

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.27

March 2008

POST CAPTAIN'S LOG

The end of my 12 months as Captain of the Club can be summed up by the opening words of a song, "The party's over, it's time to call it a day". The 12 months since I was installed as Captain at the Sea Pie Supper last year seem to have flown by with so much happening in that time and now that I have passed over the badge of office to our new Captain I can reflect on everything that has taken place; the events where I have represented the Club, the new people I have met and those who I have got to know better and of course the progress that has been made in our efforts to raise the profile of the Club, particularly in Southampton. For this latter point I need to thank our Boatsteerer, Captain George Angas, for his unstinting work in that regard.

As ever December and the build up to Christmas was a very busy time on the social side with a number of events. It is strange writing about Christmas because that seems to be in the dim and distant past and by the time you read this copy of The Cachalot we will be starting to think about Easter, which of course falls very early this year. But back to December. Janet and I thoroughly enjoyed the two Club events, our Christmas dinner on 1st December, followed a week later by the Christmas lunch, both events being held at the Kings Court Masonic Centre which was beautifully decorated for Christmas. Then on 8th December Janet and I, together with George and Sarah Angas, were the guests of the Watch Ashore at their Christmas lunch. Our next outing was to the informal Christmas supper of the Southampton Royal Naval Officers' Association at the Tudor Merchants' Hall on 14th December. By this time Janet and I were wondering whether we would be able to face any more food over the Christmas period!

In mid December Southampton saw the christening of the new passenger ship "Queen Victoria". Sailing on 11th December on her inaugural cruise, Janet and I and a number of other Cachalots boarded the "Shieldhall" to see the ship sail and to watch the superb fireworks display that marked her departure. To the mind of this simple tanker-man she seems a beautiful looking ship and I do wonder if I will ever have the opportunity to be a passenger on her.

January is a busy month in our calendar. The first event to be attended was the Docklands New Year Service in the chapel at the Southampton Seafarers' Centre on 2nd January. Then three days later there was the meeting of the Past Captains to elect the officers for the coming year. The following were elected:

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Captain Leslie R Morris

Leslie was born in India in 1944 and, following his father's retirement from the Indian Railways, the family returned to the United Kingdom in late 1949. Following primary education (in Welsh) in a small village outside Bangor in North Wales, he attended Friar's Grammar School, Bangor from 1956 to 1961. He joined The British and Commonwealth Shipping Company straight from school in September 1961 and remained with them until 1974. During this period he was married (1967) and studied at the University of Southampton from 1969 to 1972 graduating with BSc (hons).

Leslie obtained his Master's Certificate in late 1973 and shortly afterwards left B&C to serve periods with Southern Ferries and on cable ships with the Post Office. He joined the lecturing staff of the (then) College of Nautical Studies at Warsash in 1975 and remained there until late 1979, having spent four years as lecturer in charge of the Radar Simulator. After two years with Staveley Electrotechnic Services as Nautical Adviser and Master, he joined London Offshore Consultants (LOC) as a Consultant in 1980. For the next 18 years he attended offshore projects world-wide in a number of capacities, including tow- master, warranty surveyor and marine adviser. He also attended marine casualties around the world on behalf of insurance interests and acted as Expert Witness in Courts in a number of countries.

Leslie left LOC in 1998 to found Con-Mar International Ltd, continuing with marine casualty and project work, and has been a member of the panel of Special Casualty Representatives at Lloyds since 2000.

He retired from Con-Mar International Ltd in 2006, but continues to work as an independent consultant. He lives in Romsey with his long suffering wife, Ann. His interests include rugby, cricket motor racing and fishing.

Captain -	Captain Leslie Morris
Staff Captain -	Captain John Mileusnic
Sea Staff Captain -	Captain Rachel Dunn

Captain George Angas was re-elected as Boatsteerer and Barry Peck as Storekeeper.

The Annual General Meeting took place on 17th January and unfortunately the attendance was not as high as in some previous years.

One of the most popular social events of the year is the Burns Night Supper, which this year took place on 19th January. Although this was nearly a week before Robbie Burns birthday I am sure the poet would not have been upset considering the style in which the events of the evening were conducted. It was a very well attended supper and the food was first class. Excellent speeches and presentations from all concerned and Janet was particularly impressed with Lionel Hall's toast to the Lassies, at the end of which he conjured up a red rose with heather that he had concealed somewhere about his person!

The final invitation of my 12 months as Captain was to a Court Luncheon onboard HQS "Wellington" on 30th January in

London, at the invitation of Captain Martin Scott, Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. This was an occasion I was particularly looking forward to attending but regrettably I had to cancel at the last minute.

To finally round off my year in office there was the annual Sea Pie Supper held on 1st February at the Guildhall in Southampton. The attendance was very good with over 600 people present and it gave me the greatest of pleasure to welcome the distinguished guests. As usual it was an excellent evening. At the end of the meal and before the traditional singing of sea shanties I invested Captain Leslie Morris with the collar and insignia of the Club, so ending my term of office as Captain.

To finish off my last Log I would like to thank all the officers of the Club, Club staff and members who have worked so hard during my year of office to both promote the Club and ensure its smooth running. And finally, I wish Leslie the very best in his year of office and know that the Club is in very capable hands.

Peter Marriott
Post Captain



From left to right:

Councillor Mr. Stephen Barnes-Andrews
Mayor of Southampton and Admiral of the Port
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald GCB
Stowaway
Mr. John Adams, Principal Guest,
Managing Director, Teekay Marine Services
Captain C. Fagan
Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire
Commodore Mary Fagan JP RNR
Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Stowaway
Commander Richard Morris RN
Commanding Officer, HMS Southampton
Mrs Sarah Thorne
High Sheriff of Hampshire
Captain Peter Marriott
Post Captain, SMMC

Captain Peter Marriott with Stowaways and Distinguished Guests at the Sea Pie Supper

And ex Blue Funnel boys were well represented too

Standing, left to right,

Brian Waters
Bob Adams
John Currie
Peter Grant
Peter Morgan

Seated, left to right,

Tom Inglis
Paul Leece
Ken Owen
Ian Thomson
David Gibbons

Tom Effeny was also present but had gone walk-about by the time this photo was taken.



The Boatsteerer's Locker

The Sea Pie Supper

As always, our Christmas festivities soon gave way to the slightly more frenetic activity of preparing for our first major event of the year. This year, a fortnight to the day, eighty years ago, upon which our founding fathers met to establish The Southampton Master Mariners' Club, we celebrated our Sea Pie Supper in the Southampton Guildhall. On Friday 1st February, the Captain and Officers, Stowaways, Harpooners, Cachalots and their guests formed a 642 strong body to make sure the evening was a memorable one.

We were very pleased to welcome Mr John Adams, Managing Director of Teekay Shipping, Glasgow, who braved some very wintry weather to join us as our guest speaker. If we were in any doubt about some of the challenges that are facing us within the shipping industry then these were soon dispelled. Not I hasten to add in the manner of total 'doom and gloom' but from a positive point of view with a few innovative suggestions for solutions to some of those challenges.

As always, we toasted those of you who would have liked to be with us, but for one reason or another were unable to be. We wished you well and hope that you can be with us next year. Whilst it was nice to see that we had once again filled the Guildhall, I am sorry to say that upon this occasion not everybody received the service that we have, over the years, come to expect of the **Sea Pie Supper** itself. To those of you who have written in, or spoken to me since, I do apologise for the poor service that you experienced. We are meeting with the catering company next week to understand what, albeit in a few instances, went wrong and to make sure that this is not repeated next year.

Although we did not get it all right I have received much positive feedback. As always 'getting it right on the night' requires much hard work and attention to detail from all of your officers, staff and many Harpooners and Cachalots who so kindly volunteer to help. Thank you very much one and all.

The Anniversary Ball

As a special celebration this year we are holding an Anniversary Ball at the Warsash Maritime Academy on Saturday 17th May. Captain Leslie Morris is looking forward to welcoming you to this lovely site where many of us I am sure started our careers some few years ago. After dinner there you will be able to dance to "The Trojans" band. Or alternatively, you may like to enjoy a drink in the quieter confines of the lounge bar. All of which I am sure will provide a memorable evening for you and your friends. Tickets are now on sale from the Club on a first come first served basis. We have a limit of 120 places so do not leave it too late to buy your tickets.

The Shipping Festival Service

Thursday 19th June is another date for this year's diary. To have such a magnificent cathedral upon our doorstep is amazing. To be able to celebrate the contributions that our industry and its seafarers have made and continue to make, not only to the country's GDP but also to our national heritage, within that cathedral, is a privilege indeed. Please bring your friends with you, join us to celebrate our industry and take this opportunity perhaps to remember some of those good and not so good times we have had during our careers.

George Angas.
Boatsteerer.
February 2008.

Curry Lunch



Saturday 8th March

At the

Poppadom Express

This curry house comes well recommended so we thought we would give it a try. It is situated at ground level and runs the length of Latimer street, which is the one that runs between Oxford Street and Queens Terrace at the traffic lights just by the club. The entrance is in Oxford Street and a 1200 arrival will give you time for an aperitif if so desired.

MENU

Poppadoms, dips and salads

Starters: Seekh Kebabs, Pujabi Chilli Chicken Tikka, Pakoras and Samosas

Main courses: Lamb Rogan Josh, Chicken Garlic, Chicken Korma, Karai Prawns, Mixed Vegetables Pilau Rice, Nan Breads

Desserts: Ice Cream, Fruit Salad

Starter plates will be on your table. Take these to the buffet to make your choice. Galley staff will remove your starter plate when you are finished. Main course plates will be ready to collect at the buffet. You may select as many different courses as you wish. The cost is **£11.00 per head, payable at time of booking.** Please hand your payments to either Richard, the Functions Officer, Storekeeper or Boatsteerer as soon as possible so that we may give definite numbers to Poppadom Express in good time.

