

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.28

June 2008

Captain's Log

As I write this, the blackbird fledglings are demanding food in the sunshine, the cricket season is in full swing, and the mayflies have started their mating dance on the River Test. How fortunate we are to live in this beautiful part of the country!

It is probably something to do with the colour of my hair, but it is almost impossible to believe that over three months have elapsed since that night in the Guildhall in Southampton when I was installed as Captain of this Club and John Mileusnic as Staff Captain. My voice has only just recovered from the "choruses". During this period, I have played "catch-up" with the other Officers of the Club and have come to realise just how much work they put in to keep things running. They meanwhile make me feel important, though ignorant. Thank you all; I'll get there by next February!

As you all know, my predecessor, Peter Marriott, spent much of his year recovering from the surgeon's knife, and bearing in mind that George Angas before him also spent a considerable period in hospital, the Past Captains made it clear that I should not regard their actions as any sort of precedent. I have tried hard to follow that advice, and will continue to do so. Peter still has some way to go and we wish him a full recovery.

My first duty as Captain was to attend the first Business Southampton Conference at St Mary's Stadium on 28 February. I did not know what to expect but was very pleasantly surprised at both the size of the turnout, and at the enthusiasm of the presenters and the delegates. Business in Southampton – especially marine business - is booming. If there was a concern, it was at the shortage of manpower and the inability of some employers to keep young people in the area after they had completed their education and training at our two universities, as well as the other colleges. Our Boatsteerer has undertaken a significant amount of preparatory work in researching ways that the Club may be able to help in presenting the marine industry to schools and colleges. More of this later, no doubt.

If proof were needed of the success of Southampton as a port for cruising and commerce, one only needs to spend a little time in the waterside areas (as I have recently had to do as part of my "proper job"), to witness the succession of cruise liners, container ships and car carriers, not to mention the ferries, coasters and other craft, going about their daily business. Even the pubs in the area have the schedules of the cruise liners, showing arrival and departure times. It is a little disappointing therefore that the fabric of the principal administrative building in this successful port, the Guildhall,

is looking more than a little "tired". Preparations for the last sea-pie supper included draping flags in strategic places in order to cover up evidence of wear and tear and general "tattiness". The distinguished guests at the Sea Pie Supper in the photograph on page 2 of the last "Cachalot" had to be positioned strategically to hide a large tear in the drapes behind them. Let us hope the influx of new councillors can help restore some pride in the administration.

A number of Club Officers were invited to lunch and an evening reception aboard "HMS Southampton" on 3rd March, but this was cancelled at the last minute due to "operational reasons". Storekeeper Barry Peck and I were already en route to attend lunch when we heard, so we consoled ourselves with a pleasant lunch in Oxford Street instead! Not quite the same thing, but very acceptable, nevertheless.

The Club held a Curry lunch at "Poppadom Express" on Saturday, 8 March. This was so well attended – no doubt mostly by the "east of Suez" brigade who love their curries (me included) – that Ann and I could not find room on the two long tables laid out and had to eat in solitary splendour at a nearby table. (We had showered beforehand, in case anyone asks.) A splendid time was had by all. Being a ground floor restaurant, it also enabled one or two of our less mobile members and guests to join us, which we all appreciated.

The Curry Lunch was followed on 28 March by a skittles evening at The Southampton (Old) Green Bowling Club. This is always good fun, probably because there is more chatting than bowling. It is also noticeable that the quality of aim of some of us deteriorated with time – you can work out why. My personal highlight of the evening was completely missing the skittles with all three bowls, on each occasion the bowl passing through the standing skittles. I was amply compensated by the fact that after two attempts with no strikes, Lionel Hall bet me the price of a pint that I could not do the same again. It's sad to see a grown man cry.

April was a busy month socially. Firstly, The Chairman and Members of the Southampton Royal Naval Association kindly invited me to join them in the Tudor Merchants Hall on Friday 4th April to celebrate their 43rd Annual Dinner. Unfortunately I was not able to attend but we were ably represented by George Angas who, whilst greatly enjoying the evening, had to 'sing for his supper' and respond to the guest speaker on behalf of his fellow guests! The guest speaker was Commodore Kirby, the Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood. George tells me that Commodore Kirby gave a witty, informative and very interesting review of the Royal Navy today, which he followed with an analysis of what the Royal Navy of tomorrow may look like. George responded with a parallel review of the Merchant Navy today

and what this may look like tomorrow as well. Between them, George thinks that they covered all the bases for most of the members and guests, who were most generously hosted, and all appreciated a lovely meal, wine and friendly company.

