

Lt Col S G Townsend MBE RE

The name of Stan Townsend stands beside that of Bruno Splieth as a cornerstone of the BKYC. He was born on 25th April 1913 and entered the Army through boy service when he was 15. During his three years of junior service he qualified as a draughtsman and after six years of adult service at Chatham and in Singapore he was promoted Sergeant. The war years were spent at Chatham and also in Madrid where he was on the staff of the Military Attaché and where he became not only fluent in Spanish but a lover of that country. From 1949 to 1952 he returned to the Far East, this time as the Chief Draughtsman in the GHQ Drawing Office. He was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire during this tour. He then returned to Chatham and on 21st September 1955 he was commissioned. His first appointment as an officer was as Garrison Engineer (GE) on the staff of Commander Royal Engineers (CRE) Hamburg and it was there that his long association with the BKYC began.

Stan Townsend had first developed as a dinghy sailor during his first tour in Singapore. During his second tour there he had earned high praise as the driving force behind the all ranks sailing club (as well as the FARELF Camera Club). So he was already a keen sailor when he arrived at Hamburg and he immediately joined the BKYC. In 1956 he was transferred to 404 DCRE at Kiel under the command of Maj (later Maj Gen) GW Moods, primarily as a GE, but also to act as the Captain of Boats and Sailing Secretary of the BKYC. (He was also a noted rugby referee and in 1957 he officiated at a match between East Berlin and Kiel).

His GE duties took him all over Schleswig-Holstein and up into Denmark. He is remembered by at least one member of the staff of the former King Alfred's School at Plön (about 20 miles to the South East of Kiel) arriving there on his motorbike to go about his business. His talent for languages developed as he quickly mastered firstly German and then, as he spent more time in Denmark, Danish as well.

As a bachelor, Stan Townsend was able to devote most of his spare time to the Club for which he worked for so long. He spent some time using his skills as a draughtsman and as a sailor to produce a handbook of chartlets of most of the harbours used by the BKYC fleet. Later he developed this into a book, 'The Baltic Pilot', which was for many years the definitive work in English on the Baltic waters. During his close association with Kiel he rose in rank and finished in the post of Chief Instructor of the Advanced Watermanship Training Centre as a Lieutenant Colonel. He was finally posted away from Kiel on 27th March 1968 (after 12 years) and a month later he retired from the Army. However this was not to be the end of his association with Kiel or the Army. In 1967, before his retirement, he had acquired the 54ft yacht 'Ragna R'. She had been built in Sweden in 1938 and he bought her, in the UK, with the express intention of running training cruises for young men. He based her at Thuro in Denmark and she became a regular visitor to the BKYC at Stickenhorn as she changed her crews of young soldiers and apprentice tradesmen.

After leaving Kiel, Stan had made his home at Chepstow where he worked as a part time instructor in the drawing office of the Army Apprentice College. There he joined many of the College activities, especially the annual Gilbert and Sullivan productions. He also ran the Photography Club. He loyally supported the Beachley Old Boys Association and was eventually rewarded by being appointed as a Vice-President, an honour normally only accorded to former Commandants,

In 1981 Stan Townsend suffered his first heart attack and so, for that and subsequent seasons, the Royal Engineers attached a young soldier to work with him, both to help with the annual fitting out of 'Ragna R' and as a back-up in case he became ill at sea. In 1984 he was taken ill again and, realising that his carefree cruising days were nearly over, he began discussions with the REYC with a view to making 'Ragna R' available to the Club on a permanent basis. Stan spent the last four months of 1984 living with Bill Nichol, a staff member at the training centre in Kiel, in his quarters before returning to Beachley in December. He died on 27th January 1985, but his memory is kept alive in both the Royal Engineer and the British Kiel Yacht Clubs through 'Ragna R' which as a final gesture of generosity and a wish to give young men the opportunity to enjoy the sea as he had done, he bequeathed to the REYC.