR"

WAR -

I don't want to tell a lot of war stories, only what affected my life afterwards. There are many things I could talk about. I spent the entire war in the area between Gibraltar and Iceland.

Outbreak of war meant that Navy called up all R.N.R. officers and this left a shortage of Certificated Officers in the Merchant Service. I spent the whole of the war on "Watch & Watch".

Phoney War -

This was what people in England called it but it was phoney for us:- we had low flying aircraft dropping magnetic mines and the E Boat attacks up the Coast. Ports were closed for several days when Germans used "clicker devices". Short Sea traders. No Food.

Running to France - evacuated troops from Le Havre to Hornfleur. Incendiary raid. Running to Bordeaux. Refugees pouring in.

Trip to Seville - lost 8 merchant ships and 2 destroyers in two alternate attacks - boat away 4 hours rescuing new McAndrew vessel.

Later in October 1941 bound for Oporto and then to Gibraltar to join convoy. Escort Foche Wulf one side and Sunderland the other.

Attacks - "Cortes" sunk approximately 1.15, "Petrel" 1.30, 4 hours on raft, rescued by "Lapwing"s boat then she was sunk - 14.5 days making Galway Bay, 22 in boat, 3 died en route, 1 died the night we arrived, 1 man picked up by score making 19 alive out of 3 ships.

Clifden Connemara, exposure, feet, left some men in Clifden and some in Dublin.

On war pension five months. Very cold winter, told would lose toes if I went back on bridge. Lifeboat brought back and on show Charing Cross Underground station. Lord Leathers.

Returned to sea - Irish Sea then Ardrossan and Ayr to Inner and Outer Hebrides supplying R.A.F. bases. Went to Iceland. - 12 months - very strenuous - worked all hours - bad weather. Know every rock and Headland.

Returned to England. Could not keep up with Convoy. 7.5 knot convoy requires 9.5 knots to keep station.

Did 12,000 miles around Island.

Went on leave and then was to join ship in Malta. Told Superintendent that I was not ill but was not well and would rather be within reach of medical aid in England.

Sent to Leith to join "Kaimanawa" finishing building at Leith. Chief Officer from "Monowai" sent as Master.

Trading around British Coast and then based at a Tilbury and following up invasion. Dieppe, Ostend, Antwerp and finally Hamburg. I went ashore about [2.am](#) on a stretcher and put in R.A.O.R. hospital. Blood transfusions and after about 3 weeks flown in R.A.F. Ambulance plane to Wroughton and then taken to Lichfield Hospital. Came to London and discharged "Unfit for Sea Service".

Working for Peninsular and Mediterranean Committee.

Studying for Chartered Shipbroker at City of London College - Shipping Law - and German at Hampstead Garden suburb.

I went into St. Mary's Paddington for, in those days, a fairly big operation. Now they would give it to the boys to do!

I recovered partially and took London Chamber of Commerce Higher Shipping Exam and was awarded prize by Lord Mayor.

Spring 1947.

I was not well and arranged six month leave to come to N.Z. to see relatives and to recuperate - it actually took 3 years to recover.

Felt outdoor job would be better - contacted Union Co. Went home on "Hertford" arranged passage for wife on "Rangitane" and I came back to N.Z. on new ship Kowhai"

Spent 25 years with U.S.S.Co - Asst Wharf and later Freight Supervisor - 8 years on Master Mariners Committee and 10 years on Port Safety Committee.

My wife died in Green Lane 30 years ago.

Retired 25/2/1977.

Moved to Milford 1978.

(In his hand - Richard James Whittington Baxter)