

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.24

June 2007

CAPTAIN'S LOG

Our Sea Pie Supper on 2nd February saw my installation as Club Captain and Captain Leslie Morris as Staff Captain. In normal circumstances that would be the start of the social calendar for the Captain but a few weeks later I had to go into hospital for an operation and therefore unfortunately I had to miss the first few social events and a number of Committee meetings. Many thanks to those who sent me wishes for a speedy recovery. It was particularly unfortunate that I was not able to attend the curry lunch on 3rd March because it was the occasion when the Club made a presentation to the previous Boatsteerer, Captain Lionel Hall, in recognition of his eight years service in that post.

Thankfully I was fully mobile by the middle of April and Janet and I were able to be present for the wine tasting luncheon at the Club on 15th April. Robin and Jenny Hibberd have been presenting this event to the Club for a number of years now and I have to admit it is the first one I have been to. It was very interesting and Janet and I are now enjoying the fruits of their labours.

A few days later I had the privilege of responding to the Toast to the Guests at the 42nd Annual Dinner of the Southampton Royal Naval Officers' Association held at the Tudor Merchants Hall. This could have been a disaster as I had left my speaking notes at home but by limiting my intake of alcohol I was able to remember what I had planned to say!

On 27th April Janet and I were guests at the Commodore's Cocktail Party at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club. It was a beautiful evening and lovely to be able to take our drinks outside, overlooking The Hamble and the many yachts at their moorings. In his welcoming address the Commodore, Terry Saunderson, painted a glowing picture of The Cachalots, particularly the Sea Pie Supper.

We held the first Club Buffet Supper in our new club rooms on 2nd May and enjoyed an extremely interesting talk entitled, "The Fastnet – Views from a Lighthouse", given by Leslie Coney. This event was well attended and helped prove that the move to our new premises, surrounded by all our well loved artefacts which have now been brought out of storage and many of which are

on display in a magnificent cabinet made by Terry Clark, was the right thing.

Our last social event in this first quarter of my term as Captain was to entertain the ladies of the Watch Ashore to lunch at the Club on 16th May. This is an event the ladies look forward to each year and it is pleasure to welcome them. Unfortunately this coincided with an invitation to attend the Mayor Making Ceremony at Southampton Guildhall but the Staff Captain went in my place so the Club was represented at this important event in the calendar of the City of Southampton.

I now look forward to the next three months as Captain and hope to welcome more of you to our club rooms and varied functions. In particular there is the Shipping Festival Service at Winchester Cathedral which takes place on Thursday 21st June. Of course details of these events are given elsewhere in this edition of The Cachalot.

Peter Marriott
Club Captain



Captain Peter Marriott enjoys the joke of the candles that won't blow out on his surprise birthday cake at the recent Club Buffet Supper.

CLUB BUFFET SUPPER

1900 on WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE,
IN THE CLUBROOM

A Club Buffet Supper with an illustrated talk by Lt. Col. Stuart McLean entitled "The Royal Military Police in the Gulf War, 1991", will take place at the above time and date. Stuart was Provost Marshal in Kuwait, but he is now "retired" from the army and is employed at Tidworth as Garrison Sports, Leisure and Community Manager. He is a very entertaining speaker and we can thoroughly recommend this evening to you. The Menu is as follows:-

Beef and Pepper Salad
Selection of Continental Meats
Quiche
Duck Pate
Poached Salmon
Seasonal Salads and Potatoes
Roll and Butter

* * * * *

Apple and Blackberry Meringue
Orange and Lemon Mousse
Chocolate Profiteroles
Fruit Salad

There is a maximum seating capacity of fifty persons so please notify the office as soon as possible if you wish to attend. The price is £14.00 per person; please hand your payments to the Storekeeper, Functions Officer or Richard.



THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE

THURSDAY 21st JUNE 2007 AT 7.00 p.m.
CONGREGATION TO BE SEATED BY 6.45 p.m.

PREACHER:

The Right Revd. Paul Butler
Bishop of Southampton

This year the Service will be attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, the High Sheriff, and the Mayors of Winchester and Southampton and other dignitaries. Colour Party from HMS King Alfred, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, HM Coastguard and the Warsash Maritime Academy will carry the White Ensign, Red Ensign and the Blue Ensigns of the RFA and HM Coastguard, and the Army Ensign worn by HM Army Vessels. The Branch Standard Bearers of the Royal Naval Association, the Association of WRNS, the Royal Marines Association and the Merchant Navy Association will carry their Standards.

Flag Party from the Southampton, Romsey and Winchester units of the Cadet Corps.

MUSIC BY THE VOLUNTEER BAND OF H.M.S. NELSON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF BAND COLOUR SERGEANT NEIL SILVESTER, LRCM, R.M.

AFTERWARDS, IN THE DEANERY GARDENS,
WINE and REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

**THE PROCEEDS FROM THE SERVICE WILL BE
DONATED TO
THE SOUTHAMPTON SEAFARERS' CENTRE**

and

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

ALL WELCOME

Club Slop Chest

The Club has a small selection of articles for sale, available through the office:

Silver Cachalot whales	£18
Club ties	£ 8
Club bow ties	£10
Club cummerbunds	£25

The Functions Officer can also obtain a selection of ladies and gents clothing: sweaters, sweatshirts, rugby shirts, polos, fleeces etc. on which the Club badge or other insignia can be embroidered at extra cost.

