

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.22

December 2006

## CAPTAIN'S LOG

As the Christmas season creeps up on us once again no doubt we sometimes wonder why such a major event in the Christian calendar has become so politicised and commercially frenetic.

In 1978 Sarah, our two children, then seven and five years old, and I had the good fortune to spend Christmas in Chah Bahar. Yes, you may well ask, 'where is that'? Chah Bahar was then a small village clinging to a lovely but rather basic existence on the eastern side of the only large natural harbour on the south coast of Baluchistan. Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin had carved the country of Baluchistan up into provinces of, what are now, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan and reset the national borders accordingly. Understandably the Baluch were not overjoyed and never considered the governments of these 'usurpers' to be their lords and masters. Consequently the Iranian state of Baluchistan was somewhat difficult to govern. The Shah of Persia, as he was then, had recognised the strategic significance of a well-protected and very large bay on the Indian Ocean outside the Persian Gulf, now generally referred to as the Arabian Gulf. On the Western side of the bay adjacent to the town of Konarak he was developing a large military base for his army, navy and air force. He also initiated a contract between the British Council and The School of Navigation, Warsash. (Now the Warsash Maritime Academy) to establish a maritime faculty of the University of Baluchistan. The main campus for the University was six hundred miles away to the NE in Zahedan through the Makran mountain range. And the HQ was in Tehran, some three thousand miles away through vastly varied landscapes of immense natural beauty.

At the same time, Her Majesty's Royal Navy had won a contract to resurvey the coast of Iran from the mouth of Shatt al Arab, in the north to the Pakistan border in the south and east. I gave the hydrographic survey fleet of the Hydra, Herald, Fox and Fawn a base in our campus and it was not long before a warm and mutually beneficial relationship was established between the British and Australian staff of the faculty and the RN.

About two weeks before Christmas, all the families were making Christmas cards and simple presents out of what was available locally when a CPO from the RN camp came to ask the children if they would like to come to their camp, speak to father Christmas and ask him what they would like him to bring them for their Christmas presents. Come the allotted hour, a trail of small children and their parents made their way through the cool of the evening sunset to the navy camp. The single side band radio crackled into life and from the Hydra, hull down in the Indian Ocean came:

"Hello Chah Bahar, this is Santa Clause calling from Lapland". The incongruity of the last: 'do you read me'

went completely unnoticed as, with a mixture of shy poses and fingers in mouths the children stared in utter disbelief at the speaker from whence the voice had come.

Eventually one and then all of them were persuaded to step forward and talk to the microphone which was switched to the transmit mode by the 'sparky'. Their choice was either 'T' shirts or chocolate bars, neither of which was available to us locally. Of course once they got back to their homes, with every vestige of shyness gone, there was great excitement. The cynical macho eight-year-old males stating baldly that it was a con and that would be the last any of them heard about it. With the younger ones, staunchly defiant and drawing pictures of what they thought Santa would look like.

Come Christmas morning, with the fleet still out at sea, and all obstructions cleared from a space close to the bungalows large enough to allow it to hover, the interrupted thrum of a helicopter rotors could clearly be heard. Out rushed the children, with mums and dads panicking about getting too close to the billowing sand being raised, to see Santa in full regalia and large sack over shoulder being lowered from the helicopter that was hovering at about thirty feet. Once on the ground, it was so hot that Santa had to be hurried into the air-conditioned 'Club' come 'School' bungalow. Once inside and suitably refreshed, even though the sun was still undoubtedly below the 'yard arm', Santa began unpacking his sack and, calling every child by his or her name, presented them with their requested presents. Mums and Dads were also treated to large packages of bacon and sausages and other most welcome 'spiritual' gifts!!

Eventually, after a very happy hour and explaining that his reindeers were suffering from heat exhaustion and that he had had to hire a helicopter from the nearest reindeer hospital, Santa made his way back out to the returning helicopter. We helped him into his sling and, with a wave to cheering children he was hoisted skywards and soon disappeared over the horizon to his floating reindeer hospital – and no doubt a cracking Christmas Dinner.

To this day we all still remember that magical multi denominational and commercial free Christmas and once again, if any of you are reading this, a big thank you to the officers and men of the Hydra, Herald, Fox and Fawn. You were brilliant.

I do not think we will ever have a Christmas like that again but wherever you all are and however you choose to spend it may I and all your Officers wish you a healthy and happy Christmas. We look forward to seeing you in the Club in the New Year at the Sea Pie Supper and at our social events for 2007.

George Angas  
Captain.



## STRATEGIC REVIEW

### *PROGRESS REPORT AND ACTIONS*

NOVEMBER 2006

1. It is now nine months since the General Committee agreed to implement the recommendations contained within the strategic review and it is time to review the progress made to date and outline the activities for 2007 in order to achieve our objectives.

2. The agreed recommendations were: -

- 2.1 Computerise, where appropriate, SMMC administration and record keeping, especially the financial accounts.
- 2.2 Change the opening / working times of the club to: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 11:30 to 15:00hrs/administration times to: Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 1100 to 15:00hrs
- 2.3 As a matter of urgency, seek out and negotiate for more suitable premises within which to rent accommodation to provide a clubroom that will be capable of holding committee and administrative meetings, social events and also provide effective administration offices.
- 2.4 Actively engage in discussions with influential members of the Southampton based maritime industry to identify what activities/ contributions would encourage them to join the SMMC.
- 2.5. Encourage shore based and sea staff members to contribute articles for and present technical papers to *The Cachalot* and SMMC seminars respectively.
- 2.6 Seek out and work more effectively with other maritime institutions, e.g. Nautical Institute, Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology, Southampton Oceanography Centre.
- 2.7 Work with SCC to assist them to enhance the city's maritime profile, e.g. assist with the building and development of a maritime employment database or other such appropriate activities.
- 2.8 Seek out potential and appropriate contributions, i.e. within the SMMC member's field of competence, income-generating activities in order to maintain the SMMC cash reserves and support fund raising activities.
- 2.9 Build upon the relationship that exists between the SMMC and the Southampton Seafarers Centre to their mutual benefit. e.g. accompany padres on ship visits, welcoming seafarers to the SSC and the SMMC by attending joint social events such as curry lunches etc.