On 12 April, Ann and I were guests at the Commodore's Cocktail Party, followed by supper, at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club at Hamble. We were very well looked after throughout the evening by a group of the members, and the flow and quality of conversation was only surpassed by that of the wine!

We received a similar invitation from the Royal Southern Yacht Club, also at Hamble, for the following evening, but were unable to attend because of a prior engagement. The Club was represented much more capably by Sea Staff Captain Rachel Dunn, who was escorted by her husband, Neil. Rachel remembers going there on special family occasions many years ago. She and Neil were entertained by the Commodore and other Officers of the Club, and she reports that relaxing and watching the view go by while drinking cocktails in their upstairs bar in such wonderful company was an experience not to be missed.

As I am still in gainful employment, there is little doubt that I shall, on occasion, miss some functions; there are many others more capable than I of representing the Club. I would also like to see some of our younger members step in. Ann and I have a fond recollection of being asked to attend a function aboard a visiting naval ship in Southampton when I was a newly appointed member. We shall always remember the faces of some of the more junior officers when realisation dawned that the young couple were the representatives of the Club, and not some advance party! You can guess who got most of the attention after that! We have a large membership and I would love to see a greater cross section of members representing the Club on occasion. But first, we need to get to know you.

Angela Wright, the Chief Executive of Solent Skills Quest Ltd, based in Millbrook, gave a group of us a presentation at the Club on 16 April. She explained how Solent Skills Quest encourages partnerships between Education and Business in the area by providing a lifeskills link between Colleges and Business. It was a thought-provoking meeting as the Club has been considering ways to promote our profession to young people. Some ways discussed included mentoring of individual students, school visits and escorting groups to technical facilities, on ship visits, etc.

It was with considerable regret that Ann and I also missed Win Harwood's talk on the Brokage Books of Southampton at the Club Supper on 2nd May. "Reliable sources" report that this was another highly successful and well attended event. I have already asked Win to let me know if she repeats her talk sometime!

Finally, the 80th Anniversary Ball at Warsash Maritime Academy on 17 May. We are indebted to the Director John Millican – a Cachalot himself - for the use of the facilities and to his added generosity in providing the port

afterwards. John and his wife Maria were Club guests for the evening and I had the great pleasure in welcoming them both to a function at his own College!

It was a full house – as we knew it would be, almost from the outset. If anyone was expecting it to be a quiet, reserved and formal evening – I'm sorry, you would have been extremely disappointed. The weather dictated that the sliding doors to the adjacent patio had to be kept shut in order to prevent those nearby suffering hypothermia. This magnified the buzz of conversation, which rose in intensity in direct proportion to the empty wine bottles on the tables. Conversation became meaningless once the dancing started. Mind you, it could be said that dancing also became meaningless at times - there were so many on the dance floor!

Thankfully - for some of us – the draw provided some respite to the action. Gerry Cartwright was assisted in this by one of my guests, Jane Carley, the Fundraising Director of the Wessex Cancer Trust. The WCT is my chosen charity for this year. Many people came up and spoke to Jane during the course of the evening; it also gave her an opportunity to meet those to whom she had only spoken on the telephone before.

Dancing action resumed after the draw and continued until "The Queen" brought a close to evening. Before that, a well formed (?) conga wound its way through the tables. Thankfully the patio doors were still shut; otherwise goodness knows where it might have ended!

On a personal note, I was very pleased to see that a number of ladies had come on their own, either because their menfolk were at sea, or for sadder reasons. That you felt able to do so is a compliment to our Club. You will always be welcome.

Thank you all for a memorable evening, Ann and I enjoyed it immensely.

Our next function is the Shipping Festival Service at Winchester Cathedral on 19 June. It will be a poignant and solemn, yet enjoyable occasion, as we remember seafarers past and present.

Leslie R Morris
Club Captain.



Captain Morris with his guest Jane Carley. The raffle raised £523 and a table by table auction of the lovely table decorations met with mixed response but raised a further £237.