For example:

HENBURY lambswool sweater	£36.50
HENBURY sleeveless lambswool	£30.50
HENBURY acrylic sweater	£18.50
JERZEES poly/cotton sweatshirt	£17.00
FRUIT OF THE LOOM zip hooded s'shirt	£20.00
FRONT ROW longleeve cotton rugby shirt	£24.50
JERZEES ladies pique polo shirt	£12.00
FRONT ROW cotton classic drill shirt	£26.00
JERZEES outdoor fleece gilet	£21.50
HENBURY zip neck micro fleece	£26.00
RESULT active fleece bodywarmer	£18.50

Full list and further details from Gerry Cartwright.

Curry Lunches



Saturday 14th July
at
P.O.S.H.



Following the previous two convivial and successful Curry Lunches there, the next one will also be held at the P.O.S.H. Restaurant, 1200 for 1230.

Just **£7.50** per head.

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Saturday 15th September
at the
Southampton Seafarers' Centre

This Curry Lunch will be held downstairs in the SSC to allow those members who cannot manage the stairs at either the Club or at P.O.S.H. to join us. Let us hope that you can join them. Alternatives to curry by prior order only please.

Just **£6.00** per head.

Please note that this does not include coffee in the lounge area for which a small donation is expected.

Names to the notice in the Club-room or to the office, with payment please.



s.s.SHIELDHALL

COWES FIREWORKS

Friday 10th August, 1830 - 2359

This year the Club has 50 places reserved on this popular cruise to view the fireworks display and there are just a few places left. The rest of the public allocation has already sold out.

£26.00 per person

Which will now have to be made at the time of booking. Does not include food but hot meals will be available, payable on board on the night.

Departs 48 berth, Southampton at 1830, please allow plenty of time for parking and boarding.



AUTUMN DINNER DANCE

Saturday 20th October

**Brook House Masonic Centre,
Botley**

*Smoked Haddock & Prawn Vol-au-vent
on a Bed of Mixed Lettuce*

*Loin of Pork
With a
Dijon & Herb Crust
With Cream, Apple & Cider Sauce
Seasonal Vegetables & Potatoes*

*Gateau Cortina
A Chocolate Sponge Soaked in Rum
Filled and Coated with a
Sweet Cream and White Chocolate*

Cheese & Biscuits

Coffee & Mints

**A non-alcoholic fruit punch will be
served on arrival
Drinks at sensible prices
Music by**

Saraband

**Black Tie,
1915 for 2000.
Priced at **£29** per person.**

During the evening there will be a raffle held in aid of the Wessex Cancer Trust. Any donations towards this raffle will be gratefully received.

There is no restriction on numbers so why not make up a table of family and friends?

List on the notice board,
or book through the office.

SUEZ CANAL

This is Chapter 8 of "The Unforgiving Minute", the memoirs of Stowaway Member Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles. It details his involvement in mine clearing operations in the Suez Canal.

In Alexandria I reported to the Fleet Torpedo Officer, Commander Dymock Watson, who became my boss for the next couple of years - and I never knew a better man to work for. He explained that now the war in the Mediterranean had hotted up - especially the Navy being busy supporting the flank of the 8th Army in the Western Desert - there were no opportunities for fireship operations. However he said that the enemy had begun to lay magnetic ground mines by aircraft in the Suez Canal and there was a great danger of some ship being sunk and blocking the Canal. I was to go to help to deal with this problem.

It should be said that by this time all reinforcements and supplies for the Army had to be brought round the Cape of Good Hope so the problem was where to unload the ships. As the docks in Suez were of a very limited capacity, most of the ships had to go up the Canal and be unloaded in Haifa, Port Said or Alexandria. Thus keeping the Canal open was of great strategic importance.

We have already discussed the efforts being made in the UK to deal with the menace of these magnetic mines. None of these counter-measures had yet reached the Middle East, so once again suggestions were asked for as to what should be done. Glass-bottomed boats were suggested; trawl-nets to be dragged from one side of the Canal to the other - teams of camels to pull these being proposed! Another idea was to net in the entire Canal so that when the enemy bombers dropped their mines, there would be a hole in the netting and thus reveal their whereabouts.

As a postscript to this idea, a few derelict concrete posts can still be seen to this day at one place on the east bank of the Canal.

When this net scheme was suggested to the Commander in Chief, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, he was enthusiastic because it appealed to him as a hardbitten old seaman. One of his staff, Commander Lofty Power did a sum on his blotting paper and worked out that it would take 93 million miles of cod-line string to net in the entire Canal! However, an experimental kilometre was ordered to be tried out, string was ordered from India and an unfortunate Torpedo Gunner (Warrant Officer) was put in charge of the project. This took so many months to put in place that when the Gunner eventually went to Alexandria and reported "They are ready, Sir", the Staff Officer said, "What are ready?" "The nets" the man said. "What nets?" Everybody had forgotten about them because the war had advanced away from the area altogether. However, it was decided they might as well be tried out, so they were hauled over from the east bank to the west bank one night, and in the morning a team went down to haul them back. But bless me, the hauling-over lines had disappeared! The Bedouins had come in from the desert on their camels in the night and stolen all this precious rope. Meanwhile six merchant ships in the north-bound convoy came relentlessly round the corner and straight into the nets, causing one of the most magnificent scenes of chaos it has ever been my privilege to observe!