IT'S NOT ALL

BEER & SKITTLES



At the

SOUTHAMPTON (OLD) GREEN BOWLING CLUB

(The world's oldest bowling green, Lower Canal Walk, Southampton.)
ON

FRIDAY, 28 March at 1900

IT'S

**Fish and Chips with Peas as well
(followed by Profiteroles)**

This is a very serious and challenging evening when the more energetic? Club Members get into training for our skittles evening at the Southampton (Old) Green Bowling Club. There will, of course, be the customary large, handsome, and valuable prizes for the highest scoring lady and gentleman plus an appropriate wooden spoon type prize for the lowest score of all. We would like about 30 participants, but spectators are welcome to come along and ridicule the competitors if they dare. The remarkably cheap price for this fun evening is only **£13.00** including the meal. Cheques should be made payable to "The Cachalots" and handed either to the Storekeeper, Functions Officer, Richard or the Boatsteerer as soon as possible, and certainly no later than **Wednesday, 12 March, 2008**, so that we may advise numbers to the caterer in good time.

More of things to come on the back page

THE DAY THE BOTTLE DID'NT BREAK.

On a chilly day in December 2007 many of the “great and the good” assembled at Waterloo Station to entrain to Southampton – and the naming of the new “Queen Victoria” by Camilla Parker Bowles, Duchess of Cornwall. After champagne and canapés in the Southampton docks terminal – where they were entertained by a carol-singing choir –the invited guests made their way to the viewing stands and the ceremony began. Speeches were made and finally the Duchess named the ship “Queen Victoria” – and pressed the button to release the customary bottle of champagne. The bottle carrier, mounted against the hull, gave off a solid “clunk” – but no champagne cascaded over the gleaming hull. Almost immediately a hand appeared, the bottle was broken, the Master called for “three cheers for the Duchess” and the naming party went off to lunch.

For some present the failure of the bottle to break on first impact was an omen of ill luck and, shortly afterwards, on the ship's second cruise from Southampton, when some passengers fell ill with noro- virus, the press was quick to attribute this modest misfortune to the “bad luck occasioned by the failure of the bottle to break during naming”. The fact that about 2% of the population of the United Kingdom was suffering from the same complaint was not allowed to spoil a good story!

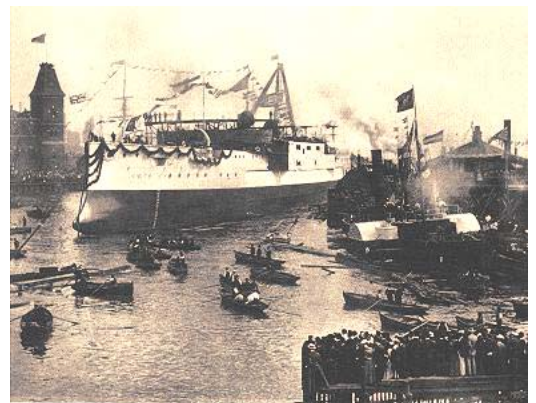
Since the third millennium BC the launching of a ship has always been accompanied by a religious ritual. The ancient Greeks had the good sense to drink the wine themselves (and poured water over the ship during the blessing) but in medieval England some wine was drunk by the sponsor and the remainder poured over the ship. The wine was held in a “standing cup” made of precious metal and as this was thrown overboard after the ceremony an undignified scramble inevitably followed hot on the heels of the launch. This custom persisted until the 17th. century when, for economy reasons, the valuable cup was replaced by a rather less valuable bottle of wine which was broken on the bow of the ship and, until quite recently, this custom was observed throughout most shipbuilding countries.

Failure to break the bottle at the first attempt is still regarded by many seafarers as a sign of bad luck and, unfortunately, the current practice of “naming” a ship some time after the launch has meant that such failures are not uncommon. Years ago it was the commonplace for the senior Apprentice Shipwright to be given responsibility for ensuring that the bottle broke on impact. This meant that the neck of the bottle had to be weakened by making a series of shallow cuts with a sharp file or diamond cutter -deep enough to ensure that the bottle broke but not sufficiently deep to allow the wine to leak out. In a well known Belfast yard it was traditional to practice on full bottles of Guinness and it never ceased to amaze the management how many bottles it took before perfection was achieved! Today, for a naming ceremony the bottle is probably bought from a supermarket on the day of the ceremony and tied with ribbon minutes before the actual event. Thus -when it swings against the ship either the bottle survives the impact or the ribbon breaks and it falls into the water. Precisely that happened during a naming ceremony of a large cruising vessel in Southampton some years ago and some time later - when the launch party was enjoying lunch - members of her Third World crew carried out their own naming ceremony - and this time the bottle broke on impact. Good fortune was assured.

The actual launch of a vessel can be a dangerous and difficult task and there have been many accidents associated with the act of sending a ship into her natural habitat. The most commonplace launching method was the “stern first” slide down the inclined and well greased building slipway but in the USA the WW2 building programme often necessitated the “sideways launch”. More recently, ships built in graving docks are simply floated out.

One of the worst disasters coincided with the launch of a warship - the cruiser HMS ALBION - by a Thames based shipyard in 1898. The yard was situated at Bow Creek and the narrowness of the river at this point precluded the normal “stern first” launch and so the builders reverted to the “sideways” system.

On June 21st. 1898 some 30,000 workers, relatives and friends assembled to watch the Duchess of York launch the ship and, despite police warnings many had assembled on a rickety slipway bridge next to another newbuilding. The Duchess named the ship “ALBION” and the heavy bottle of champagne swung against the hull - and bounced off. The bottle was hastily retrieved but again the same thing happened. Eventually after a third failure the Duchess pulled a cord and the huge ship moved at increasing speed towards the river. As she floated a huge tidal wave was created, this impacted on the frail slipway bridge and many men, women and children were flung into the water. The cheers of the crowd drowned their terrified screams and it took some ten minutes for anyone to realise the extent of the tragedy and some 38 people died before rescuers could get to them. The Duke and Duchess were totally unaware of the disaster and they embarked on their own boat to return down river. Few people were in any doubt that the repeated failure of the bottle to break was a major factor in contributing to the disaster and the newspapers made much of the “unlucky” tradition associated with the failure to break the bottle at the first attempt. As for “ALBION” herself she survived The Great War and was broken up in 1918.



Another letter home from Captain Robert Thomson, two years after the one printed in the last edition. During those two years the freight rate has dropped from £6 to £1 per ton and the shipowners are feeling the pinch. Captain Thomson also finds himself in the business of a marriage broker.

"Scawfell" Whampoa August 9th 1865

My dear Helen

I now write you in hopes it will find you and all the children well, this leaves me quite well as usual with the exception of a boil on my knee which makes me lame but I hope it will soon be better. I have not had a boil for twenty years before but many people are troubled with them here just now on account of the hot weather. We are now three parts loaded and filling up fast so will soon be away, not before time you will be saying, but I have to go back to Hong Kong and take in more than one hundred tons to fill up, so I will write you next from there before sailing. I hope to be on my way home before the mail after this leaves. I see by the paper that Capt Winchester is still in Foo-Chow and most of the ships there are as badly off as we are here. Capt Shewan has got loaded up quick at Foo-Chow and is sailed for home some time ago so he is lucky this time and the "Devana" has also sailed from Foo-Chow. The "Whinfell" is still there and many other ships, and Hong Kong is still full of ships doing nothing. I hope I shall manage to get home before Christmas, so you will better prepare yourself for a cold journey on the railway again as we will have to make all our journeys in dead of winter. But I have been thinking that it will be no use me coming to Liverpool this time, as the ship is so very late, they are sure to want her away again in a fortnight at least. The ships that are left a fortnight after me last year got to Hong Kong just as soon as me, such is my luck. There is a ship called the "Mary Nicholson" will leave China a little before me, so when she arrives, I hope I will not be far off. She has only got £1 per ton. The "Scawfell" will have £1-10/- but no other ship will get more than a pound from here, so you may see that ship owners are to lose plenty of money this year. I was never in a place so long with less to do than I have had here and there are few people here to correspond with. I sit under the awning all day and read all newspapers I can get hold of. I am now commenced upon the bundle Matilda gave me and I suppose if I am here much longer, will devour them all. The sun is so hot during the day that everyone who can is glad to keep out of it, but in the evening, I generally manage to go and spend the evening with some friends. There are only a few Europeans here and most of the old residents I am acquainted with. I was out dining the other evening with a Mr Gillies. He is from Glasgow and is manager of the Hong Kong and Whampoa Dock Company and I have got acquainted with a Capt and Mrs Blacklock of the "Anne Archbald". They are from far North but the ship belongs to London, so you will see that I am not entirely without society, even ladies, and further, I am commissioned by a gentleman here to bring out a wife to him next year if I can find one. She must be of domesticated and economical habits, not too proud to sew a button on her own or her husband's shirt and of healthy constitution so as to stand the climate, from 25 to 30 years of age or a year or two back or fore. Do not matter if other qualifications be good. Her passage out is to be paid with all incidental expenses and guarantees that she will be married in three days after arrival in Hong Kong, but in case of accident, her passage home again also guaranteed the whole sum not to exceed £150. The gentleman only expects to remain five years more in China, as by that time he expects to be able to retire from business, but would send his wife home sooner should she not keep her health. Now that is all I have got to say on the subject and you need not be scrying it about because it is all true that I have stated. I said that I did not think that I knew anyone, but he said to try and find one, so I have mentioned it to you so as you may look out for someone if you can by the time I come home. But mind, you must be very careful, because if you pitch upon one and I thought would not suit, I must reject her. One that will put on airs, or would be indolent or careless, would no more suit than she can fly in the air. All I can say more is that it will be a first rate bargain for the one that does suit. No money is required. My dear Nell, one like yourself would just do exactly, if you could find one. I do not suppose I could.

