

From Sail to Sat-Nav

Captains of The Cachalots 1928 –2010

Neither the words of the poem:

*Cruel merchant Captains,
with hearts as hard as stone,
who flog men, and keel-haul them,
and starve them to the bone.*

nor the legend that the Cachalot *Has the thickest skin, blows the hardest and spouts the most*, could be said to fairly describe any of the gentlemen who, since 1928, have had the honour to be elected Captains of The Southampton Master Mariners' Club. Indeed, some recent research into their achievements both afloat and ashore shows them to have been gentle, modest men, although possibly a few might have been short-fused or unwilling to suffer fools at all.

Perhaps one result of their reluctance to spout the most is the loss of much interesting and, to historians, valuable information concerning their careers and general life history that might have been gleaned and preserved, verbally or in writing, from them or from the equally sparse Club records. Also, as Donald MacLean reminds us in *Cachalots and Messmates* (1973): "Unfortunately, owing to the not infrequent changes, and often lack of space in the early Boatsteerer's office, coupled with the absence of secretarial aid during and around the war period – not to mention the fact that in its first quarter century the club was naturally more pragmatic than historically inclined – the record of events for a very considerable period are therefore unavailable."

In fact, to date, about a quarter of all past captains are recorded or remembered only by their photographs taken at the time of their election, otherwise simply as names routinely printed on hymn sheets, Sea-Pie Supper menus and so forth, or by only scant references to their having been, say, an Assistant Superintendent of a particular shipping company.

Happily, photographs of all past Captains hang in the Club room, some in uniform, others in plain clothes, exhibiting the extensive variety of nose and whiskers for which the Cachalots are justly famed.

Although, as seafaring men, they share much in common, by no means could they be said to be like peas in pod.

They range in age from 34 (Bayley) to 82 (Holme). The latter trained in sail and went on to command the RMS "Majestic", at that time the world's largest passenger liner. Several are Southampton born and bred, but there are Geordies, Lancastrians, Yorkshiremen, Londoners, Scots and Welshmen. Four of the most charismatic hailed from the Celtic fringes, Stornaway (MacLean), Tobermory (Robertson), Londonderry (Kelso) and Tipperary (Casey).

One Captain (Cooper) was twice elected, another (Gadd) held the appointment for three early war years, 1940 – 41 – 42.

Service was seen in almost every type of ship, some carrying a handful of men, others with crews numbering several hundred. Four masted barques, transatlantic and other large passenger liners, cable ships, coastal and short-sea traders, ferries, tramp steamers, HM ships of many types, Royal Fleet Auxiliaries and those of the Royal maritime Auxiliary Service.

Decorations for bravery, and distinctions for valuable service to the Merchant navy and the nation, are abundant.

In the Order of the British Empire; two Knight Commanders – Sir Benjamin Chave and Sir Arthur Rostron; one Commander of the Order (Casey), six officers (King, Saunders, Gadd, Thelwell, Bond and Stephenson) and five members (Braithwaite, Macmillan, Pellow, Kirton and Kelso).

Other notable awards include –

- Captain W.V.J. Clarke, D.S.C. (1914-18)
- Commodore D.A. Casey, C.B.E., D.S.O., D.S.C., R.D.
- Captain E.G. Fullick, Lloyd's Medal
- Captain A.A. Martin, D.S.O., D.S.C. and two bars, R.D.
- Commodore D.M. MacLean, D.S.C., R.D.
- Captain R.C. Freamer, D.S.O. and bar, D.S.C. and bar, R.D., Polar Medal (Antarctic Clasp)
- Captain P. Moore, Mentioned in Despatches

Several Captains were awarded the reserve Decoration and reached high ranks in the RNR, one (Carr) being awarded two bars, and two had the honour of being ADC's to the Sovereign (Casey and Carr).

Foreign awards include two Chevaliers, Legion D'Honneur (King and Rostron) and the Medal Du Merit Maritime (Holt).

Captains honoured within the Club, Honorary Life Members, include Cooper, Robertson and Kelso.

Extra Masters Certificates, their highest professional qualification, were obtained by many. At least three (Smart, Noble and Morris) made a commendable effort to undertake lengthy periods of study at University and graduate as Bachelors of Science, before 2/1's, Desmonds and suit yourself qualifications became commonplace.

Amongst their numbers there are also a solicitor (Farmiloe) and a barrister (WVJ Clarke).