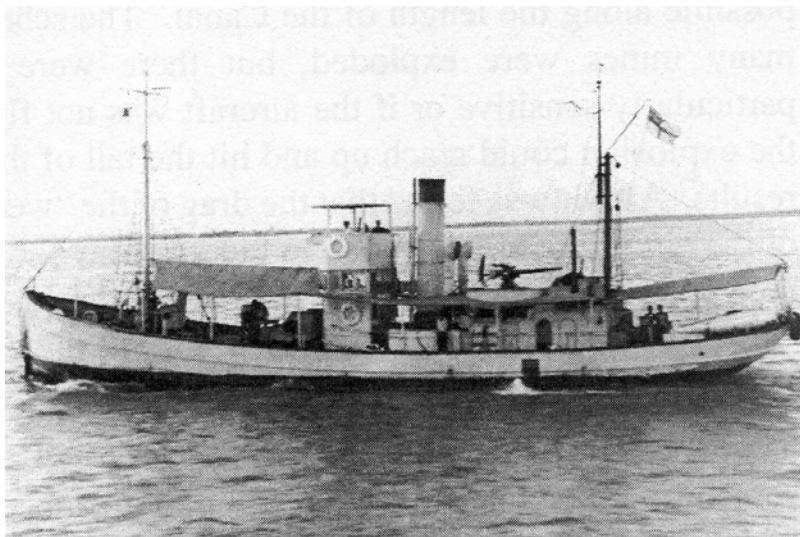
In fact, the only effective way to deal with the mines, once they had been located, was to send divers down with small explosive charges to be placed beside them -which would "counter-mine" them or at least render them ineffective. It was of course always desirable to recover the mines, if possible, to investigate their mechanisms which were still not fully understood.

I was sent to Ismailia on the Great Bitter Lake, half-way along the Canal, to report to Admiral Sir James Pipon who rejoiced in the title of "Snorsca" (Senior Naval Officer Red Sea and Canal Area). His Staff Officer was Lieutenant Commander Ralph Duckworth - who I got to know well. He sent me on a roving commission up and down the Canal to organise and co-ordinate the various mine disposal teams which went down early every morning to deal with each incident which had been reported. I had a very interesting few months, riding a motor-bike throughout daylight hours and trying to cope with each incident as it arose. There were several teams of naval divers, and there were a few locally employed skindivers. The latter were provided by a rascally old Egyptian contractor called Jim Irish who recruited the boys who used to dive down to catch coins thrown overboard by the tourists from the cruise liners before the war. One boat contained a dozen divers, but Ralph Duckworth, watching them, noticed that only six were actually diving, whilst the other six jumped into the sea and splashed round and were hauled in again gasping loudly; they were not divers at all, but Jim Irish wanted payment for all twelve!

There were also specially trained RMS (Render Mine Safe) teams which had been flown out from the UK. One of their bits of equipment included a high-pressure bladder which could be screwed onto the hydrostatic valve to prevent the mine exploding if it was brought to the surface. A gallant Canadian, Lieutenant Cook RCNVR, came to the surface full of indignation gasping "The bloody Germans have put the wrong screw-thread on this one".

All these operations were complicated by the fact that the Germans knew exactly where to lay the mines to cause the maximum inconvenience. If a ship had been sunk in a rocky part of the Canal it would be much more difficult to dredge a passage round her than it would be where there was a sandy bottom. The enemy were advised by a former Canal pilot of German nationality - a certain Herr Prikwinkle - who had disappeared without warning about a fortnight before war broke out. The commercial operation of the Canal had been carried out by a French company and all the pilots were a very mixed cosmopolitan bunch of different nationalities. The total length of the Canal from Port Said to Suez is 100 miles.

There were other different attempts at minesweeping. A large number of small craft were employed to do what they could, and I remember in particular two little requisitioned trawlers called "Landfall" and "Crescent Moon". These were commanded by two delightful young RNVR Officers called Vine, who were twins. (Forty years later I met Colin Vine as a Prime Warden of the Worshipful Company of Master Mariners in London).



H.M.S. "Crescent Moon". (Lt. Colin Vine RNVR)

By this time some of the enemy mines were acoustic instead of magnetic - set off by the noise of ships' propellers. It had been discovered in the UK that very high speed motor boats, for example MTBs, generated so much noise that the mines could be eliminated in this way. But this was very dangerous because if a particularly sensitive unit was in the mine it would explode before the fast boat had got clear.

I had two high-speed launches which had been used as despatch boats by the directors of the Canal before the war. These were beautifully built boats of about 40 ft, designed and built by Thornycroft in the UK and of much the same design as the Coastal Motor Boats of World War I. One day I was on the bank where one of these boats had been sent to sweep a particular stretch of Canal; an acoustic mine exploded immediately underneath her, blowing her completely to pieces. I dashed down the bank to the nearest Canal Company station to find a boat to look for survivors. The French official in charge of the station stopped me and

required a signature for the boat. I pushed him to one side and got into the boat with a couple of Arabs. As we paddled out towards the wreckage, a huge flapping occurred on one side of the boat. I thought it must be a survivor — but in fact it was a very large fish which had been stunned by the explosion and which one Arab was trying to recover for his lunch. Amazingly, the Petty Officer in charge of the boat was unharmed, one of his crew was badly injured but the other one was missing and never seen again. What I remember very vividly was that the boat was completely demolished and all that remained was a huge area of scum on the surface of the sea and thousands of pieces of splintered wood, none of them bigger than a pencil.