So a grand total of

£760

was raised for the

Wessex Cancer Trust

The Boatsteerer's Locker

Clubrooms

On Sunday the 20th April seven of us tackled the halls and stairwells on the ground and first floors. With the paint and equipment provided by the Seafarers Centre we set about trying to spruce the place up a bit and with the exception of a few 'holidays' that were pointed out to us with great glee by those members who had done a 'much better job' on the Clubrooms two years ago!!! Thank you for your time and effort, they made the place look much cleaner and were necessary before we could even consider what to do with the carpets. Hopefully when the rest of the decorations are complete (2nd floor and all the woodwork), be able to come to an agreement to renew all the passageway and Clubroom carpets and then we really will have facilities that we can be proud of.

The Anniversary Summer Ball

This event was held at the Warsash Maritime Academy, courtesy of John Millican the Director, who together with his wife Maria joined us and 120 other members and friends for a most enjoyable and memorable evening. The usual high standard of Club events was maintained with Club Captain Les Morris and his wife Ann greeting us all upon arrival and presenting our lady guests with a most charming gift. The original 1928 Visitors Book came out of hiding and was signed by all. In addition to a good meal and some nice wine the raffle and the auction of the table decorations so kindly provided by Jane Marriott, made a significant contribution to the Wessex Cancer Trust who's regional fundraiser, Ms Jane Carey was the Captains guest, drew the winning raffle numbers and thanked the Club members for their efforts on behalf of the Trust.

Interaction with the wider community

Since Angela Wright, the CEO of Solent Skills Quest joined us for lunch on Wednesday 16th April and explained their activities our dialogue with the Solent Skills Quest has now reached a stage where we are being asked if we will consider assisting them. The basis upon which our assistance is sought is as people with considerable knowledge and skills of the work place. We will be part of a project facilitator team that consists of teachers, subject specialists and ourselves, and we will be briefed before any exercise (They do not require us to have detailed educational knowledge or experience of a particular profession, nor are we required to 'teach' youngsters). An example of the sort of projects that SSQ are developing follow:-

1. The Swanmore College of Technology – Wednesday 4th June. 08:29 15:00hrs
They are running a business simulation day where students (14 year olds). They will work in groups of six and their brief is to put a promotional package together for a new brand emerging in the British and European market place. They have to put a PowerPoint presentation together including a radio jingle or TV advert, a written piece for a newspaper or music magazine, say where they would have their European distribution centre and why, e.g. road, rail shipping links and also design two CD covers, one for the British market in English and one for the European market in French. They have to buy their materials from a shop and convert Euros to £s.
SSQ are looking for four people to join their team to provide our knowledge of the work place. I am going, so if anybody would like to join me we can not only learn together, but we will also begin to contribute professionally.
2. Wildern School – Tues 17th June 08:20 – 15:00hrs.
Enterprise Day for 14 year olds curriculum links to English, Maths, ICT, Business Studies and Art / design & technology. Students undertake 3 different activities:
Sail Away - a design / tech activity, teams make a land buggy with given resources and race them using fans.
Gift Bag - teams form a company production line making gift bags,
Checking quality control, selling and finance.
The Wedding - teams take on the role of the functions team of a hotel and put a quote together for a fictional wedding. They have to put together a menu, costings, music, example table settings and decorations and add 'something special' to make the day memorable for the wedding party.
3. Wyvern Technology College – Tuesday 24th June 08:20 – 15:00 Same as 2. above.
Whilst the above have little direct bearing on the maritime industry, they will enable us to:
i). Establish a rapport with 14 year olds and see whether we like it/ they like us.
ii). Provide contacts to enable us to get into these colleges and schools to talk about the maritime industry.
iii). Understand how today's 14 year olds view life and hear what their aspirations are.
iv). Start to rebuild the SMMC professional contribution to the community.
If any of you living within the South Hants catchment would like to be involved with this project, or like to learn more about it, please contact me by phone 07879 816766, by post at the Club or by email through the office.

Technical Seminars

Whilst this has been on the agenda for a while, we have not achieved very much. Win Harwood's recent lecture, whilst not strictly technical, was from all reports excellent both in terms of interest, historical record and humour and attracted 34 club members who all had a most enjoyable evening. I would therefore like us to consider:

1. Do we wish to reconstitute our technical lectures
2. If so, how many, where and when.
3. Do we wish to establish a Technical Seminars Committee?
4. Do we wish to develop an annual programme of our own or, given the poor turnouts experienced by NI, RIN, ITL, should we propose a joint calendar, say with the Solent branch of the NI?

We are holding a working group on Friday 30th May to discuss these issues at the Club from 10:30 to 12:30hrs. If you wish to contribute to the debate by post or email then please contact the Club direct. All contributions will be welcome and most gratefully received.