3. Proposed Activities

- 3.1 Actions upon recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above are in hand and that we now need to make a start upon 2.4 to 2.9 inclusive. This was an agenda item at the last General Committee at which it was agreed that the views of members should be considered through the development of a questionnaire that would be sent out with the next issue of the *Cachalot*. The information requested will be related to members professional activities, qualifications and interests, for the sole purpose of identifying the Club's capability of responding to requests for items of interest for publications in the *Cachalot*, responding to other professional bodies and enquiries from Southampton City Council and Fareham Urban District Council on topical matters maritime, etc. The information will be held upon a database and will enable us to contact the most appropriate member/s in order to seek the requested article/information. In order to develop a standardised database it will require you to complete the following table of information. The information provided by you will be held by the Club in strict confidence, will be used only for the purposes as identified above and will not be disclosed to any other person or organisation without the agreement, in writing, by the named Club member. Any member will be able to withdraw the information provided at any time by notifying an officer of the Club. A pro forma questionnaire is included herewith for your consideration. If you would like to participate in the professional as well as the social activities of the Club, please would you complete it, either by email or hard copy and send to: G. Angas, at the Club's new address (see below). Also, if you have any questions or alternative suggestions, then please contact me. All contributions will be in confidence and most welcome.
- 3.2 Now that we have a new clubroom it is appropriate to consider how we should approach the issue of membership of the Club and how best to attract new members. The Executive & Finance and the General Committees' agreed (see the E & F and G Committee minutes of 31<sup>st</sup> October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 respectively) that a small working group be formed to consider the issues and report back. The working group meetings will be held in the meeting room of the SMMC between 11:00 and 12:00 hrs on each Friday up to Christmas. The nucleus of the wg will be: G. Angas (Chair), P. Marriott, H. Roberts, L. Hall, B. Peck. Any other members that have a view or wish to participate will be welcome to either attend the Club at these times or respond by email or letter to: The Boatsteerer, The Southampton Master Mariners' Club, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 12-14 Queens Terrace, Southampton SO14 3BP. The findings and recommendations will be published in the March 2007 edition of the *Cachalot*.

**This will be an agenda item at the AGM on Thursday 11th January. Please come and contribute to the debate.**

Our new web site is now up and running, or maybe just staggering to its feet, and your editor is now learning how to edit it and add new pages. There is a wealth of stuff in our archives which, although not suitable for publication in this magazine, may be of interest to someone out there. One of the advantages of posting such material on the web is that interested parties can dip and pick at will and to their own level of interest.

In the near future we will be adding a "Members only" section which will be accessible by means of a password so watch the site for further details.

It is also intended to post all the past editions of *The Cachalot* on the site but, because they were originally compiled with little thought as to their file sizes, they will need a bit of tweaking first to get them down to a manageable size.

One of the functions of the web site is not only to raise the profile of the Club within the maritime industry but also to raise funds to help keep us afloat. To that end we are seeking sponsored links on the site and ask members to contact friends and acquaintances in companies and other organisations that might be interested. Details of the proposed organisation should be submitted to the Club which will then make a formal follow up by letter, inviting the organisation to sponsor a link on the web site.

As announced in the last issue, the Office and the Club's Office holders now have e-mail addresses that reflect the club name, and this facility can now be extended to all members so that they can advertise the Cachalots rather than some nebulous service provider and at the same time raise funds for the Club. The service includes:

- E-mail address of the form <forename>.<lastname>@cachalots.org.uk
- Web mail service (like hot mail) where e-mail accounts can be accessed from any computer connected to the Internet anywhere in the world.
- Access to a UK based HelpDesk.
- Cost: £9.50 per month with £5 going to the Club.

Optional additional services include:

- Mail redirected to other e-mail accounts (no additional cost)
- "Push" e-mail synchronisation to "smart" phones (no additional cost)
- Full Microsoft Outlook client that automatically synchronises with the users own PC whenever there is an Internet connection (£2.50 extra per month).

Clive Robinson, of C Data Services, who will be supplying the service, suggests that the simplest method to order it is to order directly on the Cachalots web site and pay by "PayPal" (this is a tested and secure method of paying on the web and is very easy to set up). Payments can be quarterly or annually with an e-mail reminder being sent one month before expiry, one week before and on expiry. Details will be posted on the site when this facility has been set up.

Please note that this is an eMail service that will work on *any* internet connection regardless of whether it is broadband or dial up and you can use it on *any* PC. For example, if you are in a hotel in Australia that provides internet facilities (like an Internet Café) you can simply sign in to your UK-based e-mail account and check your messages and send new ones using only the hotel's own equipment (i.e. you don't need to



*Have you visited shiptalk.com yet? This web site was recommended to me by Andrew Tinsley and it professes to be the world's leading seafarer portal. It certainly is comprehensive and should keep you up to date with everything that is happening in the shipping industry.*

## Operation Lucid

*This extract from Rear Admiral Sir Morgan-Giles's memoirs, 'The Unforgiving Minute', follows on directly from the last.*

Later that summer, 1940, HMS Arethusa returned to the UK and was ordered to Sheerness. This was the time of the Blitz and Invasion scares. The Germans had control of the entire Channel coast, and Hitler was expected to order an invasion of Britain at any time. Arethusa and other ships were not able to move out into the Thames Estuary because enemy aircraft had laid large numbers of magnetic mines. In fact we were in dry dock for a few days. The Gunnery Officer went on leave, I was left in charge of the anti-aircraft armament which was trying to join in the defence against German bombers making their nightly blitz on London. I said to the Gunnery Officer "How on earth do I aim these things?" He replied (more or less) "You can't; just point them up and fire them into the sky!"

There was, in fact, no effective control at night-time, and all our guns did was to contribute to the anti-aircraft barrage, break a few windows in Sheerness Dockyard and cheer up the civilian population by making them think that something was being done in their defence.

Then I went on leave for a week - to my home in Devonshire. When I returned to Arethusa somebody said to me "Why have you come back?" "Because my leave's finished". "But didn't you see that signal the other day about you?" "No, what signal?". I found the signal which was a day or two previously ordering me to report forthwith to the Admiralty, Room so-and-so. I had no idea what all this was about. I remember I got a bus and a train, went to the Admiralty late in the evening and was shown to the room. When I went in somebody was sitting at a desk in a darkened room, scribbling furiously under a green shaded desk-light. It was Captain Agar. He looked up and said "Sit down". He then went on scribbling, and I can remember his pen squeaking on the paper. He put his letter in the envelope, licked it, pressed the bell, said to the messenger "Take this to the Prime Minister". Then he said, "Come and have dinner, Gilo".