But then another very interesting idea was tried out. Two or three twin-engined Wellington bombers had been flown out from the UK, fitted with an enormous magnetic coil to touch off the mines. This coil was circular and about 50 ft in diameter; It was attached underneath each wingtip and near the tail-wheel, and the front of the coil extended right round the nose of the aircraft. The aircraft was stripped of all unnecessary weight and a small auxiliary engine with a generator provided the current which flowed through the coil and produced a strong vertical magnetic field.

These extraordinary-looking aircraft came to be called "Flying Wedding Rings". The planes were very difficult to fly and one of the pilots was Wing Commander John Chaplin who will appear again later.

Somehow the pilots had to coax these things into the air and fly as low as possible along the length of the Canal. The scheme worked surprisingly well and many mines were exploded, but there were difficulties. If one mine was particularly sensitive or if the aircraft was not flying fast enough, the splash from the explosion could reach up and hit the tail of the plane with obviously disastrous results. Also it was found that the drag of the "wedding ring" meant that the engines of the aircraft overheated - so in fact the only time they could really be used was in the very early morning before the heat of the day.

I was involved with the problem of these mines for several months; sometimes after a heavy raid the Canal had to be closed for a few days but mostly it was somehow kept open and the only ship I remember being sunk was a fairly small one which managed to beach herself on one side at a point where the Canal was a little bit wider.

Huge numbers of "spotters" had to be stationed all along the bank to observe where the mines splashed in at night and to try to get cross-bearings. In the end the Egyptian Army were persuaded to take on these duties, but they were quite remarkably inefficient.

Later, LL minesweepers came out from the UK and these were quite effective. In the end very large numbers of anti-aircraft guns were positioned alongside the Canal and it became too dangerous from the enemy's point of view to fly down low enough to drop mines.

Note: LL Sweepers

LL Sweep, a method of exploding magnetic mines at a safe distance behind a pair of minesweepers working abreast of each other by producing the required strength of magnetic field to actuate the firing mechanism of the mine. It was introduced by the British Admiralty in 1940 to combat the German magnetic ground mines which were being laid in large numbers in British coastal waters. The magnetic field required to explode the mines was achieved by each minesweeper of the pair towing two buoyant cables with electrodes at the end, one cable being 750 yards (685 m) long and the other 175 yards (160 m) long. A current generated in the towing ship passes through the cables and creates a magnetic field of sufficient intensity to explode the mines. As minesweepers were incapable of producing a continuous electric current of sufficient amperage to maintain a permanent magnetic field, the current was pulsed and each pulse created a field which was large enough to explode all mines lying within it. As the longer cables passed out of the end of the magnetic field, another pulse was passed to create a new magnetic field, so that a continuous passage was swept. By using two minesweepers working abreast, this swept passage was wide enough to provide a safe lane for ships passing through the minefield.



ROLL OF HONOUR OF THE MERCHANT NAVY AND FISHING FLEETS 1939-1945

The Tower Hill memorial in London commemorates the men from the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who have no known grave and died during the two world wars. The memorial can be found close to the Tower of London on the south side of Trinity Square.

The men who died during the WW1 are listed in the covered, vaulted corridor. The men who died during WW2 are listed on bronze panels in a sunken garden. All names are arranged in alphabetical order under the names of the ships that they were lost on.

In 1958 the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation published a Roll of Honour which was printed under the authority of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. It contains the names of those members of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who lost their lives in WW2 through war service in ships registered in the United Kingdom or on charter to the United Kingdom Government.

This Roll of Honour is in three Volumes. Volumes I and II contain the names of those who are commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial and details the number of the panel on which they are listed, as well as Name, Rank, Ship, Date of death, Age and brief family details, where known. Volume III contains the names of those commemorated by War Memorials at Bombay, Bourail, Chittagong, Halifax, Hong Kong, Port Moresby and Sydney, and also of those with known graves throughout the world.

There are copies in St. Paul's Cathedral and Winchester Cathedral and now the SMMC is proud to display a copy in the Club room which is available for inspection by members. It will also be available to other interested parties by appointment.

FOREWARD (To the Roll of Honour)

This Roll of Honour records the names of more than 33,000 merchant seamen and fishermen who lost their lives while serving in British merchant ships or fishing vessels or in foreign ships chartered by the Government of the United Kingdom in the world war of 1939-1945.

This bare statement of fact conceals an epic of sustained heroism unsurpassed in the annals of war. At no time were there more than 200,000 officers and ratings serving in these ships: yet the dead numbered over 33,000. In no other field of war did so high a proportion of those engaged lose their lives. This is the measure of a sacrifice which has laid our country and the whole British Commonwealth and its allies in their debt for ever.

They were civilians without the support of military discipline and training, yet they faced mortal danger in the service of others, and they did not waver. Never, even in the darkest days, was there any lack of willing hands to man the ships however hazardous the voyage, though the seamen knew, often from bitter experience, the horrors which followed enemy attack at sea. They took the troops to the scene of battle and sustained them while they fought. They carried the food without which whole populations would have perished and the supplies without which the needs of the fighting forces and the civilian economy which nourished them could not have been met. They made victory possible.