Well this is the 10th and we are still going on loading and will be full in a few days at this rate, so I hope soon to be on my way home again, but I was never starting from China with so little heart, the ship losing about £2000 and so much behind time that she will be again in the same position next year. However, I must just do the best I can so it cannot be helped.

I have bought you a chest of camphor wood drawers that I think you will like. They cost a good deal of money, but I think they are the best set that has ever been made in Whampoa. Of course they are all solid, as they cannot veneer in China. I think I have all bought that I am going to buy except the mats which I will get in Canton. There is a man bothering me to buy a dress but I am tired of spending money. I am to write to Robert at Little Alford this mail. I suppose he will let you know when he receives it. I wrote his father last mail.

Now what are you and all the children doing? I suppose running about on some sea beach, listening what the wild waves are saying, but I suppose by the time you receive this, will be housed up for the winter. I hope that you will all be comfortable, more so than you sometimes say you are, but I suppose there will be changes soon at home. I often (wonder) what they are to be. I miss your letter on mail day very much. This makes two-mails now I have been without one and one French mail.

Now I will have to conclude with my blessings on you all and in hope you are all well. I send lots of kisses to all the children and kind remembrances from Papa.

Remember me again to all relations and friends when an opportunity offers, to all the good people at home and enquiring friends, that is if there are any of the last description. Accept dearest love for yourself.

*I remain My Dear Helen
Your affectionate husband
Robert Thomson*

With the R.A.F.

In 1941, the Afrika Korps having advanced so far, our Fleet Air Arm torpedo bombers had insufficient range to attack the enemy convoys going from Italy to Benghazi and Tripoli - long-range aircraft were needed.

Commander Watson had been driving round in the Canal Zone where there were many RAF stations. He had seen a long-range Wellington bomber standing on the runway with its two bomb doors open. He immediately wondered whether airdropped torpedoes could be fitted into the Wellington's bomb-bays. He ordered me to "Get a truck and a couple of torpedoes, drive down to RAF Shallufa, report to 38 Squadron RAF, live on their doorstep and drink their gin until they are so fed up with you that they let you try". These concise instructions were plenty to work on.



I found the C.O. of 38 Squadron, Wing Commander John Chaplin, extremely welcoming and he said "O.K. 'H for Harry' over there is unserviceable; go and do what you want with it". We found that we could hoist a dummy torpedo into the aircraft and with some relatively minor modifications it seemed that the scheme might be feasible; then we got a serviceable aircraft and did some "dummy runs" on the dry land. Putting in real torpedoes was a bit more of a problem because they had wide wooden airtails to make them drop into the water at the right angle -otherwise the torpedoes merely broke in half. A greater difficulty was that the torpedoes had to be dropped from the aircraft less than 100 ft above the sea. The young RAF pilots, trained to fly these big twin-engined bombers at 10,000 ft, did not relish the prospect of coming down to 50 or 100 ft to attack. But Wing Commander Chaplin did it, to show his young pilots that it could be done. We did several runs with practice torpedoes, i.e. torpedoes, fitted with dummy heads which would surface at the end of their run.

There were many problems to be overcome. The altimeters in those days depended upon barographic pressure and were not accurate enough to give exact height. However, the RAF persevered and soon found it possible to fly up the moonpath reflected on the sea at night. A lot of training started in the Gulf of Suez using various small craft as practice targets.

While all this was going on I lived and flew a lot with these RAF people, and I came to admire them more than I can ever say. Of course apart from the torpedo experiments, which were very small scale, these Wellingtons were going off bombing in the desert, Benghazi, Tripoli and even the mainland of Italy night after night after night. There were two squadrons (37 and 38) at Shallufa and many more at other RAF bases in the Canal Zone. Every ship that came out from England brought a dozen pink-faced boys, more or less straight out of school, who had learned to fly twin-engined bombers. Within a few weeks they had brown knees: Then after a few weeks they were Flight Commanders: And then a few weeks later they were "Missing" at breakfast-time. I acquired an admiration for these RAF people which is unshakeable and which I shall take with me to my grave. Their casualties were enormous but they never faltered.

I found it amusing to observe the disciplinary customs of the RAF. In the Navy, if you give a Petty Officer an order, he will stand to attention and say "Aye, Aye, Sir". In the Army a Sergeant will stamp and salute and say "Sah". At Shallufa, if the Squadron Leader came into the hangar, the Flight Sergeant mending an engine would merely wave a spanner and say "Hi, Len"! It is just a different way of doing the thing - and it works perfectly. Everybody understands.

Also, the ground crews would work day and night, all the hours God makes, to prepare the aircraft for their pilots.

I used to fly around with the Wing Commander in a small yellow Magister communications aircraft, a two-seater with open cockpits. We had to go up to Alexandria occasionally. Once we landed there and as we taxied round, our tail-skid collected just about every telephone wire on the base, which was not popular.



On 19th December 1941 I flew up to Alexandria in an extraordinary old bi-plane bomber called a Vickers Valentia. As we circled over Alexandria Harbour I noticed out of the window that the two battleships "Queen Elizabeth" and "Valiant" seemed to be lying at an odd angle in the water and there seemed to be a lot of oil about on the surface.

On landing we heard the extraordinary news that some Italian frogmen on human torpedoes had penetrated into the harbour during the night. There was a boom-gate to stop this happening, but apparently they had slipped in when the boom was opened to let a couple of our cruisers pass. Anyway these chaps attached large limpet mines to the bottom of our two battleships and a tanker, and then did their best to escape. In due course the mines exploded and our ships settled onto the bottom in the shallow water. I heard at the time that two of these intrepid Italians had been found on a mooring buoy in the harbour smoking cigarettes, and that two others had escaped out of the Dockyard and into the native market but were only arrested as suspicious because they tendered a British £5 note - which was a rarity in those days. One has to admit that this was a tremendously daring and successful effort by the Italian Navy. It completely altered the balance of power in the Mediterranean.

A few days later HMS Valiant was in the floating dock and her Captain, Charles Morgan, took some of us down to look at the hole in the bottom of his ship.. It was extraordinary - you could have driven a double-decker bus through it. Both battleships eventually had to go to the USA for repairs and were out of the war for many months.

All this did not please our very fierce Commander in Chief, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham.

There was a curious sequel. There was a Board of Enquiry. Whose fault was it? In the War Orders for Alexandria the RAD (Rear Admiral Destroyers) was responsible for the Port defences. RAD at this time was a fine man called Hector Creswell. Some time previously, realising that the harbour patrols were inadequate, he had applied for more boats and more officers: But these had been refused by Admiral Cunningham who was rather notorious as a hard-bitten old-fashioned Scot. But before the Board of Enquiry assembled, Hector Creswell (so I understand) went to Admiral Cunningham and said "At the Board of Enquiry I will not report that I had previously applied to you to strengthen the defences". The Board of Enquiry is not a Court Martial, but the outcome was that Hector Creswell lost his job and was sent to sea as a Commodore of Convoys from then on.

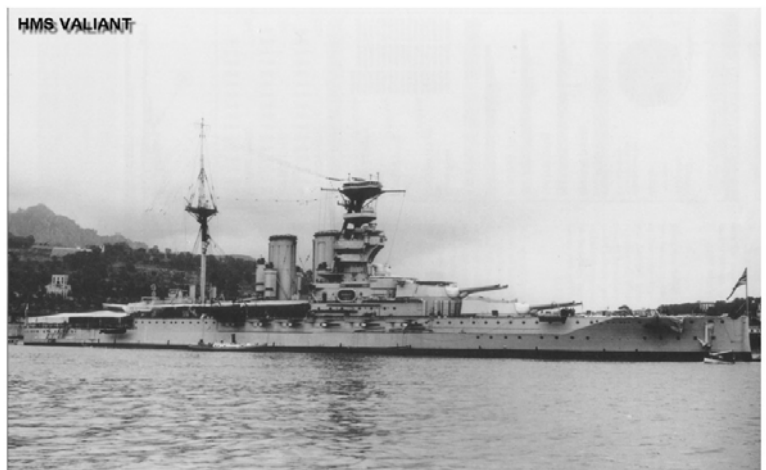
I believe this to be the true story of what happened. However, for me there is a happy ending because in the fullness of time, very many years later, my daughter Alexandra married Hector Creswell's grandson, Edward Bolitho.

There was another curious sequel to this attack by the Italian frogmen.

By the end of 1943, after the Italian Armistice, Captain Charles Morgan had left HMS Valiant, had been promoted to Rear Admiral and had been sent to Italy as "Flag Officer Taranto and Liaison with the Italians" - short title "FOTALI".

Shortly after he took over he was invited to attend a parade and present medals to some of the Italian Naval heroes. He pinned the "Medaglia di Valore in Argento" onto several proud chests, and then by chance, stopped at one man and asked how he had won his decoration. There was an embarrassed pause: and then it was explained that this was for sinking the British Battleship HMS Valiant in Alexandria harbour on 19th December 1941!

Admiral Morgan said.. "I was the Captain of HMS Valiant at that time. You did a good job. Well done" - and he pinned the medal on him with a grin.



Last Voyage of the S. S. "CLAN ALPINE"

Concluding the account by her 3rd Engineer, John Morris.

THE AFTERMATH

After shutting down main engine and all non-essential auxiliaries, the boiler Stop valves were closed, two boilers were shut down and just one boiler left on line producing steam for essential auxiliaries and to run the steam driven generators.