He explained to me that he had been put in charge of a special operation (Operation LUCID) to counteract the threat of invasion. The enemy were known to have collected large numbers of Rhine barges, which were assembled in Calais and Boulogne, intended to bring the German Army across the Channel.

Somebody in the Admiralty knew that the British Petroleum Warfare Committee had done experiments with a mixture of Admiralty Oil, diesel oil and petrol. If ignited on the sea this stuff would run round on the surface like quicksilver with huge flames that would burn up anything or anybody that it reached.

Churchill and the Naval staff had decided to mount a Fire-ship operation into Calais and Boulogne, making use of four or five ancient tankers. The idea was to fill them with this "hell's brew", send them over at night with volunteer crews, leave only one or two men to steer the ships full speed at the harbour entrance and these final two would, if possible, escape by a little speedboat over the side of the tankers. It was hoped that the tankers would burst into the harbours and burn up the barges and the waiting troops.

The background to all this was that Churchill, who had recently become Prime Minister, said that just as Drake had "singed the King of Spain's beard", he wanted to "singe Mr Hitler's moustache".

Captain Agar had been chosen by Churchill to be in charge

of this extraordinary expedition. He had asked for me as his Staff Officer and (being his previous Torpedo Officer) to install the explosive charges for scuttling the tankers and for igniting the mixtures.

There then followed a period of very intense activity. We had to collect the old tankers, get them filled up, arrange volunteers, install the explosives and make detailed plans for attack. This was all run from the Admiralty in conditions of fantastic secrecy. Nobody knew what the old ships were intended for. We had to work day and night to get everything ready.

I remember coming back one night to report to Captain Agar in the Admiralty, the Blitz was on, huge flames lit up the London sky, my staff car had to bump over innumerable fire hoses in Whitehall and when I met Captain Agar he said "They've got the Commons".

Anyway, a date was decided, escorts of destroyers and motor torpedo boats arranged, and we set sail. But unfortunately the tankers were so old and decrepit that instead of doing just the slow 6 knots which we hoped, they would only do 3 knots. Also the skeleton engine-room crew kept coming up on deck, apparently drunk; but they were not drunk poor fellows, they were merely anaesthetised by the fumes of the petrol which leaked through the old rivets in the bulkhead and sizzled out onto the floor plates in the boiler room.

So the mission had become impossible and we all returned to Sheerness. (I was in one of the escorting destroyers, HMS Hambledon, with Captain Agar).

So a further hectic period was spent trying to improvise repairs on the tankers and getting a replacement for the worst two, and again we set out one night. But this time a southerly gale sprang up which not only delayed us but of course was the last thing we wanted because the petroleum mixture would be blown out of the harbours instead of into them.

A thing like this is very difficult to keep secret and the joke was that if you went into a pub in Chatham the barmaid would say "Are you in the fire-ships, dearie?"

The third time we sailed the omens were bad because, instead of the German searchlights being up in the sky, they were sweeping horizontally across the sea. In the "Safe channel" supposed to be clear of mines, the Germans must have sent a force of E-Boats to drop some magnetic mines. Soon after we got clear of the Thames the destroyer that Captain Agar and I were in detonated a mine which blew her stem off. Of course the fire-ships following us would be unable to cross this minefield, so Captain Agar sent an immediate signal "Operation LUCID cancelled".

HMS Hambledon had to be towed back to Sheerness by another destroyer. Captain Agar called a MTB alongside and we climbed into this and raced in as fast as possible so that he could report to the Admiralty.

So that was the end of Operation LUCID. With hindsight it was really a completely harebrained idea. But of course it suited Churchill's urge to take action, and Gussie Agar with his World War I VC was just the chap to put in charge. I should add that by this time I knew him extremely well, and kept in touch with him for the rest of his life. Apart from being such a nice charming Captain, he was extremely eccentric. There is more about all this in a book he wrote called "Footprints in the Sea".



At this point I would like to tell the history of how Gussie Agar won his V.C., in 1919.

At the end of World War I there was civil war in Russia between the Bolsheviks (Red Army) and the remains of the old regime - The "White Russians". Britain backed the Whites and, amongst other things, sent a considerable Naval force (under Admiral Sir Walter Cowan) to the Baltic.

Gussie Agar, then a young Lieutenant, was detailed to ship two fast "Coastal Motor Boats" to Finland, to be used for taking to and fro the British secret agents who were working against the Bolsheviks. The two boats were unloaded and began operations across the Gulf of Finland in total secrecy - no ensigns, crews in civilian clothes etc. These craft were well suited to the purpose, having very high speed and a crew of only one Lieutenant, one young Sub-Lieutenant and one engine-room rating to work the two huge V-12 petrol engines.

After several trips landing agents near Kronstadt, Agar knew the positions of the Bolshevik Fleet and realised that it would be possible to carry out a torpedo attack. He asked for approval, but the Secret Service HQ in London said that the boats were only to be used for Intelligence work - "unless specially directed by the Admiral on the spot". Admiral Cowan said to Agar that he could not therefore order him to attack, but

that if he looked carefully on the deck of the tanker when next refuelling he might notice the odd torpedo lying about!

Agar took this hint and set out with two CMBs on a night in June 1919. One boat broke down, but he continued alone in CMB4. He crept silently into the entrance to the huge Kronstadt fortress and tried to fire his torpedo: But it stuck and the firing mechanism had to be reloaded. This took 20 minutes, during which the boat lay stopped and unobserved, right under the guns of the Bolshevik Fleet.

Then Agar fired again, at very short range, and hit the 6000 ton cruiser OLEG which blew up and rolled over nearly on top of the CMB. Agar escaped in the confusion and returned safely to his base in Finland a few hours later.

For this remarkable exploit he was awarded the V.C. on 26th July 1919.

These CMBs were the predecessors of the Motor Torpedo Boats and Motor Gunboats of World War II. I shall say a lot more about these "Coastal Forces" in a later chapter, and also more about Gussie Agar himself, and why I admired him so greatly.

See his book FOOTPRINTS IN THE SEA (published in 1961).



*Lt. Agar's C.M.B. (No.4) travelling at speed and, below, the Naval Signal announcing his award.*

S.-1320 b. (Established - May, 1900.)  
(Revised - January, 1917.)