Well, I think that is enough for this issue, I will keep you informed of the progress that we make and reiterate; we do look forward to seeing you in YOUR Club.

Club Buffet Supper

Friday 13th June

A buffet supper will be held in the Club room on the evening of 13th June, 1900 for 1930.

The speaker on this occasion will be Barry Peck and his subject:

The International Internet
Magic or Technology?

Price: £15 per head and names to the board or the office asap.



THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE

THURSDAY 19th JUNE 2008 AT 7.30 p.m.
CONGREGATION TO BE SEATED BY 7.15 p.m.

PREACHER:

The Revd. Canon Bill Christianson,
Secretary General of the Mission to Seafarers.

This year the Service will again be attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, the High Sheriff of Hampshire and the Mayors of both Winchester and Southampton.

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, led by Parade Master Julia Whorwood.

THE CHOIR AT THE SERVICE WILL BE
THE WINCHESTER COLLEGE CHAPEL CHOIR
AND MUSIC WILL BE BY THE VOLUNTEER BAND OF H.M.S. NELSON
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
BAND COLOUR SERGEANT DOUG SCOTT, 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

Please note the new starting time



The next Curry lunch on Saturday, 12 July is booked at the Gurkha Kitchen, 5 Canute Road, SO14 3FH. About five/ten minutes walk from the Clubroom towards Ocean Village. I am sure that we do not need to remind readers that the Gurkhas have long honourably served Kings, Queens and country very well indeed. The spacious reception area is at street level and is a good spot to have a pre-prandial aperitif. The modern restaurant is downstairs and is accessible by a lift.

"Nepali cooking is distinguished by the use of fresh herbs and spices which are prepared in the "khal" (stone mortar), rather than the powders used in other Asian cuisines. The heart of a Nepali meal is "daal bhat" (rice and lentils) and "achar" (chutney) surrounded by other main dishes, thus achieving the ultimate meal. Gurkha Kitchen presents an outstanding experience, which is prepared with great care and attention and there is no room for short cut methods."

The price is £11 per person, so please enter your names on the list on the Club notice board or give the office a call and book. All places must be booked and paid for by Friday, 4 July, so that we may confirm numbers with the Gurkha Kitchen.



Past Captain John Moffat's luck was in on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary Ball. He also won a raffle prize.

Southern Brittany Trip

There are still some places left on the trip to Brittany which we would like to fill so here is a reminder of the details.

EXACTLY WHAT'S INCLUDED

Luxury coach travel
outward overnight crossing Portsmouth to St Malo
3-nights at the Mercure 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 (see itinerary)
guided tour of Lorient Submarine Pens
return crossing via Caen/Portsmouth.

*Cost: £345 per person
with optional supplements of:*

Travel insurance £20 / Single Cabin £20 / Single room £60.

THE ITINERARY

Sunday 31st August - Leaving Lymington and Southampton the coach heads for Portsmouth in time to catch the 20.30 sailing to St Malo. On board ship you will find an array of impressive that include a choice of restaurants and bars, casino, cinema and a range of shops. Naturally, everyone will have a cabin with private facilities for the overnight crossing.

Monday 1st September - The ship docks at 08.15 and it is popular for people to be watching on deck as the ship enters the port of St Malo. After disembarkation the coach drives 20km inland to the charming and historic walled town of Dinan. Here there will be time for sightseeing before the group continue their journey to Vannes to arrive by early afternoon. Once checked-in, the remainder of the afternoon is completely free. For the evening the group are booked for a 3-course dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

Tuesday 2nd September - Keeping things nice and relaxed the morning is free in Vannes. In the afternoon there will be a visit to the nearby town of Auray whose charmingly picturesque port was long ago the busiest in Brittany. Or alternatively, you can take the opportunity to join a trip to Lorient for a guided tour of the former Nazi Submarine Pens in Lorient. Built strongly from reinforced concrete the pens have proved impossible to dismantle and so remain as a stark symbol of a darker time.

Wednesday 3rd September - Today the group drive up the coach to Quimper (pronounced Campair) which is widely recognised as the capital of the ancient Breton Culture. The day will also include a visit to the picturesque fishing village of Douarnenez.