The church was served by an ADC to the Lord High Commissioner to the General assembly of the Church of Scotland, who, in that role represents the Queen (MacLean); a Papal Knight of the Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory and founder of Yeovil night shelter for the homeless (Love); and the Pastor, Church of the Cross, Hammond's Green, Southampton (Macmillan), who was also President of the British Israel World Foundation, a scientific body devoted to the belief that most of the prophecies and

unusual events mentioned in the Bible have been proved to be scientifically accurate in their fulfilment. The proof of this belief is derived from the linear measurement of certain secret chambers in the Great Pyramid of Egypt. Incidentally, he also played the bagpipes.

The first Chief Inspector of the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch is a past Captain (Marriott).

A son of one captain (Bond) has been knighted and became head of the Hong Kong Shanghai banking empire, whilst a daughter of another (Corner) is presently British High Commissioner to Tanzania.

A Master Mariners' club without a captain seems like a ship without a rudder. But what does a captain do? (*No ribald remarks, please*).

Essentially, he is the "Chairperson" of the Club and, ex-officio, a member of all committees. Having been installed at the Sea-Pie Super he presides over social and civic functions, Remembrance Day for example, and represents the Club on many now traditional exchanges with yacht clubs, Royal Naval Establishments and other events mainly with a maritime flavour. No doubt there are on occasions matters arising "behind the scene" which might not require the wisdom of Solomon (who seems to have had more sense than to go to sea), but certainly cases for sound judgement based on wide experience.

In recent years the pleasing custom has evolved of presenting Captains with a handsome commemorative "medal", attached to a royal blue ribbon, at the end of their year of office.

The writer is attempting to compile short biographical notes which will record all Club Captains since 1928. Two examples will illustrate the inconsistency which typifies the records available and in many cases fails to provide much detail.



Captain Arthur Hughes Raymer. Commander RNR.
Born Kilkenny, Ireland, 1876.
Indentured 1894 to Thos. Roberts of Llanelli. Joined iron-hulled, full rigged ship "Sam Mendal", 1057 tons, Chile saltpetre trade.
1899 Joined Bucknell Bros "Johannesburg"
1907 Sub-Lieutenant RNR
1913 Board of Trade Surveyor at North Shields.
1914 Royal Navy.
1923 Board of Trade Senior Surveyor at Southampton.
1926 – 28 Founder Member, Honourable Company of Master Mariners and Southampton Master Mariners' Club. Freeman, City of London.
1940 Retired to Eastbourne.
1953 Died at Seaman's Dreadnought Hospital, Greenwich.

Captain Raymer was Club Captain for 1931. During that year 45 Cachalots were employed by Union Castle Line, 27 by Canadian Pacific, 26 by Cunard (of whom 23 were ex- White Star), 63 by Royal Mail Line, and 10 by United States Lines.



Captain S. Braithwaite, M.B.E.
Marine Superintendent, Royal Mail Line.
Club Captain 1929. *No further information.*

This dismal record hardly does justice to what must clearly have been a successful and colourful career. Regrettably, it is not unique.

Now, however, we have a new "Chair", whose election has become one of the most memorable events in the Club's 82 year history, a departure from an unbroken tradition at one time unimaginable, an officer who is not a qualified Master Mariner – Gerald Frank Cartwright, about whom no doubt more will be written elsewhere in *The Cachalot*. A wag might say, how can a non-navigator know where he is going? Don't panic – Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), a pilot on the huge, stern wheel passenger ships on the Mississippi River, was once asked by a passenger, "Say, Mr Pilot, is you the guy who knows where all the rocks is?" "No, Sir", was the reply, "I'se the guy who knows where they aint".

We can be sure that Gerry knows where they aint and will, albeit perhaps with minor deviations, maintain the course that has brought The Cachalots to the position of being better than any other Master Mariners' Club, and no nonsense about other things being equal.

Hamish Roberts

In addition to Captain Braithwaite, above, Hamish is also seeking any information that you may have on the following Past Captains:

30 Saunders, J.G	34 Bowyer, G.	37 Wolfe, J.W.	43 Waterhouse, K.A.D.	45 Fisher, C.W.	47 Smith, J.H.A.
48 Bulford, H.J.	50 Akerman, L.	53 Hodson, M.S	54 Pellow, H.J.	57 Cumming, J.	58 Pearce, R.N.S.
60 Smith, P.S.	61 Fitzgerald, W.T.	62 Fullick, E.G.	67 Gilbert, R.S.	79 O'Connell, F.	80 Cooke, J.S.
81 Hunt, A.D.	87 Renshawe, F.E.G.				