**NAVAL SIGNAL.**

From—	To—
Flag	General

P.O. of Wat.—	
Read by—	
Despatched by—	
Passed by—	
Logged by—	
System—	8750
Date—	26-7-19
Time—	1755

*For sinking the Bolshevik Cruiser OLEG  
H.M. the King has been pleased to make  
the following awards. To Lieut Agar  
R.N. Victoria Cross. To Acting Sub-  
Lieut Hampshire R.N.R. Distinguished  
service Cross. To Chief Mr M. Peakeley  
R.N.R. Conspicuous Gallantry Medal*

1058

M. 1704/00.  
Sta. 6/14.  
Sta. 596/16.

*Lieut Agar*

40750 W. 1206 1917 100,000 Path. 1217 India Const. & Sup. E 2384



### THE JOYS OF AN ASIAN ENGINE ROOM CREW:

On one occasion IBERIA arrived at SUVA pilot at 0600 as usual and went alongside Kings Wharf where there were 2 berths that could, at a pinch, take large ships. The usual berth, (the seaward one) was occupied by the regular Union Co. mail ship loading bananas and so IBERIA went ahead of her to the inner berth. All was secured, gangways in place and the Captain took the Pilot down to his cabin for a cup of 'coffee'.

About 20 minutes later there was the heck of a disturbance, the sound of moorings parting, pedestal gangways collapsing, shouting, screaming etc. etc.

The Captain and the Pilot shot out on deck and saw the wharf slowly but steadily moving astern!

At the same time as the Captain and Pilot moved rather more quickly than usual the Chief and Second Engineers moved to the Engine Room at a speed that was worthy of an Olympic gold medal only to find a dozy looking ag-wallah sitting at his ease polishing the port engine manoeuvring wheel but, having done one side, instead of walking to the other side to complete the job, he just moved the wheel half a turn thus putting steam into the port engine and going "ahead".

As the Captain said later the only good thing was that they were not at the usual berth and so the 'TOFUA' was spared having 30,000 tons boarding by the stern!

## **TO THE DISTANT SHORES OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS**

You may or may not be aware that for over 40 years a Danish Cargo ship transported most of the general cargo to The Falklands. There was a very specific reason for this, and that was the ongoing conflict with Argentina over many years and it was seen as being a safer route for the cargo to be transported on a neutral ship.

My ship, the M.S. A.E.S. was 2,200 tons and capable of carrying 18 passengers. Our normal port for loading would be Gravesend or Victoria docks, and we all assured that we had a jolly good night out before this long and lonely journey ahead of us, which would take us 3 months before returning to real civilisation again. Our 8032 mile journey to Port Stanley would take us approximately 30 days including a short 4-hour stop in Las Palmas to take on bunkers for the trip. When we arrived in Port Stanley we were always greatly welcomed by lots of the residents from Port Stanley who would be waiting on the jetty for their vital supplies. Many of the products we shipped were for the two main local stores; one was The West Store, owned by the Falkland Island Company, and the other the Speedwell Store in John Street.

On the map, the Falklands are mere specks in the chill South Atlantic. For the 2,379 who lived there then, it was spacious enough. Approximately, 1,800 of them dwelt in Port Stanley, and Goose Green, with approximately 100 islanders, was the only other real community. Most of the rest lived on lonely sheep stations scattered throughout the 'Camp' as the countryside beyond Port Stanley is called.

The countryside is a little like the Old West with the Stetson and it was rather entertaining when some of our passengers from UK, who had signed long term contract as shepherds, visited The West Store near the jetty. Here they were met with open arms by the manager who, with a unique sales talent, was well capable of convincing them to spend the next two years salary on top quality saddles and all the rest of the riding gear required for the life on the out stations, leaving them with little money and a slim hope for an early return back to the UK.

On several occasions we also had passengers who were former murderers/convicts and were released on probation, provided they served a certain specified time in the Falklands, a very safe place with nowhere to go. Some very interesting people; a real insight into why anyone could end up committing a murder when they were normally a genuine nice person and it indicated that almost every person, in given circumstances, could do the same, but fortunately most of us have the sense not to enter into such a situation which could lead to such a terrible crime.

I spent a considerable amount of my free time visiting the "Camp" and I was fascinated by the extent of the spectacular wildlife, in a place where nature is still in charge.

There are five species of penguin that breed in the Falkland Islands. As well as the King, Gentoo and Magellanic (locally known as Jackass), there are Macaroni and the Rockhopper, all attracted to the Islands by the rich waters of the South Atlantic

Over 200 species of birds have been recorded on the Island, ranging from the tiny Tussa bird to the large birds of prey such as the Striated and Crested Caracara, the majestic black-necked and Coscorot Swans and, of course, the Black Browed Albatross which would often be seen following us for a few days north bound after leaving Port Stanley.

Sharing the white sandy beaches with the penguins are the fascinating elephant seals, sea lions and fur seals, they all hide in the tussock grass that can be ten feet tall in places. The largest breeding site of elephant seal is found on Sea Lion Island where there could be more than 500 pairs.

The only entertainment in the evening was the Old Globe Tavern in Port Stanley, just like an old western type bar, or if you had the desire for a more upmarket establishment then you would visit the Upland Goose Hotel situated in the west side of the town and that would be your entertainment places, with the exception for a few of us who became friendly with some of the soldiers based on the outskirts of Port Stanley who had a night club where we were able to finish off the evening.

The only other regular visiting ship to The Falklands was their own ship M.S. Darwin which normally ran between Montevideo and Port Stanley with passengers, fresh food and vegetables. The Antarctic Ship HMS Endurance would also visit on occasions on her way to South Georgia and I had the pleasure of having a luxurious lunch onboard during one of her visits.

We would spend most of our time in Port Stanley, but would also visit Goose Green Farm, which had an approximate population of 100 residents and being the biggest farm on the Island at the time, with approximately 140,000 sheep. The farm had their own jetty where we were partly able to moor with our two anchors out. Fitzroy was another large farm that we visited with A.E.S. and at times Fox Bay. We would off-load general cargo and load wool for our return to UK. We would also load wool from S.S. Great Britain which was still in Port Stanley, deteriorating further day-by-day, and was used as a storage ship for coal and wool. The average annual wool clip at the time was approximately 2,500 tonnes. At times we were carrying wool back to UK at a value exceeding £250,000 (There were approximately 700,000 sheep on the Falklands).

