

The Cachalot

24th. June, 2001..

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club

This Newsletter comes to you as the result of a debate in the Entertainments Committee of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club. The members of that committee found that they continually faced an uphill struggle to raise support among the Club Membership for the various functions that they devise throughout the year. Until now the dissemination of such information has been relegated to the annual calendar of events followed by notice board announcements in the Club Room. We now feel that you, the Members would be better served by an occasional mailing like this one, hopefully twice a year apart from the annual calendar and subscription mailing.

The grand exception has for many years been the Sea Pie Supper. This seems to have a momentum of its own. It is a great social success at a very dull time of the year and is always oversubscribed. It provides an excellent opportunity for networking and corporate entertainment but is also a fun night out for the rest of us. Most of you will realise that the venue at Southampton Guildhall is currently our sole choice owing to the numbers we are required to accommodate. There are always over 600 of us seated at table and there is no where else in the area that can cope. Well, you wouldn't want the **Southampton** Master Mariners to have their Supper in Portsmouth would you? If you are considering attending in 2002 remember that the tickets will be on sale from the Portakabin office on Tuesday, 20th. November, 2001. Book the date of 8th. February into your diaries.

Please remember that the Club Room is open from Tuesday to Friday at lunch time from 1130 to 1500 hours and can prove a most convivial rendezvous for lunch. Being at the lower end of town makes it a suitable stopover during shopping forays or business visits.

We also open periodically on Saturdays at 1230 to provide a really nice curry lunch. There are variations on the theme from mild to hot and a vegetarian course is also available. We had one Sunday lunch earlier in the year which was intended to precede a guided walk around 'Old Southampton'. In the event the weather was so awful that a unanimous decision was reached to change the programme to a wonderful talk on city landmarks with a question and answer session. The gentleman who addressed us was enormously knowledgeable but was also great fun. I believe we're going to try to get him back for another go some time.

There have been several successful evening functions already this year. They have included a Curry

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Quiz Night and two Club Suppers with guest speakers. Our visits to the Garrison Theatre at Tidworth are now well established. A coach picks up at the Club at 1700 hours with a second pick up point at Chandler's Ford at 1745. The entertainment comprises a most professional military band concert. Such a description does not encompass all that the band members do to make it enjoyable. They have vocalists and jazz players among their number and some very humorous characters. During the interval a filling and tasty buffet supper with wine is served. The next Tidworth Concert date for your diary is Tuesday, 30th. October, 2001.

Earlier in the year the Club Captain organised a most successful evening talk by the Consultant Naval Architect who leads the design team for the new transatlantic Cunard liner QUEEN MARY 2. The speaker was not only very knowledgeable; he was also very entertaining.

More recently the Captain hosted a luncheon which is our annual tribute to the Ladies of the 'Watch Ashore'. There were thirteen lady guests while a number of Club members attended as hosts. We like to think they were made welcome.

I'm afraid you are now too late to book yourselves into the Club's Summer Ball which was held in glorious weather at the Botley Grange Hotel on the 22nd. June, 2001.. It proved to be a very uphill struggle to achieve viable numbers for this event. Perhaps you could let us know if you feel that the time of year we picked for the Club's main partnered event was unsuitable. Certainly, many of us were unable to support it due to holiday commitments. No doubt you will receive a report on the Ball in a future Newsletter. Please remember that this event is intended to *entertain the members' partners* and to constitute a 'thank you' to them for their forbearance in allowing us out on our own for the Sea Pie Supper. For those of you who would like to take advantage of the opportunity we usually manage to negotiate a discounted bed and breakfast deal so that you can enjoy a more relaxing evening and following day. We have sometimes been asked why the Ball cannot be held on a Saturday evening. The answer is that any hotel that we would seek to use is booked for Saturday weddings more than 12 months in advance and that the numbers at a wedding reception are usually more than the Club seems to be able to muster.

That might seem odd given that our total membership is stable at around the 450 mark. However, some of our members still actually go to sea. Others take off into some pretty inaccessible parts of the world to look at wrecks. Then there is the Friday evening problem for the London commuters.