The 2nd Engineer and myself went to Chief Engineer, Charlie Ross's cabin to make our report and to confirm the requirements for steam in the morning. Mrs Ross, who was sailing on this voyage prior to her husband's retirement, was sitting on the settee in a state of shock. Their cabin was covered in thick filthy mud from the paddy field. A non-return valve of an over the side discharge pipe wasn't functioning and the mud had blown up through the cabin sink drain.

At daybreak a strange sight of paddy fields and palm trees in all directions awaited us. Unbelievable the sea appeared to be at least a half-mile away. The 2nd Mate got a couple of compass bearings and fixed our position at Sonachara Beach, 11 miles NNW of the Chittagong and Kharnapuli River entrance. The vessel had been dragged eight miles up the Sandwip Channel, The vessel was in a perfectly upright position and all was well with the exception of the lack of water. This was probably the first time in history that a deep-sea vessel had ever been anywhere near this location. Capt Harris dispatched a radio message to the London head office of our position and predicament. "Vessel driven ashore in position indicated (22 25'W, 91 44'E) during a cyclone, no casualties suffered among the crew. The response from our London office was immediate, "Please confirm position".



We just had breakfast and some of the ships officers were looking over the vessels side around mid-morning when a man in a pith helmet was seen walking out of the jungle and across the paddy field towards us. He turned out to be the District Commissioner who was assessing damage to the area. He seemed quite stunned at our predicament and called up to Capt. Harris, "How are you going to get off again?" The old man replied "I'm waiting for the next cyclone".

Later in the morning our company agent showed up to enquire of our welfare. There was a total telephone failure in the region and they had heard a rumour of our situation. Apparently a local fisherman, out looking for his fishing boat, had stumbled on this huge ship lying in a paddy field. He ran to the main Road, stopped a passing vehicle on its way to Chittagong, and the driver informed the local police. The message went round the ship like wildfire that the company agent had the crew mail in his possession, The dutiful 2nd Mate volunteered to go down the pilot ladder and on to the paddy field to collect this precious mail There were a number of large pools of filthy muddy water around and on the 2nd Mate's return, clutching the mail bag, he fell into one of them over his head, to the merriment of all on deck. As his head reappeared, shouts of "Don't you dare get those letters wet" came from those aboard ship.

Majority of us now felt that the cyclone and fate of the vessel would eventually reach the British Press, and that our families would be worried. The Radio Officer sent radiograms for us at night directly through Portishead Radio. I found out later that my wife had heard nothing about the cyclone and only started to worry when she got the supposedly reassuring telegram. I was fortunate at this time to have an uncle who also worked for Clan Line. He was Captain L.C. Higgins master of the S.S. Clan Shaw who was home on leave at the time. He contacted head office in London and confirmed that the "Clan Alpine" was aground, but that all the Officers and crew were safe.

The devastation in the region was terrible. Thousands of people were drowned or killed by sheets of corrugated metal etc. blowing along at over 120 knots. Two ships sank in the harbour and many more were badly damaged. Not one crane was left standing in the docks and power and telephone poles were down by the hundreds.

The President of Pakistan, General Mohammed Ayub Khan, paid us a surprise visit by helicopter. He asked Capt Harris how we would get the ship back to sea. The Captain jokingly replied that we would put rollers under it and roll it back to the sea. A number of reporters around at the time wrote this down and it was later stated as fact in a number of Indian and Pakistani newspapers. The President had all the officers made honorary members of the Chittagong Club which was exclusive for the local "Burra Sahibs" (Big Shots). This included the use of a few bungalows, which we used in rotation and proved to be a welcome break from staying on board in those conditions.

One could see that Dictatorships were not all bad! He had mobilised the bureaucrats to get food and medical supplies moving and to get the power, phones and the harbour operational. It's unlikely that recovery would have moved so quickly without the absolute power he wielded. There was a food shortage and merchants hoarding supplies were threatened with the most severe punishment.

Unfortunately, the most heartrending acts were to follow in the days to come. There were many human bodies and carcasses of cows around which in the tropical climate were quickly putrefying. The smell became sickening. Indeed carcasses were floating in many of the ponds that people drank from. As the tide came in, it brought further bodies of both humans and cattle washed out to sea during the cyclone. As there was great concern of a typhoid or cholera outbreak, a shallow grave was dug alongside the human remains and the bodies buried where

they lay. Later the army appeared and rounded up the local population in the villages nearby at gunpoint and vaccinated them with pneumatic injection equipment supplied by the United Nations. The army came on board ship and wanted to vaccinate the officers, but we managed to convince them that we had all been vaccinated prior to leaving the UK. The animal carcasses were burnt by the army using flame-throwers.

A few days after the grounding, the 2nd and 3rd Officers took a ten-minute walk from the ship to the waters edge. Using his sextant he fixed the distance as a half-mile. Although there was water within a half-mile, it was extremely shallow. It was in fact about three miles to where there was sufficient depth to float the ship. Later a number of salvage experts visited the ship, surveyed the situation and left shaking their heads. One however mentioned that salvage was feasible but not nearly economically practical. The Beaufort Scale was normally used to enter the winds force in the ship's log. This unfortunately only went to 12 for a hurricane of 66 knots. It was calculated later that the wind in fact reached more than double the scale at 135 knots!

Obtaining boiler feed-water was a problem that the engineers had to contend with. The boiler feed-water, kept in a double bottom tank, was reaching a dangerously low level. One main boiler had to be kept on line supplying steam to operate the steam driven generators and auxiliary pumps. As there was no sea water available to cool the auxiliary condenser, all the steam was exhausted to atmosphere. There was only one solution available, sea water had to be used as boiler feed-water. Sea lapped the ship's side at high tide and it was decided to dig a deep trench alongside the vessel. As the tide came in, the trench would fill up with sea water and this would then be pumped into the double-bottom tank and used as boiler-feed. How this was achieved was a feat of engineering.

The steering gear was situated aft in what's called, in naval terms, the "Steering Flat", this compartment also contained the diesel driven "Emergency Fire Pump". A 20' length of 6" diameter wire reinforced flexible pipe, flanged at one end, was located in the engine room. The flanged end of the pipe was positioned over the inlet to the emergency fire pump suction on the ship's side, then drilled, tapped and bolted. The other end of this pipe now lay in the trench. The inspection cover was removed from No. 6 double-bottom fresh water tank and after rearranging pipework in the engine room, one end of a fire hose was connected to the fire main and the other end dropped into the double-bottom tank. At high tide the emergency diesel fire pump was started, drawing sea water from the trench and pumping it into the double-bottom tank. This muddy sea water was then used as boiler feed water. Pumping this contaminated water into the boiler was against all engineering practice and also against all that one was taught while studying for one's ticket. However, the boiler was blown down twice a day to keep down the salinity. But for a vessel to be scrapped, this was expedient. To conserve feed water, the generators were shut down during daylight hours, and ship's power being restored as dusk fell. As the vessel had bare steel decks she cooked in the tropical heat. It's only when the ship is out of water that you realise how important this commodity is for the vessel's every need.

There was still 2,400 tons of general cargo to unload. Due to the devastation ashore, very little help was available from the shore authorities. Self preservation and motivation was therefore the order of the day. Dozens of "coolies" were employed to construct a roadway linking the ship to the main Chittagong highway, through a section of the jungle and across the paddy fields. A stockade was also constructed alongside the vessel and the cargo was unloaded over the side using the ship's steam winches, then taken away by lorry. As one can imagine, this was a very slow process, and discharge was completed on January 4th 1961.

Many of the ship's lascars came from Sandwip Island, close to where the vessel grounded. It was a very low lying and totally flat area and the tidal wave had swept right over it causing huge loss of life and property. A number of our crew had lost family members that night. You could hardly imagine a more dreadful homecoming to the crew after eighteen months away.

The vessel soon became something of a tourist attraction. We woke one morning to find that an enterprising local had built a teashop close to the ship, selling tea to the thousand who visited. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip later visited the vessel, but I never heard whether they bought any tea!

The ship was finally declared a constructive total loss and Clan Line did very well financially from it. Her insured value was a great deal more than scrap so the old ship made money for the company to the end. Soon after the cargo was discharged, the vessel was sold for scrap and broken up where she lay. However, the scrap merchants did not get everything as I acquired the ship's engine room clock as a memento. I still have this in my possession and it still keeps perfect time.

The area between Calcutta and Chittagong is notorious for cyclones even to this day. Looking back, I feel privileged to have witnessed, but more important, to have survived the cyclone and lived to tell the tale. One of the world's greatest natural disasters occurred in this area in 1876 when a similar cyclone followed by a tidal wave killed over 100,000 people.

I never again met up with the Officers of the "Clan Alpine", but visiting the local newsagent in February 1998, the front cover of a nautical magazine caught my eye. It read- "SHIP IN A PADDY FIELD". Glancing through the magazine I was amazed to see photographs and an article on the final voyage of the S.S. Clan Alpine. The article was written by Capt. Andy Logan, who in 1969 was the "Clan Alpine's" Second Officer. I contacted the editor of "Sea Breezes", the nautical magazine in which the article appeared, explained who I was, and was informed that Capt. Logan now lived in Vancouver (Canada). On obtaining Andy's telephone number, I contacted him, much to his surprise, and promised to keep in touch. We now correspond on a regular basis using the "Internet", Charlie Ross, (now deceased), the Chief Engineer of the "Clan Alpine" retired and emigrated to Victoria (Canada). Capt. Andy Logan has informed me that at the time of the cyclone, had the wind not veered from south to south-west it's quite likely that the vessel would have continued to drag her anchor for a few more miles up the Sandwip Channel till the storm passed. It would then have been possible to sail back to Chittagong and continue the voyage to Japan. However, that is water under, or in this case, water not under the bridge.

