

HMS CONWAY ~ MR. LESLIE BOLD, CHIEF ENGINEER.

Good morning everyone!

I feel honoured to have been invited by **Stephen Bristow** to take part in today's important event at which **Leslie Bold's** valuable contribution to **The Greenwood Centre** is being recognised.

Stephen has allowed me a few minutes to tell you a little of **Leslie's** background, particularly *HMS Conway* where he was Chief Engineer.

The story of *HMS Conway* began in 1859 when a wooden warship was moored in the River Mersey to become a training ship for teenage boys who aspired to become officers in the Merchant Navy. With the passage of time, *HMS Conway* was replaced by *HMS Winchester* and then *HMS Nile* but, with each succession, the name "*Conway*" was retained.

These vessels became very well known and respected parts of the Mersey scene but, in 1941, due to the bombing of ships and the dock areas of Liverpool, *HMS Conway* was towed to a new mooring off Bangor pier, an altogether safer haven. One notable boy on board *Conway* in those days was **Cadet Gwyn Par-Huws** who, in his retirement many years later, was to build the little clinker dinghy that you have on display here at the Greenwood Centre.

In 1949, it was decided to move the old 'wooden wall' further down the Menai Strait and moor her off **Plas Newydd** so that the 300 cadets would be able to use parts of the **Marquess of Anglesey's** estate, in addition to the ship. Some four years later however *HMS Conway* was in need of repairs and so, in 1953, she began what would prove to be her final voyage, under tow to the Birkenhead shipyards.

But it seems that the old ship was reluctant to leave the Menai Strait for she broke loose from her tugs and ran onto the Platters Rock in the Swellies. *HMS Conway* could not be re-floated and she became a total loss. Miraculously and with the good will of the **Marquess**, all the cadets were able to live and continue their training at **Plas Newydd**. From April 1953 therefore, *Conway* was able to continue as a shore establishment until its eventual closure in 1974 when it was calculated that over two thousand cadets had been *Conway*-trained, to begin their careers in the shipping industry.

Mostly retired now of course, many as ships' captains, *Old Conway* cadets settled all over the world. Indeed, tomorrow in **Hobart, Tasmania**, a southern-hemisphere reunion is being held and more than a hundred are expected to attend. Nearer home, this part of Wales is 'knee-deep' in *Old Conways*. I have already mentioned my good friend **Gwyn Pari-Huws** and I am so pleased that his wife **Eira** is in the audience today. My own claim to fame is that I was one of the very first *Conway* cadets NOT to join the Old Ship. My training commenced only weeks after the ship was wrecked, but

at least I cannot be blamed for her loss! And then, there's another good *Conway* friend of mine here today with his wife **Gwyneth, Captain Tudor Jones** from Holyhead. He too has retired but Tudor still pilots these enormous cruise liners into Holyhead harbour on a regular basis.

And so now I come to **LESLIE** himself and, as his "*Conway*" employment lasted from 1946 until 1957, clearly he was there throughout my time there, ('53-55). Sadly, we do not remember each other but let me tell you that, as **Chief Engineer**, he would have been a most important person on board HMS *Conway*. His task was to keep everything working for the 250 cadets and staff who lived on board the Old Ship. So the electrical generators, the boilers, the pumps, the plumbing and the maintenance of all on-board services would have been his responsibility. He may not have figured directly in the daily lives of the cadets, but if the machinery broke down, there was nobody more important!

In like manner, at the **Greenwood Centre**, it is my understanding that **Leslie** has voluntarily helped out for a number of years. He happily takes on the task of looking after the rabbits and other animals that the visiting children come to see but he is also willing to turn his hand to anything, even the washing up! A friend to all the staff, he is known to be a real character and, for these admirable reasons, this superb display cabinet has been provided to house **Leslie's** collection of artefacts. It is indeed fitting that the cabinet will provide a window upon Leslie's interesting life together with his HMS *Conway* connections of which he is so proud.

