

# SOUTHAMPTON SHIPOWNERS' ASSOCIATION – THE CACHALOTS

## OAKWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL- SHIP VISITS

### **Introduction**

You will have read from my reports in previous editions of the Cachalots that we had offered to assist members of the SSA to help maintain and develop their programme of ship visits which they started last year for children from the Oakwood Junior School. On Monday and Tuesday the 28th and 29th June 2010 the Ships Whitchallenger (Whitaker Tankers) and the Apex (Solent Towage) were alongside 22 Berth waiting to host 30 young school children.

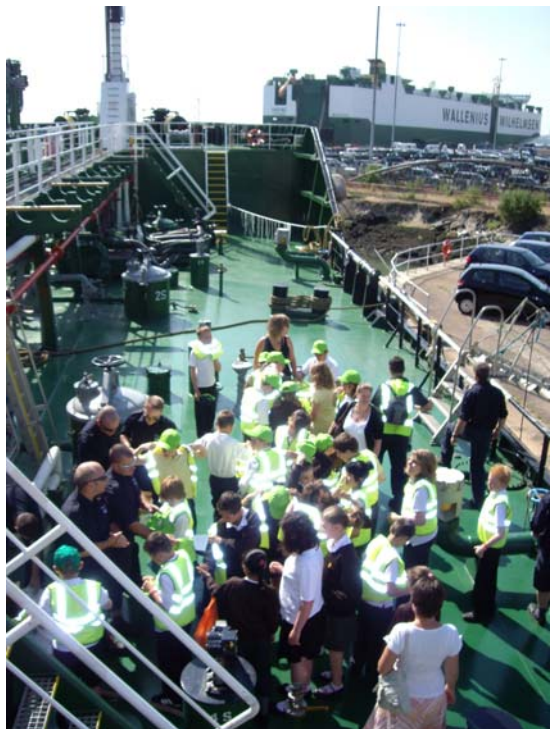
### **What's the difference between a ship and a boat mister?**

Imagine thirty youngsters turning up at the gangway to see your ship!! Blind panic and total chaos? No, not at all. Ashley Jenkins and Nick Jefferies had arranged to have their ships and crews all ready and organised to receive them. Ivor Salter and I were there to help. Ivor in his masters uniform and me with my Athel line tie on (my uniform had long since fallen prey to voracious moths!) joined the crews of the ships and agreed how we were going to keep them occupied. These visits followed last year's successful formula and the children were split into five groups of six each with their own teacher in attendance except for one group that I looked after (only four teachers). Five specific areas of focus had been arranged. For'd Stbd was the knots and splices department. Stbd aft was the cargo handling and pollution prevention with booms and dispersants.

The bridge was the third where the Captain and Ivor showed them how to manage the navigation, communications and remote control of the engine room and propulsion units. Port aft was the fire prevention and fighting zone where to the amusement of the children the more adventurous of the groups donned SCBA and fire protection suits and clutched heavy fire hoses and nozzles. The fifth and final visit was to the tug Apex that lay alongside the Whitchallenger and the crew gave them a guided tour of this most magnificent vessel.

It was not a totally one sided process and upon arrival on board the children were given, together with lime green baseball caps and model ships from WMA, a questionnaire containing 31 questions. We made sure that all the questions were covered in the different sections and an answer sheet was given to each teacher to take back to the school and correct the children's' answers. International code flags were flying and stapled to each questionnaire was a sheet identifying all the code flags so that the children could work out what was being said. Half way round we stopped for cool drinks in the shade of the flying bridge. One or two were feeling the heat and needed the rest. One particular girl of between 10 & 12 years of age called May had a metal calliper on her leg. Apparently she is normally confined to a wheel chair. For this visit the wheelchair was nowhere to be seen. She managed the gangway at both high and low water with no complaint and our concerns for her safety were unnecessary. Never once did she complain and she did not miss a trick. What a lovely, bright, determined young girl!

Before we knew it, it was 12:45hrs and time for them to go, three hours had flown by. There was one last treat in store however and whilst they all lined up on the port side of the Whitchallenger, the engineers of the Apex started up the fire monitor pump and put on a demonstration of water power that none of them had seen before. Quite a finale and after they disembarked with many grateful thanks (they all wanted to say goodbye to the Captain!) and went back to their school both ships and crews calmly went back to their day jobs secure in the knowledge that for three hours under clear blue skies and with mirror like seas they had entertained, interested, absorbed, yes and maybe even inspired thirty lucky youngsters who had been given a rare insight into life at sea today.



### **Thanks mister**

The SSA is to be congratulated. With all the commercial and H&SE pressures of today they organised and coordinated this event, even down to contributing to the transport cost because the school budget could not manage it. "From small acorns....."

This is a start; surely with all our experience and such supportive employers we can take this forward and begin to show our community what a fantastic career opportunity the shipping and maritime industry can provide.

One of my group, a regular little cheeky chappie said to me on leaving: "My dad was at sea and you said what he said so you must be right. – *Thanks mister.* "

George Angas