John Morris

HISTORY OF THE LIBERTY SHIP **SS. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN.**

This is the third and concluding part of an article taken from the lecture notes of Engineer David Aris

POST WAR.

Despite the war losses of 200 Liberty ships, 50 on the Murmansk convoys, the US emerged from the war with a merchant fleet of 4.1 million tons compared with a pre war figure of 8.7 million. This was greater than the rest of the world total and the Liberty formed some 50% of all world dry cargo vessels and hence had a huge commercial effect. The predicted life was 5 years (it is not possible to build a ship to last a mere 5 years) but some Greek owned vessels worked until 1986, a 40 year life.

The Lend Lease policy of the US allocated many ships to other countries...

UK	125
Greece	100
France	75
China	18
Norway	24
Soviet Union	50
and even Italy	100

US shipowners, after some time, realised that UK owners could operate their ships more economically than themselves and lobbied their government to have these ships returned to the USA. The UK Government opposed this suggestion as unfair and it did not take place but the British shipowners had to purchase the ships at about £140,000 each. Some of the Soviet operated ships were never returned and never paid for!

Despite the distribution of these ships there were still hundreds remaining in "Mothball Fleets", up the James River in Chesapeake Bay and in Suisan Bay, up the Sacramento River from San Francisco Bay and other sites. These were slowly sold off or scrapped as by the 1960's 4th and 5th surveys were required and more efficient ships were being built and by 1970 only some 300 remained. By 1979 there were less than six and today there remain only two.

(It is a measure of the wealth of the US that 41 ships were de-oiled and sunk off the Florida coast to form a fish breeding reef.)

CLASSES USING THIS HULL AND MACHINERY DESIGN.

Oceans	60
Liberties.	2710
Canadian built Forts and Parks.	353

(This class was subdivided in to North Sands, which had coal fired Scotch boilers, Canadian class, which had Scotch boilers oil/coal fired, and Victory class which had W/T boilers oil fired.)

Empire ships built in UK at Thompsons	24
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(Whilst other shipyards in the UK were building similar cargo ships which would be classified as Empires, the designs were not standardised hence only the Thompson Empires were using the identical hull form.)

Hence this hull form and main engine type was used for a total of
3147 ships.

An all time record never to be broken for deep sea vessels.

SS JEREMIAH O'BRIEN. (JOB)

This ship was built on No.1. slipway in the west Portland, Maine, shipyard of the New England Shipbuilding Corporation. (Sometimes known as the Bath/Iron Works)

Keel laid 6 May 1943.

Launched 19 June 43, delivered 30 June 43, hence 54 days building.

Voyage 1 was from Boston to the UK.

Voyage 2 was from New York to Liverpool.

Voyage 3 was from New York to various UK ports.

Voyage 4 was from New York to Newport, South Wales, then the Clyde. After which she was ordered to Southampton from where, from D Day plus 3, she made 11 voyages across the Channel to Omaha and Utah beaches. For example, on 9 June, she transported 573 troops, 161 tons of ammunition and 135 tanks to France.



Voyages 5,6 & 7 were in the Pacific and her last commercial voyage, at the end of the war, included the carriage of Australian women, war brides, back to San Francisco in January 1946.

So this ship only had a normal service life of 2 ½ years before being laid up in the Suisan Bay Mothball Fleet for the next 33 years.

Admiral Tom Patterson was in charge of this fleet of redundant ships and considered that at least one of them should be retained as an example of the wartime Liberty ship programme and so the O'Brien was selected as a sample which had not been damaged, modified or cannibalised and she was kept low down on the disposal list until such time as an organisation could be formed, finance raised and volunteers found to look after the ship.

This resulted in the creation of the National Liberty Ship Foundation (NLSF), the current owners of the vessel and she finally steamed, under her own power again, down the Sacramento River from Suisan bay to San Francisco on 6 October 1979.

NORMANDY VOYAGE.

I first visited the ship on her berth at Fort Mason, San Francisco in 1992 and discovered the volunteers were raising funds in the hope of returning to the Normandy beachheads via various ports in the UK and France, this in 1994 to become involved in the commemorations of the 50th Anniversary of D day 1944.

It was organised that the ship would leave San Francisco southbound and meet up with SS Lane Victory, another WW2 veteran, off San Pedro and transit Panama together and then join up with SS John W. Brown of Baltimore, (the only other extant Liberty) to form what was called "The Last Convoy". Unfortunately for technical and financial reasons this did not happen and only the J.O'B came to Europe, calling first at Portsmouth.

A principle of NLSF in general is to try and keep the ship in 1944 condition as far as is possible and legal; for the Normandy voyage this meant the ship had to be fitted with some new equipment, notably a SatNav, and a modern radio station on the bridge and an oily water separator in the engineroom. This equipment needed an a/c power supply and the Caterpillar Company loaned a containerised deck mounted diesel alternator for this purpose, this unit being donated to the ship at the end of the voyage.

(The ship has a second Caterpillar alternator set as spare, in the tween deck, this unit being ex Alcatraz Prison, donated by the National Parks Service.)

There was some opposition to this projected voyage on the grounds of expense and risk of an old ship with a veteran crew but the ship was drydocked and surveyed to full ABS and US Coast Guard standards and had few voyage problems. This was a round trip of some 20,000 miles and cost some \$2.5 million and of the 7000 or so ships at D day 1944 it is claimed that the JOB was the only one to return 50 years later.

The ship sailed SF on 18 April and arrived Portsmouth 21 May 1994 and during the 3 day "Navy Days" in the RN Dockyard she welcomed over 23,000 visitors most of whom demanded to see the engineroom, quite a problem considering the single engineroom ladder for descent and ascent from the floor plates!

After Portsmouth and the Fleet review at Spithead the ship visited Southampton, Omaha Beach, Chatham, the Pool of London,



At the Spithead Review, June 1994

Cherbourg, Rouen and Le Havre which is where I joined her as a Fireman/Water Tender (very much over qualified!) for the return leg of the voyage.

We sailed from Le Havre on 22 July and crossed the Atlantic to Portland, Maine where the ship had been built in 1943. The shipyard no longer exists, now being a yacht marina, but there is an Association of Veteran Shipbuilders who were delighted to see once again the result of their efforts. From here the ship passed down the US east coast calling at New York, Baltimore, and Jacksonville. Whilst approaching the Cape Cod canal to enter Long Island Sound, we passed the SS John W Brown which, having transited the Canal was on a coastal passage to Halifax, Nova Scotia. This is likely to be the last time that two Liberty ships will pass at sea.

After passing through the Panama Canal (where, in the Gatun Lakes, we passed an eastbound Chinese owned Liberty Ship Replacement, a Sunderland built SD14) the ship called in at San Diego and Los Angeles, returning to San Francisco on 23 September 1994.

WATCHKEEPING AND THE CREW.

The average age of the crew for the Normandy voyage was between 50 and 70 depending upon which newspaper you read! They were all unpaid volunteers. Some were veterans of wartime seagoing, others were not seafarers at all.

Because of the known very high temperatures which would be encountered in the engineroom, and the rather high average age, it was decided to operate on four, three hour watches and engineroom watch comprising three men, and engineer watchkeeper, an oiler and a fireman/water tender. On deck, the normal three, four hour watches were kept.

On my watch the engineer was Kevin Kilduff, 52, an Irish American whose real time job was as an engineer on a Matson line catamaran type pusher tug which moved barges of sugar from Hawaii to San Francisco. This tug had twin diesel engines and Kevin's knowledge of steam plant was elementary to put it mildly! The watch oiler was one Ralph Ahlgren who was 73 and in real life was a retired printer from Sacramento. Ralph had to oil about 100 points on the main engine every half hour. My responsibility was the steaming of the two Babcock boilers, each with four fires and it was 38 years since I had been at sea as a watchkeeper. Our practice was, on taking the watch, to replace the burners in one boiler with four clean ones regardless of necessity. The removed burners were then cleaned and made ready for the next watch who exchanged the burners on the other boiler. If of course, there was a change in steaming rate or manoeuvring then burner tips had to be adjusted by size to match. The fireman was also responsible for the oil fuel pressure pumps, the feed pumps and the condition of the hotwell. It will be appreciated that when the sea water temperature rises, then all other temperatures rise and when approaching and leaving Panama, with a sea temp. of 87F the boiler-room temperature rose at times to 135F and the temp. at engine cylinder top level was 140F – it was necessary to use a gloved hand when climbing the ladders from the engineroom at this level. Liberty ships do not have any forced ventilation although the two vents at the Fwd. end of the boiler room are hand geared and can be trimmed into the wind from the floorplates. Further, Liberty ships have no automation in the engine-room save a (very erratic) thermostat controlling the steam to the fuel oil heater. Fuel temp and pressure are controlled by hand operated valves as is the speed of the forced draught fan steam engine. There is

a float control in the hotwell controlling the feed to the feed pump suction but this pump serves both boilers so hand check valves have to be controlled to balance out feed water levels in the boilers.

The crew of some 52 (this varied between the various ports, people came and went from time to time) was in effect led by Admiral Patterson, 70, who was I suppose the commander and who did the speeches, presentations etc, as necessary,

The master of the ship was Captain George Jahn, 79, a veteran of Liberty ships in WW2 and a one time San Francisco pilot.

The Chief Engineer was one Richard Brannon, 74, who had been a Chief Engineer officer for American President Line.

The oldest crew member was Clarence Rocha, seaman and onetime stevedore, aged 91.