The Memorials which record their sacrifice and the headstones that mark their resting places are scattered throughout the world, some at home, some far overseas. But it is fitting that the names of all the great company who gave their lives should be recorded together in one place. This book is the record. It is dedicated to them in humble gratitude.

Southampton's Maritime Memorials

Readers might be interested in a sequel to CRK's informative article in "The Cachalot" (No 23). A further three memorials, each outside the ordinary field of vision of the citizens of Southampton, are noteworthy.

The extensive Hollybrook Cemetery lies close-by Southampton General Hospital. Just inside the main gates, to the right, lies a small, immaculately maintained Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery where, behind the few lines of standard design headstones and the traditional Cross of Sacrifice, stands a long white wall bearing several bronze plaques on which are engraved nearly 2000 names. The inscription above the names reads:-

1914 – 1918

"To the Glory of God and in memory of 1852 officers and men of the British Empire who fell in the Great War and have no known grave but the sea or to whom the fortunes of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death"

The names of the soldiers lost at sea were inscribed in cemeteries nearest to their last point of embarkation and perhaps the most notable of these was the Hollybrook Memorial at Southampton. Not only soldiers, but sailors and nursing sisters and others are commemorated, the most senior being Lord Kichener who perished in HMS "Hampshire".

The ships mentioned, for instance:- Llandoverly Castle, Asturias, Apapa, Connemara, Leinster, Maine, Abasas, Armadale, Warilda, Anglia, Clenarty Castle, Lanfranc, Citta di Palermo, - will be familiar. Some are described as HM Ships, others as HM Transports or Hired Transports.

Holyrood Church, in the High Street, has stood on its present site since 1320, although it has been rebuilt or restored on several occasions. The "Picture of Southampton and Stranger's Handbook to every object of interest in the town and neighbourhood", published in 1850, tells us that "this church has suffered most extensively from the wretched vandalism of the last two centuries". The old Town Hall stood in front of it and, until 1849, a wooden Doric colonnade, called the "Proclamation", whence Government declarations of war, etc. were read. There were a great number of tablets and monuments, including one to sufferers by the great fire of 1837. On 7 November of that year, a fire having broken out in a store in the lower part of High Street, a number of respectable inhabitants pressed into the burning edifice with the laudable intention of saving such portions of the property as might admit of removal, but the fire unfortunately reached some carboys of turpentine, which exploded in resistless sheets of flame, thus cutting off the retreat of a part of the crowd, 22 of whom perished miserably, and many others were severely injured. The fire was supposed to have arisen from some fireworks set off by boys in the neighbourhood, in the earlier part of the evening.

By 1850 the restoration of the church tower had been deferred due to the insufficiency of funds but it was hoped that the wealthy of the parish, and the munificent among the public generally would not allow it to remain in its present state. Whether or not funds were raised, 90 years later on 30 November 1940 the Church was virtually destroyed by enemy action. Known for centuries as the Church of the Sailors the ruins have been preserved by the people of Southampton as a memorial and garden of rest dedicated to those who served in the Merchant Navy and lost their lives at sea.

A small plaque records "The Watch Ashore has dedicated this corner garden to the everlasting memory of relations and friends who lost their lives at sea".

A larger wall plaque erected by the City Council on behalf of the citizens of the City reads:-

*The Falkland Islands
May – July 1982
This tablet marks the invaluable and heroic service of the
Merchant Navy
Operating out of the
Port of Southampton
For the Campaign to recover
The Falkland Islands
From occupation by Argentine forces*

A memorial fountain, removed from the original site in Cemetery Road, The Common, was erected in memory of the Crew, Stewards, Sailors and Firemen, who lost their lives in the S.S. "Titanic" disaster, April 15, 1912. It was subscribed for by the widows, mothers and friends of the crew.

Resting in the Sailors' Church, having removed from St. John's church yard in 1958, is Richard Taunton 1684 – 1752, Merchant Venturer and benefactor, twice mayor of Southampton, and founder of Taunton's School, Southampton, where incidentally Lord Maybray-King, one of our late respected Stowaways, taught.

There are several other memorials, somewhat difficult to read as a result of crumbling stonework or want of a drop of Brasso and regrettably the wretched vandalism suffered for centuries continues, although of late considerable effort seems to have been made to keep the Sailors' Church shipshape.

To be continued

Hamish Roberts

From the Editor



The newest "Titanic" memorial in Southampton is this one which was installed in the docks by ABP, with the help of the British Titanic Society, during 1993. Shown above are the then Harbour Master, Captain Malcolm Ridge, "Titanic" survivor Miss Millvena Dean and Canon Stef Roberts at the small dedication ceremony at which your editor was also present and took this photo. Miss Dean is now one of only two remaining survivors of the disaster. The stone and plaque, a memorial to the passengers and crew, was originally positioned on the seaward side of Ocean Gate (the ABP office block) at 45 berth, overlooking the Ocean Dock from where the Titanic sailed. Members of the public were afforded access but the open dock was deemed to be too much of a hazard and a couple of years ago the memorial was moved to just inside No.4 Gate, on the left.

In this edition, on page 6, I have elaborated on Reg Kelso's previous report on the Volumes of the Roll of Honour that the Club now has in its possession, in the expectation that they will now be afforded the dignity and respect that is their due.