The next event that the Entertainments Committee is promoting is an afternoon trip on the preserved steamship SHIELDHALL on Thursday, 9th. August, 2001. This is during Cowes Week so there should be lots to see around the Solent. The vessel is boarded at 48 Berth in the Eastern Docks. This is accessed through

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Dock Gate 4 and there is sufficient (free) parking in the vicinity. The docks security guard at the gate will direct you to the berth. Departure is scheduled for 1300 hours with return at around 1730 hours. Drinks, snacks and light lunches can be purchased on board. The particular trip we have selected is not a private charter so there will be other passengers on board. However, with a capacity of 150 passengers there is usually room for all. If you contact the Club office for tickets in advance you can remove any lingering doubt about being accommodated. The ship is really preserved as a floating, working museum of the triple expansion steam engine and the Scotch Boiler.

The engine and boiler rooms are open to interested visitors while the ship is steaming. There is never any shortage of enthusiasts wanting to be conducted around them but I can't imagine any master mariner who wouldn't cringe at being seen emerging from down on the engine room plates. Cowes Week is usually a very exciting time to be in the Central Solent on the SHIELDHALL owing to the sheer density of the yacht traffic. The policy aboard the ship is not to hit any yachts but at the same time not to miss them by too much. (Last year she was rammed up the stern by an overtaking racing yacht - from which you will gather that she is no ocean greyhound!).

Now for the really painless Club Event of the Year. Our Captain, David Carr, put forward the idea of a visit to the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and suggested that it might be turned into a full weekend trip. John Smart, the Chairman of the Entertainments Committee did a great deal of research and organising to come up with a viable package. We now have in prospect a coach trip to Torquay on Friday the 5th. October, 2001; staying two nights in a hotel and visiting Dartmouth on Saturday afternoon. In fact we shall have the coach at our disposal throughout so some side trips may also be possible. The cost is estimated to be £90 per person for an ensuite double for two nights, two dinners, two breakfasts and Sunday lunch. At this stage there are still some vacancies, so hurry up and contact the Club office.

One unwelcome piece of news is that there is now a traffic barrier across the entrance to the BISS car park. I'm afraid this had become necessary to protect the income the Society receives from cars parked legitimately in return for a fee. Entry is now by swipe card. The Club only has 6 of these and they are mostly allocated to those who work there on a regular basis or those for whom age or infirmity make walking particularly difficult. However, there are plenty of pay and display parking areas nearby. In particular, if you park on the south side of the park in front of Queen's Terrace it is easy to walk in through the main entrance of the Seamen's Centre. (Sorry, Seafarers' Centre). Evenings or weekends are not a problem as the barrier is then left up.

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The Shipping Festival Service was held in Winchester Cathedral on Thursday, 21st. June, 2001 at 1900 hours. It was a brilliantly sunny evening so that the lawn of the Deanery Garden proved a delightful venue for the serving of wine and tab-nabs after the service. The beautiful hats and colourful clothing were much appreciated - and that was just the men! But in fact there were lots of beautiful hats worn by the ladies. The only objection being that the big brims made kissing difficult. The Service and the Parade of uniformed organisations were very well conducted and very dignified. The Sermon was very well received. The right things were said without being too weighty and humour was always lurking on the edges. Apart from the cathedral choir and organ, music was also provided in a most accomplished manner by the Hampshire Youth Band. Part of the Band also entertained on the Deanery lawn during the after proceedings. The Service was well supported by VIPs, including the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayors of both Winchester and Southampton. The Lesson was read with great aplomb by the Club Captain.

May I remind you of a few more dates that appear in the Annual Calendar but which I have not yet mentioned . Club Buffet Supper, 27.7.01; Curry Lunch, 22.9.01; Club Supper, 12.10.01; Curry Lunch, 24.11.01; Christmas Lunch, 5.12.01; Black Tie Christmas Dinner, 14.12.01.

Without a great deal of effort by Judith Peck, the Administrative Assistant, the Boatsteerer, the Storekeeper and Liz behind the bar, the Club could not function so we owe them all our gratitude. We can best show this by supporting the Club Events, dropping in at lunch times when in the area and by prompt payment of our subscriptions.

If anyone has copy for a future newsletter their contributions will be gratefully received. It doesn't have to be news. I'm sure anecdotes and reminiscences would be most acceptable. I regret that the Club itself does not possess an email address but it can be phoned or faxed on 02380 226155. Anyone wishing to email the Club could try iwstirling@aol.com or any other personal addresses known or appended hereto. You could even try snail mail!