Another seaman was Carl Nolte, a senior reporter on the San Francisco Chronicle who radioed in a report of activities on the ship every night so that the people of SF could follow "their" ship. Carl is now Chairman of the Board of NLSF following Admiral Patterson's retirement.

CONCLUSION.

The voyage completed on 23 September when she sailed in under the Golden Gate Bridge escorted by some 150 small craft of all types and followed by the Victory ship, SS Lane Victory which had come up the coast from San Pedro as an escort. Flowers were dropped onto the ship from the bridge as she passed under and on reaching her berth a ticker tape parade was organised through the city for the crew followed by a dinner in the berthside shed.

In 1966 the ship voyaged up the coast to Vancouver, Seattle and Portland, Oregon and she occasionally steams up the Sacramento River, past Suisan bay where she lay all those years, to Sacramento and she has recently sailed down to San Pedro. The ship is open to the public every day and one weekend per month steam is raised on one boiler and the main engine is turned (slowly) with the ship tied up to the berth so people can get the feeling of "steam and oil". Twice a year the ship does two or three successive cruises around the Bay all these activities being a means of fund raising to maintain the ship. In 2007 she will once again enter the floating dock for maintenance.

A few years ago she was hired by Hollywood (at a lucrative rate) to steam around the Bay whilst the main engine was filmed to represent the engines on Titanic, this for the film of that name! That the ship is still in good condition is a tribute to an outstanding British design and US workmanship and the labours of a dedicated volunteer crew.

This document is formed from an expansion of lecture notes used by the author.

David Aris, Oxenholme, Cumbria. January 2007.



Clintons on the JOB

President Clinton, sporting the appropriate knitware and cap, escorted by Admiral Patterson (?) and Capt. Jahn, with some of the Whitehouse press gang, on deck at Spithead, June 1994. Mrs Clinton can be seen behind them, meeting and greeting some of the crew. Ed.

Isle of Wight Pilotage District

In 1808 there were nearly a hundred pilots around the Island at Yarmouth, Cowes, Ryde, Nettlestone, St Helens, Bembridge and Atherfield. These self-employed pilots either had their own boats or hired boats to take them out to ships requiring a pilot. In 1808 Trinity House was given the authority to examine and license pilots. It was decided that there should be 35 first class pilots and 35 second class pilots. The pilots were licensed for either the outward journey to the cutter or the inward journey but not for both.

By 1819 there were 150 pilots licensed for the Island District and stationed at Cowes or Portsmouth.

In 1844, with the increased trade generated by the new docks, T.H. first licensed pilots for the separate Southampton District.

At this time a number of small cutters, manned by 4 or 5 pilots cruised in or beyond the area in competition with one another. A rowing boat, manned by members of the cutter crew, transferred the pilots. Keeping a sailing vessel on station and transferring pilots in all weathers must have been arduous but, at the time, there was no alternative.

In the T.H. annals there is a complaint recorded saying that when all the pilot cutters were afloat there were so many different types of pilot flag displayed that it was difficult to tell who were pilots and who were smugglers.

On February 20th 1886 the separate, independent Cowes Pilotage District was incorporated with Portsmouth, despite strong protests from local authorities on the Island who complained about loss of pilotage rights and privileges. It was required that pilots should reside at Portsmouth.

By 1899 the position had become more ordered and the Needles station was served by two cruising sailing cutters. Some of the vessels in service at that time being Agenoria, Osprey, Neptune, Spider, Hornet and Hesperus

In 1907 the Southampton District was incorporated with the Portsmouth District to form the Isle of Wight District Pilotage Service, continuing to provide two cutters at the Needles.

In 1910 T.H. took on the responsibility of providing the cutter service from the pilots. The pilots were self-employed and paid Trinity House out of their earnings for the support service Trinity House supplied. In those days, supplying a boarding service was provided by sailing cutters.

In 1910 T.H. had two auxiliary ketches built. These were the Solent and the St Helens. They were 60 feet in length with a speed of 6/7 knots under power. The Solent was sunk when in collision with the troopship Duffrin off the Needles in 1912.

Over the years there were many changes. Prior to World War I there were pilots on the Dover/Deal area that were licensed to pilot ships from Gravesend in the Thames as far as the Needles.

Maintaining a cutter on station continually was not always easy. On September 17th 1921 there was a severe gale. The Needles pilot cutter was anchored, sheltering in Totland Bay. Suddenly her anchor cable parted. The auxiliary engine would not start. Three more anchors were deployed but still she dragged. Two of the anchors gave way but the third held just as the cutter was approaching the shore and nearly aground. The auxiliary engine was eventually started and the cutter proceeded under power to deep water. The Coastguard had been standing by to rescue the crew from the beach. Fortunately they were not needed.

With the advent of steam power and diesel engines, the boarding task became easier. Initially the cutters were small motor-sailers such as the Woodbridge, No.4, that can be seen in a photograph showing it on its moorings in the Medina. She carried a rowing boat for transfers. The jetty belonged to East Cowes Sailing club, behind the Victoria Tavern (commonly known as

Myram's after a former landlord). The Pilotage Depot was located at the bottom of Minerva Road in what is now the RNLI offices. It consisted of a flat-roofed store and workshop with offices above for the Superintendent, clerical officer and secretary. There was also an anchor store located at the depot and supplies for the lighthouses were kept here during WW2.

Superintendent Edward J. "Bungy" Young lived at 41 Osborne Road, East Cowes, and had an office there at one time. He had joined the service in 1912 and retired as Superintendent in 1950. The Pilotage secretary was Eileen Millmore. Edward Young was followed as superintendent by Captain Fraser, then Danny Perkins and finally Ron Birkin before the post was down-graded to officer-in-charge in the late 1960s.

There was a seniority order of Pilotage districts. The Superintendents at Harwich and Folkestone wore four rings of braid on their uniform while Superintendents at "Outports" such as East Cowes were entitled to only three rings.

The motor-sailers were replaced in the 1930s by larger coal-fired steamvessels. The **Brook**, No.2, was built in 1932 at Birkenhead and carried a small motor launch for the transfer of pilots. She was joined by a similar vessel, the **Gurnard**, No.3. The **Penda**, a converted motor yacht, became the third of a trio. In 1946 the boilers of the Brook and Gurnard were converted to burn oil rather than coal. This made life much better for the engine room staff. The last Cutter, the diesel powered **Bembridge**, No.9, was built for the Solent area but spent most of her working life on the Dover station. She did not return here until she replaced the Penda when the Needles station was replaced by launches. The Gurnard was scrapped and the Nab station was serviced by the Brook and the Bembridge. The Brook was the last cutter to leave the local service when the launches took over.

The three cutters maintained two pilotage stations, one at the approaches to the Needles' Channel and one at the Nab. The cutters were on station at the Needles for a fortnight then had a week in Cowes for servicing and on standby. They then took over the station at the Nab for a fortnight followed by another week at Cowes.

The arriving ships would communicate with the duty cutter by MF radio operated by the radio officer to give the time of their arrival. There were six cabins for inward pilots waiting for a ship. There was always a "duty pilot" on board. Replacement inward pilots would be collected from Totland or Yarmouth by a small pilot's relief boat. On the Needles cutter the outward pilots would wait for a boat to take them ashore to Yarmouth, then latterly Totland, from where they would make their own way home by bus, train or taxi. There could be up to 7 or 8 pilots on board at any one time.

Each cutter carried a crew nineteen consisting of: -

3 navigating officers, 3 engineer officers, 8 seamen, 2 greasers, a cook, a steward and a cabin boy.

The officers did watches of four hours with eight hours off. The ratings did four hours on and four hours off. The seamen were in two groups of four with two men in the launch taking the pilot and two on deck launching and recovering the boat. The crew had every third week off when the ship was in Cowes and additional holidays when the ship went for refit. In 1951 a second officer received £8.0.0d a week but a third engineer received £7.10.0d, which was considered unfair. Soon afterwards they were put on the same pay scale. Out of their wages the men would have to pay a Mess Bill of about £2.0.0d. They supplied their own dry stores, so it was normal in the officers mess to see six different small teapots lined up for each officer to brew his own tea.

On the 29th March 1961 a new T.H. pilot station was opened at Totland Bay. The cruising cutter service at the Needles closed with the Penda being the last cutter on duty. She then proceeded to Cowes for few days before being transferred to the Harwich Pilotage District. The Gurnard was scrapped and the Brook and

Bembridge continued to maintain the Nab pilot station. The cutter moorings were still opposite Marvin's Yard on the west bank of the Medina but the launches were serviced at the Depot off the High Street.

A House had been built, overlooking Totland Pier to provide accommodation for pilots to wait ashore until required for inbound vessels. The new station stood on a site of approximately half an acre on the cliff top due east of Totland Pier. It was necessary to carry out extensive re-shaping of the site to provide a level plateau for the building and car parking space. The outer walls were of cavity construction, built of bricks made on the Island and the low-pitched roof was covered with copper. Although sited some 150 feet from the cliff edge the station, particularly the interior, had a distinctly nautical atmosphere with its cabin accommodation for five pilots and the commanding "bridge-like" view over the whole of the bay from the double-glazed plate-glass window of the spacious sitting room. There were three divans in this room that could be converted into six beds to provide additional sleeping accommodation at short notice. Near the large window overlooking the bay was a switchboard connected to two telephones by each pilots bed – one direct line to the pier head and the launch and the other to the Freshwater exchange. There was also radio equipment and visual signalling apparatus. There was also an electric kettle and a small cooking grill.

