

NATIONAL SERVICE REMEMBERED

PDF RESOURCE

‘National Service Remembered’ is a heritage project which uses photography and oral history narratives to bring to life a little remembered time in our history: the National Service years, which spanned from 1947 to 1963.

What was NATIONAL SERVICE?

The National Service years spanned from 1947 until 1963, and in that time more than two million men were conscripted into the British Army, Royal Navy or the Royal Air Force.

National service was mandatory, and generally all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 30 were called up. However, it was possible to defer if working as an apprentice or studying, or even be exempted altogether if working in an essential service.

National Service conscripts were expected to serve 18 months, although this was extended up to 2 years during the Korean War (1950-53).

All National Service conscripts were asked to attend medical assessments, after which they were sent for six weeks of basic training in the British Army. Once the conscripts arrived at their training base, they were issued with their uniform and equipment, and training could begin.

After basic training, National Service conscripts served in a variety of roles across the Armed Forces and, as well as serving at home, many Servicemen were posted to one of Britain's many garrisons around the world. An overseas posting also often meant that the conscripts saw active service.



Colin Smith



Geoff Clayton



Jerry Anderson



IVAN RUSS

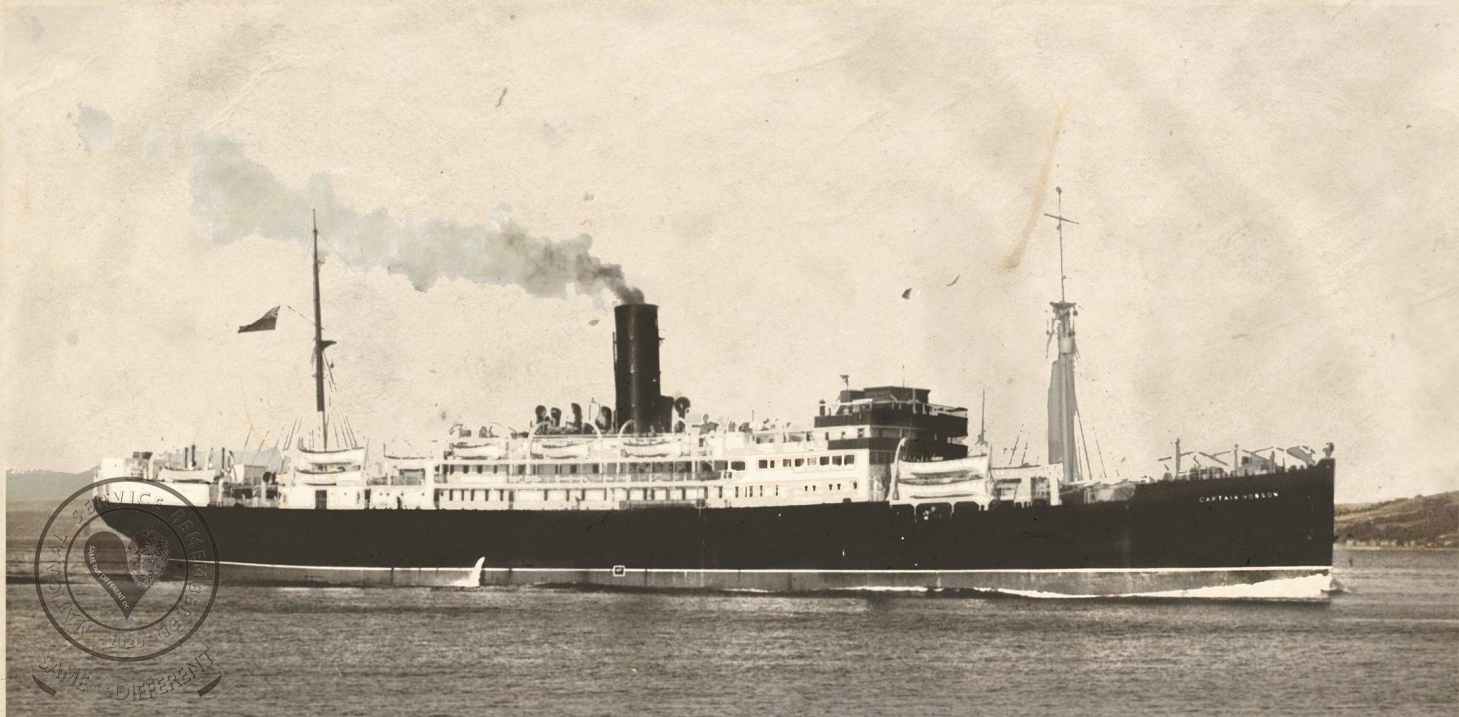
“I knew I had to do my service unless I was physically unfit. It was a pity because I’d completed my apprenticeship and being deprived a man's wage, but in retrospect it was the best thing because I was a country boy down in Devonshire and I was then thrown into the British mix of people my own age, and that was eye opening. When you hear about lads that grew up in Glasgow and the room was separated by a curtain stapled to the ceiling to separate one family from the other, it makes you think a bit.

I got the train up to London, then to Cardington in Bedfordshire, just for a few days to get my uniform and then I went up to Wilmslow in Cheshire for square-bashing.

It’s all shouting and swearing, trying to reduce you mentally, change your attitude. I think our generation knew we had to do things and the easiest way was to just accept it and get on with it, but we knew that trade training was going to be easier.

After square-bashing I was sent down Yatesbury to train as a radar operator (I knew nothing about radar) and sadly, that meant that I was stuck in the UK. I ended up in Portland, which was a very nice posting. The billets were nice, relatively new, plenty of bathroom facilities. The camaraderie was great, we used to leg pull and it was always fun, a much more relaxed atmosphere.”

THE SAME but DIFFERENT



S.S. "CAPTAIN HOBSON"

National Service Remembered

POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

To my sweetheart.
I saw an old school friend
today, who now happens to be
an Officer. I was excited to see
him but I called him by his
first name - I got into trouble
for that and sent to the
cookhouse to work! I've got
blisters for thumbs now.
I miss your apple crumble.

NATIONAL SERVICE REMEMBERED

ADDRESS

The Chapel,
91 Wrexham St,
MOLD
CH7 1HQ

Always yours
Charles





HEDNESFORD

National Service Remembered

POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

Just a quick note for you all. Spent my 21st birthday in Amman. Because it was the Battle of Britain day, we had a parade and were given the day off. Quite lucky I suppose!

ADDRESS

The Chapel,
91 Wrexham St,
MOLD
CH7 1HQ

I hope I can come home soon. Keep a slice of cake for me. Sending love.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Did National Service impact your life? If so, how?

Was anybody here conscripted; where were you based?

Were your loved ones conscripted?

How do you remember National Service?

Was it a positive or negative experience?

Did taking part in National Service influence the course of your life, or the path of your loved one?