Wool was always our main cargo for our return trip, but often we would call in to a small port on the River Sao Francisco called Sao Francisco Du Sul, located on Latitude 26° 14.0'S and Longitude 048° 25.0'W. The port is on an island in the river, which flows into Babitonga Bay. We would load Brazilian mahogany in any space left below deck and when all hatches was closed and made safe, we would then have a full load of mahogany on the deck, but only after careful stability calculations using all those dreadful formulas which I am sure some of you still remember and of course we also had to consider the time of year with reference to expected weather conditions. We have on one occasion lost 75 % of the deck cargo of mahogany in the Bay of Biscay and had to seek shelter in Lyme Bay.

On another return trip from Port Stanley our deck cargo was a small proportion of the wild life. It was rather sad to see elephant seals, sea lions, and penguins being taken away from their home and having to travel over 8,000 miles to Dudley Zoo in the UK.

We had a large refrigerated container on the deck full of fish to feed them with during the journey. The stress was very noticeable on the sea lions, they would refuse to eat after being captured and we were having to force feed them for several days before they would finally start to eat themselves, I can assure you that this was a very difficult task and we were at high risk of being bitten.

I did 3 round trips to the Falklands in 1965 (9 months in total) before I joined Lilli Tholstrup (Kosan Gas) chartered by the British Government to supply natural gas to the Americans in Saigon with another ship owned by Kosan Gas supplying Ammunition, rather a dangerous contract at that time, but that is a different story.

I did a further two trips on the A.E.S in 1971 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer after leaving Navigation School in Svendborg (Denmark). I had borrowed money from Maersk and A.E.SØRENSEN for my two years study for my Mates & Deep Sea Masters certificate.

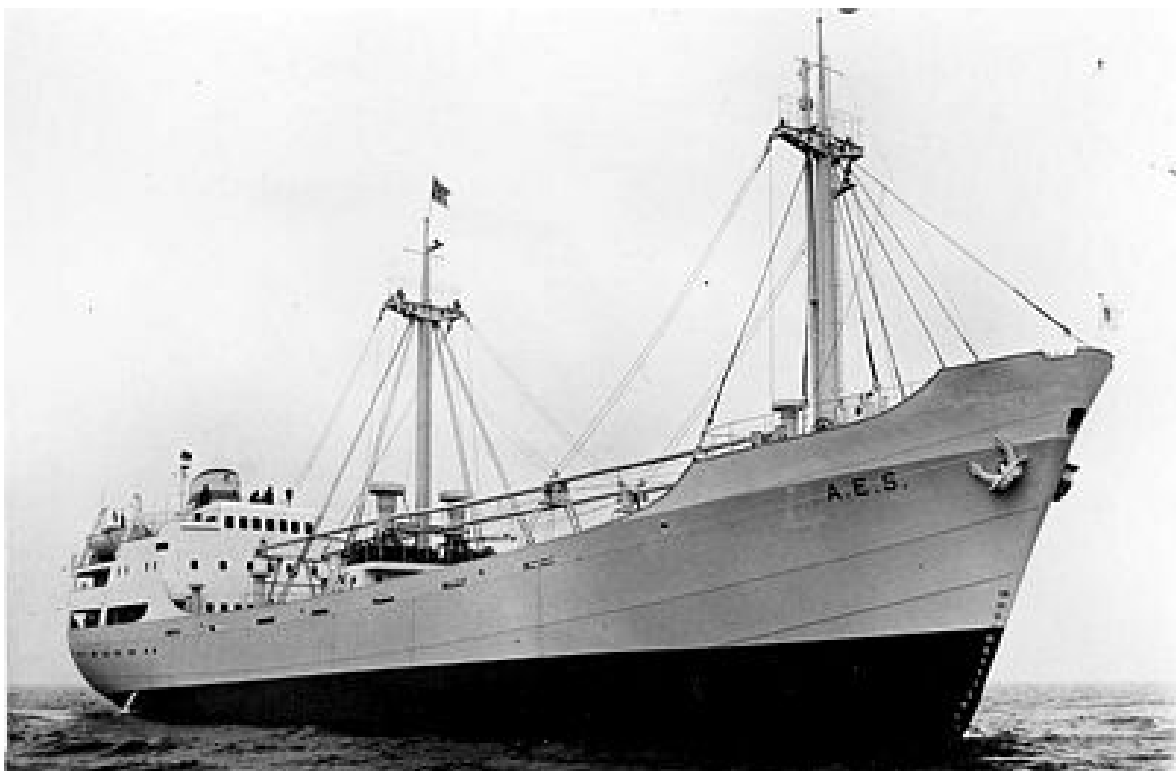
A.E.S did not have a 3<sup>rd</sup> officer and therefore gave me a short cut and I needed two trips (6 month) to repay my debt to A.E.SØRENSEN before joining MAERSK in 1971 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer on Leise Maersk (85,000 tonnes Bulk carrier).

So I had a total of 5 trips to the Falklands (15 months) with 5 months of them being based somewhere around the Falklands.

Sadly, the ties with Danish shipping over so many years for the supply of cargo to the Falklands came to an end last year, as the MOD have now taken over the contract, but up until early this year, the Falklands were still being served by Danish ships with the Port of Loading being Shoreham in Sussex.

It was a very interesting experience - now distant memories, but I hope you may all have enjoyed to learn a little more about these distant shores of the Falkland Islands?

Captain Flemming Nelleborg Pedersen



## The Red Sea 1953

The small motor vessels of the Halal Shipping Company Ltd, of Aden, Arabia, served ports in the Red Sea, Southern Arabia and the Benadir coast and, in addition to Hadjis bound for or returning from the Holy Shrines of Mecca and Medina, or the Red Sea specialities, hides, coffee bags and tins of kerosene, frequently transported sheep, cattle and, even, camels.

Red Sea sheep however were not the cuddly, woolly-coated variety with which we are familiar in the UK, some of which were allegedly mistaken for WRNS in duffle coats by sailors in Scapa Flow and other lonely stations, but had short coats and made excellent curry.

Any laws relating to the carriage of live-stock by ship were perhaps only sketchily enforced in Aden and elsewhere round the Red Sea coasts more than half a century ago, but the carriage of camels, on the hoof and unsecured, in the holds of a 700 ton coaster cannot be recommended.