There was a caretaker for the station who lived in a self-contained flat on the ground floor. The kitchen was fully fitted with the latest equipment. Central heating and hot water supplies were provided by an automatic oil-fired boiler located outside the main building. The building was designed by Messrs Drivers, Jonas & Co. and erected by Messrs W. Downer (IW) Ltd. Edward Watts & Sons Ltd and Vectis Electrical Installations, both of Cowes, provided the heating and electrical installations respectively.

Three seventy-foot high-speed launches were purchased for the Needles station. These were based at Totland Pier until required to transfer a pilot. The Leader, built in 1957, was the first of the launches to take up duty. The others were developments of the Leader and named Link and Landward, both built in 1960 by Phillips & Son of Dartmouth to a design by Peter Thornycroft. Landward had her day of fame when she led the funeral procession for Sir Winston Churchill up the Thames in 1965. She continued in the service until sold 1978. She was seen in 2006 at Medway Bridge Marina, Rochester for sale at £160,000, having been refitted in 1981.

The launches were fitted with twin Rolls Royce supercharged engines that gave a service speed of 15 knots. They were fitted with radar and both M.F. and V.H.F. radios. Improvements in short range VHF radios allowed a ship's navigating officer on the Bridge to speak directly to the launches, giving them an accurate time of arrival.

In 1965 The East Cowes Depot, in the High Street, was extended and rebuilt. The pilotage service was invited to move into a boat store and offices in the new building. The Superintendents office was located on the right of the entrance to the office block. Ron Birkin was superintendent at the time but, when he retired in 1966, his position was taken by Jack Sharp as Officer-in-charge of the Pilotage district. This avoided having two superintendents in the East Cowes District, one for Pilotage and one for the Lights Department.

In 1966 a pilot station was set up at the end of Ryde Pier. There had been an office for pilots in Union Street and now accommodation was added. This became the office for Jack Sharp as officer-in-charge until he was promoted to Superintendent of Pilots at Harwich. Peter Trafford took over the post until the district closed in 1988.

The establishment of the Ryde pilot station marked the end of the cruising cutters. They were withdrawn from service and replaced by two forty foot high speed launches based at the pier. Most of

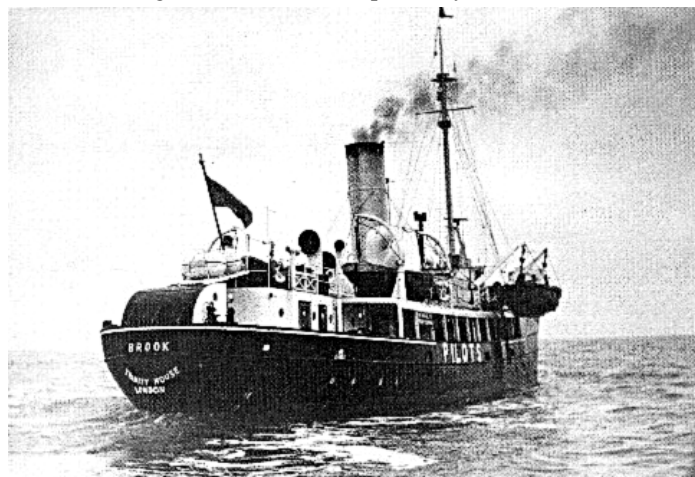
the launches were built at Bembridge – Nelson craft built to the design of Commander Thornycroft. Their names were Vigil, Versatile, Valid, Vanquisher, Velonia, Vagrant, Van Dyke and Valkyrie.

Other pilot launches built at Bembridge were tested in the Solent before being taken to Dover, Harwich, Middlesbrough, Liverpool or Whitehaven. Generally Arthur Morris checked the engines in his capacity as Engineer-in-Charge of the pilotage district from 1966, based at the East Cowes Depot. In his youth, Arthur had been unable to go to sea due to a medical condition but had completed an engineering apprenticeship at the London Graving Dock. A Trinity House pilot cutter was in for overhaul when Arthur learnt that he would be able to get a job on pilot cutters. He joined his first cutter, the Brook, at the Needles in 1950 in a force 7 gale. He could not look at rice pudding again for many years!

The Southampton Pilotage District at this time had a support staff of sixteen uniformed officers, twenty ratings, seven coxswains with two boatmen at Portsmouth. They operated five pilot launches, a 30-footer at Portsmouth, 40-footers at Southampton and Totland and two at Ryde.

Maintenance of all the launches was carried out at East Cowes. On one occasion one of the launches reported loss of all propulsion on one engine. The launch returned to the depot on the other engine. The Depot crane lifted the stern of the launch out of the water to confirm that the propeller had fallen off but the engineers were surprised to see a discarded car tyre neatly placed over the tips of the propeller as if on the wheel of a car.

In 1988 the government removed the responsibility for maintaining pilotage districts away from Trinity House and gave it to the local port authorities. This reduced the demands on the Trinity House budget. The pilotage for Southampton is now run by Associated British Ports at Southampton Docks. The assets, including the launches together with some of the crews, were transferred to Associated British Ports (Southampton) and the Trinity House Pilotage in East Cowes closed down. The bell from the Penda and some old photographs now decorate the pilot's lounge in the pilots accommodation at Dock Head in Southampton. Other archives were given to the Southampton City Archives.



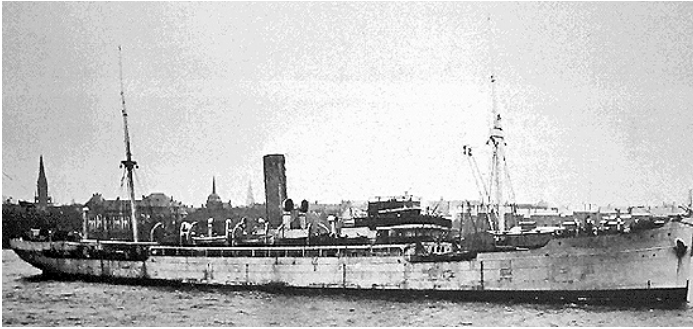
This article is by David Burdett, an Old Conway who served part of his career with the Trinity House Steamvessel Service and is writing a book on TH at East Cowes, including pilotage.

David helped establish the East Cowes Heritage Centre in 1992 and now spends his time running the I.O.W Society.

He says: *I shall be very grateful if you would include the attached article in an edition of the Cachalot as it will let a wider audience know of my research and provide a chance to correct any mistakes I have made and possibly add to the information. For example I have no information about what happened to the pilotage service during the two World Wars, nor have I included anything about Portsmouth pilotage when the Trinity House service was terminated.*

Please point out that I am not a serious researcher and the article is based on a casual collection of information so is liable to inaccuracies. Any information and memories that members might have will be gratefully received and passed on to David. Ed

For Valour (2)



German Raider MOEWE pictured in the Kiel Canal

In the early months of WW1 the German navy suffered heavy losses and this dictated a modification in their strategic planning. In addition to stepping up the submarine building programme they converted a number of merchant vessels to "surface raiders". Heavily armed and cleverly disguised, these vessels roamed the trade routes of the world laying mines and attacking British and Allied merchant shipping of all types.

In 1914 the refrigerated cargo ship "PUNGO" was launched in Geestemuende, Germany. Designed for the refrigerated banana trade between West Africa and Germany she was 408 feet overall, had a loaded displacement of 9,800 tons and was capable of a speed of 14 knots – fast for her day.

A German Korvettenkapitan whose full title was Count Nikolaus Dohna-Schlodien had been instructed to find ships suitable for conversion to "surface raiders" and when he found "PUNGO" and her sistership he had no hesitation in recommending them for the role. Both ships were converted and "PUNGO" – under the command of the Count – was renamed "MOEWE" (Seagull, in English) and entered naval service.

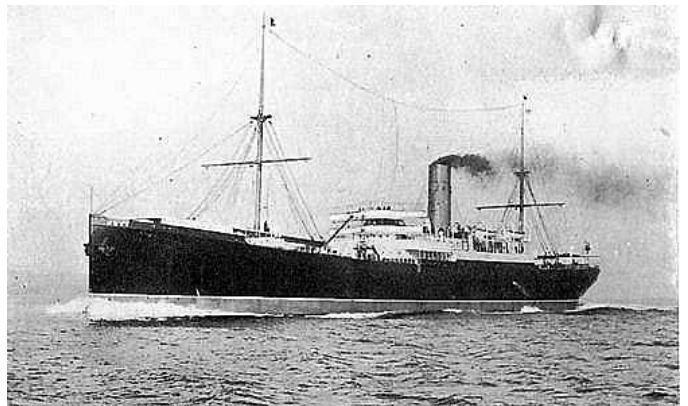
Her armament comprised four 5.9", one 4.1" and two 22 pounder guns and her first commission was as a mine layer operating in the North Sea but, subsequently, she became an extremely successful armed merchant cruiser operating in the North and South Atlantic oceans. Undoubtedly the most successful surface raider in the German navy she sank, captured or mined some 45 ships.

The "OTAKI", also a refrigerated cargo ship, belonged to the New Zealand Shipping Company. A ship of 9575 tons, she was "defensively" armed with a single 4.7" gun.

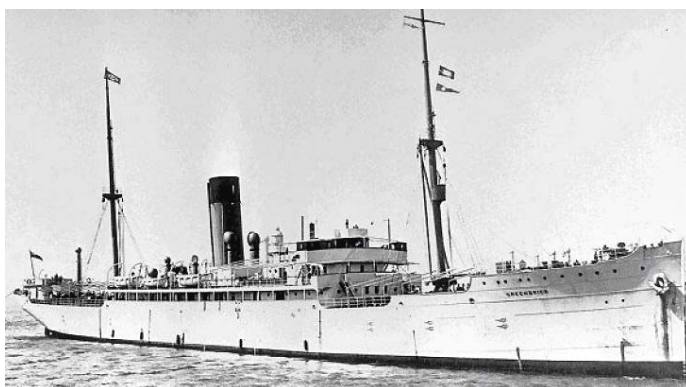
On March 10th. 1917, "OTAKI", under the command of Captain Archibald Bisset Smith, was on passage to the United Kingdom when, in reduced visibility and heavy weather conditions, she was intercepted by the "MOEWE" and instructed to stop.