Well, that's enough of memorials to be going on with for the time being. I would dearly like to bring you something a bit more modern as I fear we are in danger of getting bogged down in the past. I can, however, only work with what I am given so this is really another re-working of that well known editors' refrain, "Give me some copy. Please!"

On the following page you will find the first of the personal letters that Ian Thomson's great grandfather wrote home to his wife while he was master on the tea clipper "Skawfell", and which I intend to present to you as an occasional series. First to be presented to you, not the first that he wrote home, if you get my drift. I hope that you will find them as interesting as I do, with their almost Dickensian flavour. This one is dated 1863, six

years before the launch of the "Cutty Sark", and already the freight rates are starting to waver due to the high tea prices.

Reg Kelso has also come up with a slightly later tale of shipwreck and hardship in the sailing ship days but I shall hold that one over until another time, otherwise you will be getting too much of a good thing.

I have filled in the back page with a gentle tale of yesteryear (only 55 years old, this one) from Past Captain Gordon Renshawe (1987). It has been in my "pending" file for a couple of years and I thought that I had already used it here. It appeared in "Sea Breezes" in July 1981 and I am trusting that the copyright still rests with Gordon and that he won't sue me. I'll have to take my chances with the picture.

Our www.cachalots.org.uk web site is up and stumbling, if not exactly running. I try to keep it updated when I can but I have little idea of how, or even if, it is being received. Perhaps I should try and install one of those little counter thingys to record how many "visitors" the site has had, but then that might depress me. We still intend to install a members' only section when time allows. If you have any constructive comments, please don't hesitate to give me a nudge.

As far as the electronic version of this newsletter is concerned, I have now come across a great little tool that facilitates sending large files painlessly over the internet. It is a free application called Pando and it was featured in issue 237 of "Computer active" magazine. Basically, I download the complete, original "Cachalot" file to Pando and their server sends it on to you, prompting you to download the required software first. The whole thing only takes a few minutes on broadband and you will get the original version in all its glory and in colour to boot.

It's really easy and seems to work well. As well as testing it with the previous edition I have also successfully downloaded a video clip from my niece in California.

Send me your e-mail address and give it a try, or, you can download the Pando package from www.computeractive.co.uk/2183223

Finally, I am loath to report it, in case it deters you from visiting the Club, but the parking fees have gone up in Southampton (again!) College Street has gone up from 80p an hour to £1, an increase of 25%, and Platform Road from 90p to £1. The wardens are quite zealous, Ian Odd was fined because his ticket was upside down, presumably having blown that way when he shut the car door. Please don't let this corporate extortion stop you from coming in to enjoy the company anyway.

Ed

"Scawfell" Shanghai June 20th 1863

My Dear Helen



I am happy to inform you that I received last mail no less than three letters besides the one enclosed from Lizzie and all the overdue papers addressed to Hoare Miller & Co. Hong Kong. Just think of that, but I need not scold you any more now since - after a little trouble and detention - I have got them all. I had to write to Birley & Co. of Hong Kong and they called at the post office there and got them and they are to inquire every mail while I am here so I do not care now what you put for an address, it may be to the care of old boots & co. If you put "Scawfell" & Hong Kong, or Shanghai I will get them all the same. I am very glad you are to write next mail as I am likely to be here. We have been getting on very slow with the loading, the price of tea being so high that the merchants cannot buy it. The "Whinfell" had to be sent to Foo-Chow eight days ago, they being unable to load us both here. There are none of the ships getting away so early as expected and in consequence of there being so many ships here and the teas so high in price, the freights have come down. We are now loading at £5-10/- instead of £6-10/- expected when I came here, besides being longer in getting away, we are more likely to make a longer passage down the China Sea, so that you need not expect me so soon as last year. There will be four or five ships away before me from this and the Foo-Chow ships sailed in the end of May and beginning of June. I have been unable to buy any tea for myself on account of the prices, so I am remitting my money home. I may send you a small bill next mail but not certain. I have sold all my spec pretty well. This place is better than Hong Kong for that, but it is getting worse every year. You say that Capt. Westcott wrote to me six weeks ago. I have never got it and I don't believe ever he wrote. Capt. Shewan is just on the point of sailing again. His agents are his owners and have been able to load him at once. I knew all about his house before I got your letter. He did not expect that Mrs Hogg would have been remaining in her house so long, as she has been expecting to get into the Trinity widows fund when they get a free house. I think I would prefer stopping with her than Mrs Robertson, what say you?

I think I told you that I had found Capt. Smith's brother and that he was not doing well, so I have now to inform you that he has drank himself to death and was buried yesterday. He is just as well dead as he would never have done any good. He is owing me £7 or £8 which I suppose I will have to put down to profit and loss. I am write up to Capt. Bowers and I think I may as well write to his sister in Aberdeen as I think Mrs J Smith and them do not correspond. I hear he was owing money to several people.

June 27th. Now my dear Helen the mail closes today and I am to break the Sabbath day in finishing your letter which I have no doubt you will highly disapprove of but it cannot be helped. You know I would not desecrate the Sabbath wilfully. There is a Capt. Beddie here it seems he knows you all at Nelson St. and I think I have heard you mention his name. Probably some old sweetheart. I have not been introduced to him yet but likely will be.