Walking along the deck meant a balancing act on the backs of sheep and, after the sheep had been discharged, the white paint on the deck-houses would be found to have been licked off up to a level that could be reached by the sheep's tongues.

At Aden, sheep came alongside in lighters, tightly packed together. A deck crane or swinging derrick lowered a cargo hook into the lighter, several "snotters", or lengths of manilla rope having a eye and thimble at each end, being attached to the hook. Labourers or "coolies", working under the ship's own "Coolie Tindal", stationed in the lighter, then unhooked the snotters, hitched one end around the hind-leg of a sheep and re-attached the other eye of the snotter to the cargo hook. When all the snotters had been utilised the order "heave-away" was given and, saay, a dozen bleating sheep were lifted into mid air, each by one back leg, swung over the ship's side and landed on deck or in the hold at high speed. This performance continued until all the sheep were on board.

The problem of how to devise a more humane and dignified method of loading sheep at bouys or an anchorage must have exercised the minds of some of Aden's more caring citizens and officials for, on arrival at that port on one occasion, we discovered that progress had reared its ugly head and the loading method had been modernised.

Now the ship was provided with "sheep loaders", a heavy, cumbersome structure resembling in appearance a portable boxing ring. Corner posts were fitted to the heavy wooden base, connected on all four sides by wooden slats placed a few inches apart so as to form a wooden fence around the base. On one side a wooden gate had been fitted. One leg of a four-legged bridle could be hooked to each corner post, the common ring for the bridle then being slipped over the derrick hook, and the complete loader lifted from the lighter. Ideal.

Perhaps the reader has already grasped the idea:- the gate would be opened by a Coolie in the lighter, through which the sheep would be invited to enter the loader, forming themselves into orderly lines. With the contraption full the gate would be closed, the order given to heave away, and the loader would rise gently, cross the ship's side, and be carefully landed on board where, once the gate was opened by a courteous Coolie, the sheep would file out in an orderly fashion similar to London office wallahs being disgorged from a lift at lunch time.

Regrettably, as with most new systems, a few technical hitches soon became apparent. There had been no change in the method of stowing sheep in the lighters lying alongside the ship so, as usual, they stood tightly packed together. The first problem was how to land the heavy "boxing ring" in the lighter when the only available space was on top of the sheep. Accordingly, the loader was loaded over the ship's side by the Arab winch driver at the customary high speed, landing heavily on top of a considerable number of sheep. With the loader in this position the gate was of no value, the result being that the Coolies decided to load the pen by lifting the nearest sheep and hurling it into the middle. When the loader was seen to be heaped with sheep, some standing, some on their backs, others on their sides, the order to heave-away was given. As it was hoisted, the heavy loader often struck the coaming of the lighter and, late, the ship's side plating, causing severe injuries to any sheep whose leg protrude through the wooden slats forming the side of the loader. More injuries of this nature occurred when the pen was landed clumsily in the hold or on deck, after which the sheep were roughly physically ejected from the loader by the genuinely uncaring Coolies.

Both systems were cruel and I like to think that by now a better system has been devised. I wonder?

Incidentally, Masters of Halal coasters, in view of their responsibilities, had certain financial inducements. One was "Sheep money", with cargoes of livestock. In the 1930's the Captain would receive one rupee for each sheep landed alive and sound at the port of destination. They were also "considered" for payment of one half per-cent commission on the profits of the voyage "but in no circumstances should this be written into the Contract of employment".

Hamish Roberts



*El Hak*, working lighters at anchor, and, below, her details.

NAME: *M.S. "El Hak"*  
FLAG: *BRITISH*  
OWNERS: *HALAL SHIPPING CO LTD LONDON*  
MNGRS: .....  
BUILT: *1929*  
BUILDERS: *HAWTHORN LESLIE & CO LTD NEWCASTLE*  
TONNAGE: *1022 GRT 511 NET 1070 DWT*  
SPEED: *11 KNOTS*  
P of B: *LONDON*  
REMARKS:  
*"The little jewel of the Red Sea"*



## Escort towage steps up a gear in Southampton

*My plea for something a bit more “contemporary” has elicited this contribution from my friend and ex-colleague, John Mileusnic. John has been a Southampton Pilot for 17 years and a “choice” Pilot for Esso for the past 12.*

A new arrival to be based at the Fawley Marine Terminal is the purpose built escort tug *TENAX*. Operated by Solent Towage, a wholly owned subsidiary of Østensjø Rederi AS, the *Tenax* will work alongside the tug *Thrax* under the overall management of Captain Nick Jeffery. She has a crew of six, comprising Master, Mate, Chief Engineer and three Seamen. Two of the Seamen are also assigned duties on Solent Towage’s smaller tugs, purpose built to handle coastal traffic and run moorings at Fawley.

Since the early nineties active escorting through the Solent has been compulsory for loaded tankers greater than 60,000 tonnes dead-weight bound to and from Fawley. Inward vessels are now met 4 miles south of the Nab tower and the tug is secured aft as soon as is practicable for the 25 mile passage to the berth.

Outward bound in ballast condition the tankers are escorted until they have completed the West Bramble turn and are clear of Cowes, some 5 miles from the berth.

Powered by two Rolls Royce Bergen type C25 diesel engines driving Voith propulsion units the *Tenax* has a standard bollard pull of 70 tons, but is able to apply a steering force and braking force at 10 knots of 150 tons. The escort line is 80mm Steelite with a breaking strain of 500t and in addition the tug is also equipped with a 57mm wire tow line with a breaking strain of 233t.

As well as escorting and ship handling at Fawley the

*Tenax* has two 1500m<sup>3</sup>/hour fire pumps powering a water monitor and a water/foam monitor. Should the need arise the oil spill response capabilities of the vessel has been enhanced by the Norlense 600S oil boom and a Desmi Oil Skimmer linked to three recovered oil tanks with a capacity of 146.5 m<sup>3</sup>. The navigation equipment is extensive allowing the *Tenax* to operate off shore if required with a communications suite that includes UHF and air band radio. This high standard of equipment coupled with a ships office that can be rapidly converted gives the

*Tenax* the flexibility of operating as an on scene emergency command post. One unique feature of all Ostensjø tugs, designed by a tug skipper following an incident in Norwegian waters, is a wire basket with a buoy at each corner attached to the crane, which can be rapidly lowered over the side to recover a man overboard.



