

Food, Glorious Food

HMS Worcester - Memories

These E-Mails were shared on the subject of food between the 6th Sep and the 11th Sep 2010



Sometime Between 1953 & 1955

I was pondering earlier today on the meals we had what did they consist of?

Breakfast Porridge? I dont think we had cereals unless you had some quirreled away in your locker from a tuck parcel? Toast or just bread? Eggs and Bacon? we did have eggs as i am still addicted to 'smashed eggs' between two slices of toast which Tier boat crew got in the morning if we were lucky.

'Dinner' what in the heck did that consist of?

'Tea' whenever I think of that all I can remember are 'Soused herrings' or Kippers.

CoCoa with a bun after Prep

Barnsey

I can remember eggs swimming in fat and grey meat ,note I say meat not which animal it came from.

Barry Leech

Barry,

I do not remember a lot about food on Worcester except that it was mostly bloody awful . With a few exceptions mainly at teatime.

We got one boiled egg a week on Sunday. Also on Sunday we were issued with our weekly ration of 4 ounces of butter. On two other week days we were given a further two ounces of margarine.

I often think about this when I now get the butter dish out.

Breakfast consisted of porridge and four slices of bread. Another four slices were given at tea time.

One slice with dripping for supper.

If you were in a race crew you got a cup of cocoa mid morning. We reckoned this was to give you a dose of bromide..

On a day during the summer term Mrs. Steele would buy strawberries for the cadets to have at teatime.

You need to remember this was at the time of severe rationing and we all survived.

All cadets were weighed at some time. This was supervised by Third Officer

Donner and records kept. I know I put on weight slightly at around 10 stone.

David Bell 47/48

David/Harry

There was a cadet I believe his name was Ellis? who used to go round and pick up all the slices of bread left on the tables! and apparently was eating them.

We had another souvenir due to the excellent food and that was boils!! back of the neck mostly and sometimes (backside)! The quack used kaolin poultice I still remember this experience and the marks still on the back of my neck.

Harry Wellman 46/47

David do you remember the so callwed macaroni puddings? we used to call themforeskins i.e. pass the foreskins please!!!!

what days they were

brgds

Harry Wellman

Fast forwarding a decade (55-57), the food had not improved greatly. I seem to remember that we took turns to collect the platters/cauldrons from the galley for our respective tables and when it was my turn it was a fasting day!. I can still remember the sweat shaking off one of the 2 (maybe more) local (large) ladies who worked the kitchen, and watching it fall into the porridge or the jam roolly polly or whatever she was serving. Thank heavens for the tuck shop or Nicky Vernicos's Harrods food parcels! Talking of the tuck shop. Anybody recall tuck shop raids?!!

Cheers all & happy Labor day for those on my side.

Tony Child

I well remember the Tuck Shop and Silvers being broken into. Myself and another cadet (Macfadyen or Macfarlane(?)) were accused of it and went through HELL with Crumpton over it. We knew who the real culprits were but didn't turn them in. Neither of them are on this list!! One of my bad memories of the ship.

Sid Woods

Mizzen Starboard 1955-57

These stories bring back some memories. I well remember just one meatball for tea then nothing until supper when we had a piece of dry bread with cocoa. At lunch we would be served with a rusty dish of fatty meat. Anything left over was "bottoms up" Breakfast was a piece of bread with treacle. This of course was 1946 when food was still rationed. What saved us were the food parcels occasionally sent by our parents. One would be stuffing a piece of cake and suddenly found oneself surrounded by "friends"!!

Do you remember "Williamsons" in Gravesend and Dartford? On the rare Sunday afternoon our parents would come down to take us on a "free walk". We would head for Williamsons where the portions with chips were mountainous.

The food was not much better in the Wardroom in 1957.

But how fit we all were! I often think that that experience gave me a great liking for food ever since!!

All the best,
John Bakewell



The food when I was there was OK although I did get a skin ulcer which wouldn't heal and only did so after anti biotics. I was told that the cause of it was poor nourishment. We did have a food strike which caused great upset. It was over the Sunday evening meal which was always cold meat, corned beef and wafer biscuits. Whole ships company refused to eat it and we were all mustered on the main deck for a pep talk.

Courtney

The food was crap. four times a day. inedible and a disgrace. we made sugar and ketchup sammies and a can of cold rice pudding was an epicurian delight.

Rob Burt

I have never heard so much moaning about the food.....what did you expect Gordon F'in Ramsay or Nigella.....I enjoyed all the grub we got in the Wardroom and especially in the Captains which of course is where I did most of my eating.....

Arthur

Nigella would have been disastrous. Just imagine the state of the bed sheets!!!

Tim Cook

Rob that brings back memories! I def remember the sugar sarnies and also eating an whole can of 'conny onny' on occasion

Cheers

Tony C

Pete Ashcroft won the prune eating contest with predictable results { something near 50}. the fact that prunes seemed like a good meal underscores the fact that the meat and veggie portion of our diet was sadly lacking. The hungriest years of my life for sure.

Rob Burt.