Captain Smith ignored the instruction and opened fire on the German raider from close range. A fierce but uneven duel ensued with the German vessel sustained three direct hits, one of which started a fire in her coal bunkers. The battle could have but one outcome and the heavily armed raider scored hit after hit on "OTAKI". Realising that his command was mortally damaged Captain Smith gave the order to "abandon ship" but he elected to stay with his ship – and went down with her. He was 38 years of age; five other crew members also perished.

The gallantry of Captain Smith and his crew soon became legendary and, reputedly, even earned the admiration of the crew of the "MOEWE". Various awards were discussed and, yet again, the Admiralty appeared to be in a quandary about awarding a Victoria Cross to a merchant seafarer. Eventually, Captain Smith was posthumously inducted into the Royal Naval Reserve as a "Temporary Lieutenant" and on May 24th. 1919 – more than two years after his death – a citation in the London Gazette announced the award of the Victoria Cross to Captain Archibald Bisset Smith - the first of two Merchant Service Masters to be awarded the supreme decoration for valour.



OTAKI



As the GREENBRIAR

The "MOEWE" survived the war and after Germany surrendered she was brought to England under war reparations, delivered to Elders & Fyffes Co.Ltd. and named "GREENBRIER". In 1933 the Germans bought her back (when she was welcomed on her return by Count Dohna-Schlodien), renamed her "OLDENBURG" and she carried refrigerated cargo up until the outbreak of WW2. In WW2 the vessel was supporting the German campaign in Norway when, on April 17th. 1945 she was attacked by Allied aircraft armed with rockets and sank in Vadheim, Norway - where she is still clearly visible and a very considerable attraction for scuba divers.

Rope Ends

Rule Change

At meetings of the Executive & Finance and General Committees the consensus was that the frequency of these meetings had become cumbersome and excessive to the current needs of the administration of the Club. The General Committee therefore recommended to the AGM a small change to Rule 12 to reduce the number of General Committee meetings from four to two a year. This was approved and Rule 12 now reads:

"The General Committee shall meet at least twice a year to transact necessary business, and can be called together by the Boatsteerer at such times as may be necessary."

It is not intended to promulgate this change by any other means but if you would like an updated copy of the Rules please send an S.A.E. to the office.



250 Club

Our entreaties to you to support the 250 Club have met with some success and, to reward that support and to encourage even more it has been decided to draw two £40 winners each month, stating from January. Remember, each £5 contributed now gives you 2 chances to win in each of the 12 monthly draws following your contribution, including 2 x £100 in December.

December	S. Harwood
January	D. Bloy
	M. Fenwick
February	G. Angas
	J. Bowden



NEW CACHALOTS

P.M.J. O'Sullivan

CAPTAINS & OFFICERS 2008

CAPTAIN:	L.R.Morris
STAFF CAPTAIN:	J.N.Mileusnic
SEA STAFF CAPTAIN:	R.Dunn
BOATSTEERER:	G.Angas
STOREKEEPER:	B.Peck
POST CAPTAIN:	P.B.Marriott
FUNCTIONS OFFICER:*	G.F.Cartwright
MEMBERSHIP OFFICER:*	D.Gates
CACHALOT EDITOR:*	T.E.Clark
ARCHIVIST:*	H.Roberts
HON LEGAL ADVISOR:*	S.Daniels

* HONORARY OFFICE BEARERS

PAST CAPTAINS:

1963 Bayley R.E.A.	1968 Kirton E.J.	1973 O'Connor B.M.
1977 Corner A.J.	1978 Phelan C.N.	1982 Murphy F.C.
1985 Love P.A.	1986 Fenwick M.	1987 Renshaw G.
1988 Downer I.	1989 Noble J.M.	1990 Moffat J.C.
1991 Thomson I.B.	1992 Kelso C.R.	1994 Moore P.
1995 Stead P.J.	1996 Hall L.W.	1997 Hughes T.
1998 Smart J.C.	1999 Plowman E.	2000 Clark T.E.
2001 Carr D.A.	2002 Stirling I.W.	2004 Tinsley A.R.
2005 Harwood S.	2006 Angas G.B.F.	

HARPOONERS:

G.F.Cartwright, S.Daniels, G.Draysey, P.Fost, R.Gage, D.Gates, A.Gravestock, P.Leece, A.McDowall, I.Odd, R.Olden, F.Pedersen, R.Pretty, J.R.K.Smart, J.C.Smith, M.Wallis, J.Whorwood, T.Winsborough.

GENERAL COMMITTEE: Includes the Captains & Officers, Past Captains and Harpooners identified above.

EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE:

L.R.Morris (Chair), G.Angas (Sec), S.Daniels, D.Gates, R.Kelso**, I.Odd, R.Olden, J.R.K.Smart, A.Tinsley**.

ENTERTAINMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE:

G.F.Cartwright (Chair), T.E.Clark**, P.Fost, R.Gage, A.Gravestock, A.McDowall, F.Pedersen, J.R.K.Smart, J.Whorwood.

CHURCH SUB-COMMITTEE:

S.Harwood (Chair), G.Draysey, P.Fost, P.Leece, A.McDowall, R.Pretty, J.C.Smith, P.J.Stead**, I.Thomson**, T.Winsborough

The five Officers of the Club and the Post Captain are members of all the above Committees.

MEMBERSHIP SUB-COMMITTEE:

D.Gates (Chair), G.Angas (Sec), T.E.Clark**, M.Wallis, B.Peck.

** = Co-opted Past Captains

HON. CHAPLAINS:

Rev'd A.Huckett, Rev'd F.Sahetapy.

HON. SHANTYMAN:

D.King.

The Curator of the Southampton Maritime Museum has kindly offered to show Club members around the museum. This will include items not normally on display. Numbers will be limited to 10 per visit on the following dates: 3rd, 10th and 15th April, probably mid-morning, 90 - 120 minutes. Names to the notice board or the office.

There will be another wine tasting in the Club in April but we do not yet have a date. Would those interested please register that interest with the office and we will notify you when the date is arranged.

There will be a Club Buffet Supper held in the Club Room on Friday 2nd May and our speaker, Dr Win Harwood, will be giving us a talk on "Southampton's Brokage Books". If you don't know what they are then this is your chance to learn. Maximum of 40 for this event.

Another trip to the Continent, this time to Southern Brittany, has now been arranged. Departing Sunday 31st August, first night on the ferry, three nights at a hotel and returning on the day crossing on Thursday 4th Sept.

What's included

Luxury coach travel
Outward overnight crossing Portsmouth to St Malo
2-berth outer cabins for outward crossing
3 nights at the 3* Mercure Hotel in Vannes
continental style buffet breakfasts each day in the hotel
3-course dinner in the hotel on the first night
experienced tour manager
full sightseeing programme
guided tour of Lorient Submarine pens
return crossing via Caen/Portsmouth

Full details on the Web Site and colour leaflet available from the office.



The U-boat pens at Lorient. Photo from www.timstimes.net (Go there)

It is hoped to arrange the coach trip to Buckingham Palace on the following week. Again, full details when they come to hand.

Maritime Web Sites

The New Zealand Company of Master Mariners has launched a new web-site: www.mastermariners.org.nz

The same web-master also runs www.nzshipmarine.com if you need another nostalgia fix.

SPONSORED LINKS

Down the right hand side of the pages on our own Web Site, www.cachalots.org.uk can be seen a number of icons which are sponsored links. Their purpose is to provide links to the web sites of businesses and members who run such businesses to advertise their products and services which they believe could be of interest to members. These could typically include travel agents and small boat surveyors. In addition, members who are self-employed consultants in any marine associated field may consider a link simply as another way of making the marine industry aware of what services they offer.

From the Club's point of view, the advantage of providing this facility is to give an additional source of revenue to cover the cost of running the web site, and otherwise assist with financial support to the club in

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	Mar 8	Curry Lunch, Poppadom Express
Fri	Mar 28	Skittles Evening. So'ton Old Green B.C.
Tba	Apr	Wine Tasting
Fri	May 2	Club Buffet Supper (Max 40)
Sat	May 17	80th Anniversary Ball, Warsash
Fri	Jun 13	Club Buffet Supper (Max 40)
Thu	Jun 19	Shipping Festival Service, Winchester
Sat	July 12	Curry Lunch
Fri	Aug 8	Cowes Week Fireworks cruise, Shieldhall
Sun	Aug 31	Coach trip to Southern Brittany, 5 days
Tba	Sept	Coach tour to Buckingham Palace
Sat	Sept 13	Curry Lunch
Fri	Sept 26	Quiz-SMMC v Seafarers' Centre
Tue	Oct ??	Last Night of the Proms Concert, Tidworth
Sat	Oct 25	80th Anniv.Club Dinner, Brook House
Sat	Dec 6	Christmas Dinner, Kings Court
Sat	Dec 13	Christmas Lunch, Kings Court

the provision of services to members. It is proposed that the links be prioritised from the top of the page according to how much a sponsor is prepared to pay for the facility, and therefore the annual fee will be subject to negotiation.

Anyone interested in taking advantage of this facility, and in the process assisting the Club's finances, should contact the Storekeeper on e-mail storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk. Requirements for such a link are:

- * your logo as a .gif or .jpg file
- * your URL to set up the link
- * a very simple statement of products or services to be added as a "Tool Tip" for the logo.