The crew live onboard for two weeks at a time and as a consequence the accommodation has been fitted out to the highest standard with six individual cabins all with en-suite facilities, messroom/dayroom, galley, changing room and separate laundry. Below decks there are numerous storerooms and a dedicated fitness/exercise room.

Following extensive trials and crew training the *Tenax* is now a regular sight at Fawley and throughout the Solent when operating in the escort mode. A program of joint training with the tug masters and pilots on simulators and in open waters is on-going enabling the *Tenax* to be used by all to its designed capabilities.

### PILOT'S PERKS

In the days when the Colombo Pilots were nearly all ex-pat Brits, there was one who was a particular mate of our Captain and who was always on the scrounge, it was usually the Purser who had to provide the likes of smoked salmon, English bacon etc. etc. On one occasion I recall the Chief Officer was the fall guy when the pilot required some gloss white paint to tiddly up his bungalow, The Chief Officer and the Bo'sun headed for the paint locker where they opened up a new five gallon drum, took out a third of the content and replaced it with paraffin!, stirred it up and delivered it to the gunport door for the Pilot's launch. We never heard any more of the incident but no way, even after 30 years, would that paint ever have dried !

## Here there be Monsters

Here is an interesting excerpt from "Cachalots and Messmates, "A Brief History of The Southampton Master Mariners' Club", written by Commodore D.M.MacLean, DSC, RD, RNR, and published in 1973.

11th July 1972. By way of implementing the friendly aims of the Club, the author visited the Club's oldest surviving member, Captain C. H. Watson, O.B.E., on this, his 91st birthday, and found him "Hale and hearty from yardarm to yardarm".

He joined the Club in its foundation year, 1928, and although never an Officer of it he has always been a staunch supporter. Captain Watson (or "Charlie" as he is affectionately called) joined the Southampton Pilotage service in 1912 and retired from it in 1952, having been "Choice" Pilot for both Canadian Pacific and Union Castle lines for many years.

His memory goes back to the old sailing Pilot-Cutter days; and long before the oil refinery and storage tanks appeared on Southampton Water. "We were constantly on the move, piloting all kinds of steam and sailing craft in my young days," he declared, before releasing a flood of interesting anecdotes about his early seafaring days.

Flicking through the faded pages of an old Seaman's Discharge Book, he showed me, with a smile, one engagement entry for the year 1900 which read: "Rating: Second Cook" of Steam Yacht *KEMPION*, engaged in cruising in the Norwegian Fjords. Rate of pay £7 per month.

During this period, Charlie explained, the shipping economy of this country was at a very low ebb. Officers with Master Mariner's Certificates were serving in ships' forecastles - glad to be in a job of any kind.

But one of his proudest memories is, that when he was 19 he served as Able Seaman on board King Edward VII's graceful yacht, *BRITANNIA*, in her exciting racing heyday. His principal duties aboard *BRITANNIA* were "Mainsheet-and-Backstaysman", when racing; and, more important, he was always directly responsible for the personal safety of Her Majesty Queen Alexandra whenever she was embarked in the Royal Yacht.

Among the more unusual experiences which Charlie related to me was the following incident.

Shortly after leaving *BRITANNIA* he signed on as Able Seaman in the well-known 1,300 ton full-rigged ship-yacht *VALHALLA*, owned by Lord Crawford. One morning in the spring of 1902 in mid-Indian Ocean while on passage in her from Aden to Singapore an incident occurred which left an indelible impression on Charlie's youthful memory. The crew were working about the decks in their usual manner when the helmsman reported a sail well out on the starboard bow, where-upon the skipper, Captain John Caws, was promptly called and *VALHALLA* bore away to close the object, and Charlie went aloft into the fore rigging in order to get a better view.

Before long all hands and the Cook had mustered by the lee rail after someone had said something about the "queer-ness" and the absence of any kind of movement around the reported sail. Hearing the unusual commotion on deck. Lord Crawford, together with the two eminent scientists who were his guests on board, hastened to the fore-deck and, as the ship closed to within about 20 feet of the strange object, it was clearly seen to

be a mottled dark brown coloured fish (or mammal) of reptilian form and about 25 feet in length with a serrated dorsal fin of about three or four feet in height, and a proportionate snake-like head. It somehow gave the impression of being old, but at the same time, of immense and sinister power, and there was an uncanny feeling about disturbing the monster's apparent unaware-ness of their presence; it seemed as if it were dozing in the morning sunshine.

There was very little wind and *VALHALLA*, under sail, made hardly a ripple at her bow. This might possibly have accounted for the creature's lack of awareness of the ship's proximity.

Presently Lord Crawford ordered his valet to fetch his elephant-gun, but by the time the weapon was loaded the awesome creature had reared its head and slowly dived into the depths. It probably had been disturbed when the shadow of *VALHALLA'S* sails fell across it or possibly by the now closer sound of her bow-wave faint though the latter was.

As a sort of postscript to his story Captain Watson added that while watching a television programme a few years ago he was very surprised to hear the above incident sketchily described but mentioning the name of his old ship, *VALHALLA*. The

programme also included a report of a sighting of a marine monster by a Naval vessel in the Indian Ocean some time around the same era.

After obtaining his Master's Certificate in 1907 he got command of Sir Frederick Preston's famous sailing yacht, *MODWENA* and, judging from his colourful accounts of his various cruises in her he must have been a very competent and resourceful seaman.

Paradoxically enough, although *MODWENA* was a purely sailing vessel and

therefore without engines or propeller, her owner's wealth derived from the manufacture of ship's propellers! Sir Frederick, at that time, was Chairman of the world-famous Stone's Propeller Foundry at Deptford.

When asked for his recipe for health and longevity Charlie replied: "I eat well; and always keep a ball of well-tarred spun-yarn by my bedside; it keeps off bronchitis and 'flu germs.'" !

He now lives in happy retirement tending his attractive little garden by the river Hamble.



The auxiliary full-rigged ship-yacht, *VALHALLA*, owned by Lord Crawford, in which Charlie Watson served as an A.B. in 1902.

Photo by Beken & Son, Cowes



I could find very little information of the *VALHALLA* on the internet but at [www.strangemag.com/definitiveseaserpent.html](http://www.strangemag.com/definitiveseaserpent.html) there is an account of the sighting by the two scientists on board. They were Michael J. Nicholl and E.G.B.Meade-Waldo, both experienced British naturalists and Fellows of the Zoological Society of London. They date the sighting as Dec.7 1905 at 1015 am and put it at 15 miles east of the mouth of Brazil's Parahiba River. Their account is recorded in the 1906 edition of the Society's Proceedings and in Nicoll's 1908 book "Three Voyages of A Naturalist."