The "Chaaqee" sails today. He is not quite full but he will not wait any longer, he is in such a hurry to get first home. The "Coulmakyle" Capt. Morrison sailed yesterday. The "Guinivere" and "Glenaros" will be next and probably after that your humble servant. There are other ships sailing with cotton and troops, but them we do not care about.

I shall put in a note to Lizzie but not to scold her as you mentioned. I think you frighten her by saying you will represent her conduct to me. It is best to keep charge of her yourself and I will see about it when I come home when I have no doubt I shall find her very good as usual and when I hope to find you all quite well. I hope your trip to Ireland will do you all good and by what you mention of yourself in your letters I think you have need of it. Now I must conclude with kind love to you and the children and return their usual amount of kisses. I think you better wait my likeness until I come home. It costs too much money here. Remember me to all at home at the Swan and all friends and I remain my dear Helen ever your loving and affectionate husband

Robt. Thomson

SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS

23rd - 26th SEPTEMBER 2007 - 4 DAYS

Cost will
be approx
£260
per person

THE LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire Valley, renowned for its wonderful chateaux, fine wines and delightful scenery and has long been associated with gracious living.

Based in the delightful town of Saumur, in the heart of the region, tour highlights include a visits to the ancient town of Angers, the stunningly beautiful Chateau of Azay le Rideau, a fascinating troglodyte village and the top sparkling wine producer Gratién & Meyer.



EXACTLY WHAT'S INCLUDED

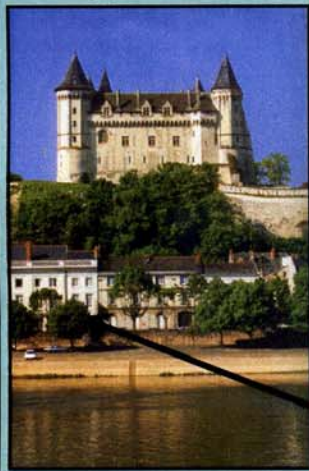
- * hi-spec luxury coach with toilet & video
- * two nights 3* hotel accommodation with breakfast
- * outward crossing via Portsmouth/St Malo
- * cabin accommodation for outward crossing
- * return sailing via Caen/Potsmouth
- * full sightseeing programme (excluding entrances)
- * visit to a Troglodyte Village & wine tasting
- * 4-course dinner on board ship en route home

Optional Supplements

- single cabin & room- £70
- outside cabin £5pp (single £10)
- travel insurance - £15pp
- dinner in the hotel on the first night £20
- up-grade to a 'Traditional' room at hotel - £30pp

THE 3* ANNE D'ANJOU - SAUMUR

This is a truly delightful hotel with a distinctly French flavour where many of the original architectural features have been preserved. As you would expect, the rooms offer a high level of comfort and the hotel also boasts its own splendid restaurant serving gourmet cuisine.



As for location, the Anne D'Anjou overlooks the Loire, a short walk from the town centre. It is also worth mentioning that the hotel sits directly below the Chateau de Saumur's that is strategically perched on river cliff high above the Loire. The picture on the left shows the hotel's excellent riverside location.

THE BRITTANY FERRIES CROSSINGS

For reasons of comfort, simplicity and directness, we have chosen to sail outward on the deluxe Brittany Ferries service between Portsmouth and St Malo. Another two reasons are the ship's excellent main restaurant and the very civilised sailing times. The ship sails at 20.30 and being a proper overnight crossing, you have time for dinner, to enjoy a drink in the bar and have a good night's sleep before arriving the next morning at 08.15.

Coming home the group sail on Brittany's flagship route from Caen to Portsmouth and on board facilities include a choice of restaurants and bars, sun decks, shops, cinemas, a casino and, if you want, you can pay a supplement for a day cabin.



THE ITINERARY

Sunday - Depart Southampton at 18.00 and drives to the port to catch the overnight Brittany Ferries service to St Malo. This is a proper overnight crossing and allows time for good meal, a drink in the bar and a good night's sleep.

Monday - Arriving in St Malo at 08.15 the coach drives to the ancient town of Angers. Here there will be time for sightseeing and lunch before continuing to Saumur. Having checked-in by mid-afternoon the remainder of the day is entirely free and you will find Saumur is a delightful town with a good choice of cafes and restaurants.

Tuesday - Keeping things relaxed the programme will include a visit to a troglodyte village, the Chateau of Azay-le-Rideau (see above) and a wine tasting at Gratién & Meyer. Returning to the hotel by late afternoon the evening is completely free.

Wednesday - Departing hotel after breakfast and head towards Caen. En route the group stop in Le Mans for lunch. The Brittany Ferries ship sets sail at 17.00 and the expected time of arrival of the group back at Southampton is 22.40.

HOW TO BOOK

telephone Lionel
023 8028 2487

Rope Ends

With reference to the aforementioned "Cutty Sark" (p.8), how sad it is that that lovely vessel has now been ravaged by that scourge of the wooden ships , - fire. No doubt they will have to raise a great deal of money to repair her, if that is possible, and I expect that Cachalots will respond in their usual generous fashion to any appeals that are made.

Another thing that you could do, and this won't cost you a penny, other than perhaps in your tax-bill, is to visit:

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/historicships>

and, if you agree with the sentiments there, append your name.