Then there were the fishcakes. Quite large as I recall but usually smelling decidedly fishy and often served on a Saturday. On one occasion the ranks on Sunday divisions looked a bit thin on the Upper Deck. Then the rain came on so were doubled away to fall in on the Main Deck and even more went smartly into the heads instead of down the ladder as they could hang on no longer.

Alasdair McCulloch

The food was generally disgusting. The rabbit stew even more so. If my mother hadn't sent the weekly fruit cake our mess table would have starved. The meat used to come in as a greasy fatty mess in a pan even the lower end of the table had, if they wanted it plenty. The only good thing to eat was the porridge usually good unless it was burnt. Sundays I starved as we had cornflakes. I still eat porridge by the way and missed it when I went to sea. The food at sea was considerably better unless we had a robber chief stw'd, many of them in Royal Mail. The best feeders were the D boat which had the Argentine as their primary run. The grub on Canadian vessels was unbelievably terrific but there were still those who complained!! In retrospect the lack of good food on the ship is possibly the reason why I have good health now.

Peter Whitehead

I do remember the "roast potatoes" cooked in stock and lard no doubt. Well worth queuing up for seconds. Don't remember the food in general being bad but not enough for growing lads. I used to receive a tuck box sometimes. My sister and boyfriend used to come and pick me up in their sunbeam alpine <http://www.hands-on-illustrations.co.uk/big/mn/2/15.jpg> and take me out for something to eat. I think my sister felt sorry for me as it must have seemed a harsh place for a young lad.

Mind you I had come from this school <http://www.hands-on-illustrations.co.uk/africa/page4.html> so Worcester probably seemed better to me.

Colin

PS I am gathering these memories to put on my site so if there is anything that you don't want on there, say so

G'day,

I've been reading with interest the various opinions on Worcester food and although my memories are not as clear as many who contribute to this site I do have some recollections.

Overall the Worcester experience was good and far easier than daily life/work on a dairy farm, I particularly enjoyed the lie in every morning in my hammock, far better than traipsing over cold paddocks to get cows in for milking 365 days a year.

I survived without a single food parcel and can't recollect ever buying anything from the tuck shop, I can't even remember where it was or what it sold. However I'm eternally grateful to those who shared some of their food parcels with me, particularly Alasdair who shared his haggis, I acquired a taste for it and still like it when I can find it. Somebody else always shared his home made fruit cake. In my first term I shared the bottom of a 12 man mess with Barnsey and as the bowls were the same size as for a 10 man mess we didn't get to each much when the food was good although we were allowed to be first to race to the galley for seconds if there were any. On one glorious occasion I recall eating most of a bowl of boiled parsnips simply because nobody else liked them. On a later mess one morning the CC of the mess pored milk on his porridge only to have a small fish land on his plate. On another mess we used to have a cadet who would take bets that he could eat anything and he invariably did, it didn't seem to matter what the food was laced or mixed with. On the same mess the deckhead was covered with butter/margarine pats which were flicked there in some form of competition. Worcester, and subsequent life at sea cured me of drinking tea, the foul taste out of some of the urns converted me to coffee for life, on one ship as 4th mate I was rebuked by the mate as I routinely tipped my wake up cup of tea out of the port over my bunk and it caused a dark diagonal stain down the white ship's side.

Worcester food must have had some goodness in it as I grew 8 inches taller in 2 years and haven't had any noticeable health problems since, touch wood.

One final comment on one ship I served the cook on learning I'd been on the Worcester and served my time in Ellerman's commented " you'd eat shit if I put enough sauce or curry powder on it " which cause me to recall I did buy and take my own OK Sauce to the Worcester.

Now I'll go and have breakfast,

Regards

Mike Bartlett OW 1955-1957

Another slant on Worcester Food - Who remembers the food fights that took place? Was this just a Brats thing or did this happen through the ages. I recall one occasion when kippers were the subject of some abuse and the dressing down by King was appropriate.

On another occasion, boiled eggs went flying across the mess deck.

For me, one of these food fights was a near death experience when without taking particular aim shamefully chucked a lump of margarine across the deck where it hit Abo Best square on the back of his neck as he looked out of the port. In an instant I managed to divert my eyeballs elsewhere as he turned inboard ready to rip the head of the culprit off it's socket. Talk about c..p..g oneself.

Abo had a reputation not to be messed with and had respect for his prowess as a hard nut.

Clive Reynolds

He sure was and did his stuff on the rugby field and in the ring...a good hand. However,my understanding is that Abo was killed in the off-shore oil industry in the Bass Straits...

As to the food,it reached such a pitch that the evening Tier boat [1961?], carrying the Cook ashore was asked to stand-off the platform one night...the crew to take cover!...and a barrage of mashed potato,tomatoes...whatever...found its mark.It seemed 'the right thing' to do at the time!...well,if Nelson's Midshipmen could pelt the British Ambassador in Naples we had a precedent...well,sort of...

My early letters home never failed to ask for more food, which duly arrived in a tin box!

Aye, John Hinchcliffe. 1959-1962