There is also very scant information with regard to the *MODWENA* or of Sir Frederick Preston.

Ed.

# Rope Ends

## Dinner Dance

A total of ninety Cachalots, their spouses and friends attended the Autumn Dinner Dance at Brook House at the end of October. As we have come to expect, the food and catering were once again excellent and the music, as provided by husband and wife duo "SARABAND", (new to us) greatly enjoyed. It was also a certain Great Dane's 60th Birthday and every table shared in his generosity in the shape of a bottle of wine.

Cheers! Flemming.  
A very pleasant evening which raised £300 for the Wessex Cancer Trust by way of the raffle. The same venue has been booked for next year's dance which will be held there on 20th October.



## Wine Tasting

Jenny and Robin Hibberd will be back in this country with their next batch of wines in April 2007 and it is intended that another wine tasting "session" will be arranged then. More details in the next edition and on the web site.



\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
\$									\$
\$									\$
\$	September	Mary Juelsdorf							\$
\$	October	R. Henry							\$
\$	November	t.b.a.							\$
\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

## DANGEROUS CARGO

As all learned Master Mariners will know the carriage of dangerous cargo in passenger ships is heavily frowned on if not downright forbidden.

On the final homeward voyage of the Orion, going to the Captains morning conference the morning after leaving Bombay (not Mumbai until some years later) the Senior Officers found the Captain and the Cargo Officer in deep and serious conversation.

On going through the manifests after departure the 1<sup>st</sup> Officer had found '1 c/s SA Ammunition' consigned to London. After a brief discussion during which it was confirmed that the agents had not mentioned this to anybody either verbally or in writing and so the Chief Officer was told to muster a deck gang, open No 3 hatch and turn over the cargo until the case in question was found.

The treasure hunt ended successfully about noon, the rogue case taken to the bridge wing and, with due ceremony, chucked overboard and a report to advise London of the occurrence prepared!

On reaching Tilbury the ship paid off and de-stored as we were going on charter for 4 months as a floating hotel in Hamburg, operated by a German hotel chain. We had on board a small care and maintenance part of deck and engine ratings and a few officers to assist the operators in any way that might be needed.

After about a week in Hamburg the Captain (Staff Captain during the voyage) received a letter thanking the ship for its report on the jettisoning of one case of SAA and, of course, endorsed the Captains discretion in taking the action. They thought however that he might like to know that the ammunition had been in India for 10 years as a part of a trial to establish how well the ammo and packaging stood up to monsoon and other various climatic states experienced in the sub-continent and how it would react. The tests were now going to be repeated!!



## Gone Aloft

### Captain Paul Canter CBE RN

Included with this edition of *The Cachalot* you should find two additional pages. One is the pro-forma questionnaire mentioned in the Captain's report on the Strategic Review on page 2, and which the Captain asks you to complete and return to him at this address. The other is the Programme of events for 2007/2008 and at the bottom of this is the cut off and return slip for your annual subscription and, hopefully, your participation in the "250" Club. A timely response is requested as, under Rule 11, only paid up members are entitled to partake or vote at the AGM.

It will probably not come as much of a surprise to you, in this age of the surveillance society, that we too are now compiling a database of our members.

Nothing too serious, just an update of the old card file system, and we hope to keep it reasonably benign.

We are, of course, bound by the Data Protection Act, just as are all the other hundreds of Government Departments, Agencies, Financial Institutions, Companies, Service suppliers and Associations that are keeping a tab on you. Re-assuring, isn't it?

Anyway, the point of this little dig at the way we live now is that one of our willing helpers, (She Who Must Be Obeyed), in updating our records, has observed that many of your post codes would seem to be out of date and we ask you to check the address on the envelope, if you haven't thrown it away yet, and advise us by whatever means suits you if it is in error. There is a space for your post code on the return slip, and this is perfectly adequate, but some of you pay by S.O. so will not necessarily be returning it.

Talking of willing helpers,

### YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

Volunteers are needed to help distribute the pre-ordered wines from 1500 to 1800 on Sea Pie Supper day, Friday, 2 February, 2007. Changing facilities are available at the Guildhall including showers as long as you bring your own towel.

Don't forget that if you wish to take advantage of the reduced prices your order must be in by 1400 on Thursday, 11 January, 2007. After that date you will need to buy on the night at Guildhall prices.

Please remember to include a s.a.e. for anything that requires a response from the Club.



The Club room is currently open three days a week, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 1130 - 1500. Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink and she can take your orders for meals, sandwiches and snacks. Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this newsletter will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.

The Club's address is:

**The Southampton Master Mariners' Club,  
(The CACHALOTS)  
Southampton Seafarers' Centre,  
12-14 Queens Terrace,  
SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3BP**

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### Dates for your Diary

Sat	DEC	2	Christmas Lunch, King's Court
Sat	DEC	9	Christmas Dinner, King's Court
Tue	JAN	2	Docklands New Year Service, SSC
Wed	JAN	3	Meeting of Past Captains
Thu	JAN	11	<b>A.G.M.</b>
Sat	JAN	20	Burns Supper, King's Court
Fri	FEB	2	Sea Pie Supper, Guildhall
Sat	MAR	10	Curry Lunch, SSC
Fri	MAR	30	Skittles, Southampton (Old) Green BC
Tba	APR	??	Wine Tasting
Wed	MAY	2	Club Buffet Supper
Wed	MAY	16	Entertain Watch Ashore to Lunch
Sat	MAY	19	Curry Lunch, SSC
Wed	MAY	23	Technical Seminar, tba
Wed	JUN	13	Club Buffet Supper
Thu	JUN	21	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cath.
Sat	JUL	14	Curry Lunch, SSC
Fri	AUG	10	Cowes Week Fireworks Cruise
Sat	SEP	15	Curry Lunch, SSC
Tue	OCT	??	Last Night of Proms Concert Tidworth
Sat	OCT	20	Autumn Dinner Dance, Botley
Fri	NOV	2	Harpooners' Dinner
Tue	NOV	13	Sale of Sea Pie Supper tickets
Sat	DEC	1	Christmas Dinner, King's Court
Sat	DEC	8	Christmas Lunch, King's Court