The petition was launched, before the fire, by one Alex Naughton, who is a historian who runs a collection of websites:

www.transportbritain.co.uk

He also runs a “virtual” ocean liner museum at:

www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk

I would think that the "Cutty Sark" would be classed as an historic ship, as is the "Shieldhall".

Alex writes:

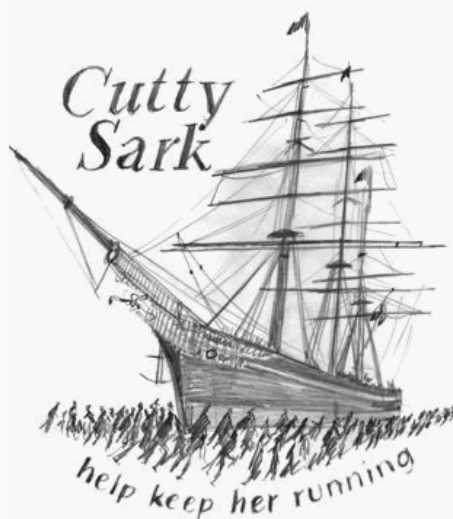
I have just launched a petition on Britain's historic ships and transport heritage on the Prime Minister's website. We need 200 votes to make sure that the Government will respond on this issue. If you are interested in, care for or support Britains transport heritage and historic ships /railways / aeroplanes etc and believe that it deserves greater recognition and support then I urge you to support the aim of the petition and please sign up. The petition reads:

"We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to give proper recognition to Britain's transport heritage by giving it adequate funding, resources, protection and recognition. We request that the Government build on the success of the National Register of Historic Buildings and Sites by creating a similar statutory national register protecting Britain's mobile transport heritage e.g. historic ships, aeroplanes, railway locomotives and carriages, and motor cars etc."

Everyone can help by just taking a short moment to go to the website and sign the petition.

Thank you.

Alex Naughton



NEW CACHALOTS

W. Cherry
J.J. Jones
G.D.W. Lewis
J. Stewart
M. Thomson

250 Club

March	G.Cartwright
April	Mary Juelsdorf
May	A.J. Wilson

Members are reminded that they can join, renew or increase their subs to the “250 Club” at any time of the year and that their subs will run for 12 months from that time, after which they should receive a gentle reminder to renew from the office.

The General Steam Navigation Company's motorship "Royal Sovereign" was popular with day trippers down the Thames in the 1950s. Here is a brief memory from those days.

"A Long Wait"

by **CAPT GORDON RENSHAW**

THE *Royal Sovereign* was three years old. A hot summer's day in 1952; the ship had left the buoys at East Lane Pier, near Tower Bridge at 0700 for embarking at Tower Pier in the Pool of London. Over 1,500 chanting Cockneys had come aboard for the traditional Summer trip, and they were off down river at 0930, to North Woolwich, Southend, Margate, perhaps the sea trip, and back. All were happy, some very happy, as the empties around the ship could testify, full of holiday snacks, all in all, content.

Now they were going ashore at Tower Pier, late evening, crowding down the two gangways, clutching souvenirs of the seaside, lettered rock, small bags of fresh cockles, and wearing the obligatory "Kiss Me Quick" hats. The ship's staff, eager to get back to the buoys, thence ashore in the boat for a pint, called, "Come along please, it's lovely outside."

The second mate at the gangways watched carefully to prevent accidents. An elderly lady, brought up from childhood to take the annual trip to "Sarfend", pressed a half-crown into the young officer's hand saying, "We've 'ad a lovely day, dear".

He protested; the crew were happy, he said, if the passengers had had a good day.

"No, no", she insisted, "you buy a pint when you finish, mind you, you 'aint 'arf lucky, being 'ere all the time".

"It's not always so nice as today, and we have a long day, get up at five to make the ship ready".

"Yes", the lady agreed, "it must be tiring, but you boys don't 'arf keep the ship nice and clean".

The captain approached on his way to the bridge and buoys. A long day for anyone near retirement, in a hot uniform, tight collar, 12 manoeuvres on and off piers, pushing his way to meals, the singing and "knees ups" outside his little cabin on the promenade deck, and the daily comic remarks, "Where's yer parrot, then" and "Ain't yer arm tired wiv all that gold". He was tired, and glanced crossly at the second mate.

"'oos that old bloke, then?" asked the lady.

"That's the captain".

"Will you ever be captain, duck?"

"Hope so, one day".

"'ow long's 'e been 'ere then?" was the next question.

"Since the ship came out".

Her Cockney eyes twinkled, and slowly she looked up at the yellow funnel, to the white General Steam Navigation Company badge with the red lettering. One of the initials in each corner, the world in the centre, with 1824 underneath.

"Well, love, you 'ain't got an 'ope of a chance, the way that old bleeder is 'anging on".

Deadpan, she made her careful departure.

I enjoyed that pint.



Twin-Screw M.V. ROYAL SOVEREIGN
1,851 Gross Tons. Length 203ft. Speed 20 knots. Capacity 1,703 passengers.

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

Wed	JUN 13	Club Buffet Supper, Club Room
Thu	JUN 21	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cath.
Sat	JUL 14	Curry Lunch, P.O.S.H. *
Fri	AUG 10	Cowes Week Fireworks Cruise
Sat	SEP 15	Curry Lunch, S. Seafarers' Centre *
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

* note change of venue

Gone Aloft

**Dick Denning
Ivor Owen**