Thursday 4th September. - Departing the hotel at 09.00 the coach will drive across Brittany to Mont St Michael where the group will be free for lunch and sightseeing. From here the coach will drive to Caen to catch your homeward Brittany Ferries crossing to Portsmouth. The ship is time-tabled to leave Caen at 17.15 and dock in Portsmouth at 21.45 (UK time). Being the final highlight of the tour, we suggest that we book everyone into the ship's excellent main restaurant for a 4-course dinner (cost £20pp). Once back in the UK the coach will drop the group back in Southampton for around 22.45.

Deposit of £50 pp now required with booking:
Capt. Lionel Hall on 02380 282487
Or the office 02380 226155

Buckingham Palace

The date for the visit to the State Apartments has now been arranged for Monday, 15 September. The coach will leave Southampton at 0930 sharp. ABP have kindly agreed to permit us to park nearby VTS. As you will appreciate this is a working day and parking space is at a premium. It will, therefore, be much appreciated if as many people as possible can share cars, and to this end Richard has been telephoning those whose names are on the list.

Traffic permitting the coach is expected to arrive at Buckingham Palace Road near Victoria Station at about 1200. In the nearby vicinity there are several establishments where refreshments may be obtained. From the station it is a short 10/15 minute walk down Buckingham Palace Road to the visitors entrance.

We have booked the 1330 entry time and allowed about two hours for the tour. Entry times are strictly controlled and all members of our party will need to be at the entrance promptly. Each person will be given a talking handbag which gives a description of the various apartments to be visited. This is included in the price.

After the tour you should make your way back to Victoria Station where the coach will be waiting. In order to avoid the rush hour traffic the coach will leave promptly at 1545. Once again, traffic permitting, the coach will arrive back in Southampton at 1830.

The cost, including coach fare, entry to the Palace and a gratuity for the driver is £30 per person. This must be paid by Friday, 1 August as we need to confirm ticket numbers shortly after. Tickets will not be booked for unpaid places as we will be unable to obtain refunds. Cheques should be made payable to "The Cachalots" and handed to the Storekeeper, Functions Officer, or Richard during the last week in July or before.

Should you have missed the notice on the Club noticeboard, there are still a few places available.

80th Anniversary Dinner

Following the Spring Ball our autumn event this year will be a dinner only occasion at Brook House in Botley on

Saturday October 25th.

A club speaker has been lined up to augment the occasion in an appropriate manner.

By utilising the redundant dance floor space we should be able to accommodate up to 136 on rounds of 8 and, without the cost of musicians, we hope be able keep the price to a reasonable level, more details of that in the next issue.

Meanwhile, here is the menu that has been chosen:

Baked Avocado with Stilton & Bacon

Beef Wellington

Seasonal Vegetables and Potatoes

Paris Breast

Choux Pastry Ring filled with Cream, Strawberries & Vanilla

Cheese & Biscuits

Coffee & Mints

Three Queens and some Southampton History



On 22nd April, 2008, the three Cunard Queens met in their home port for the first and last time. It was an event which seems to have completely by-passed the City Council but there were still thousands of ship watchers, both ashore and afloat, to enjoy the spectacle.

Normally, *ss Shieldhall* would have been out there amid the throng but essential boiler work had curtailed her spring cruise programme and she was confined to her berth in Southampton. I thought that she would still be a good viewing platform and boarded her at 48 berth, along with quite a few other regulars.

It was a sunny afternoon but unfortunately very hazy and not conducive to clear long range shots. Also, from my perch on the monkey island of *Shieldhall*, the *Queen Victoria*, on 101 berth, was mostly obscured by the buildings on Town Quay. However, I persevered and managed to get a few half decent shots, two of which are reproduced here in b&w (in grainy colour on our web site). You can, no doubt, find a lot better ones on the internet.

The *Pacific Princess*, formally *R3* with Renaissance Cruises, was berthed on 106 astern of the *QE 2* on 105. She sailed at 1700 and the *Queen Mary 2*, berthed sstq on 38 berth, waited until the outward vessel cleared. She then made her way up past her two sister Queens, swung in the Upper Swinging Ground off the now defunct dry dock and returned downstream with much saluting of whistles. It was a pity we didn't have steam up on the *Shieldhall* or we could have given her a good toot-for-toot as well. After *Queen Mary 2* cleared, on her first trans Atlantic crossing of 2008, the *Queen Victoria* also sailed, for the Canary Islands I think.



Another maritime mile-stone (way-point?) in the history of the port of Southampton.

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**Boxes of original water colours and paintings
Curator Alastair Arnott ruffles through for Reg and
June Kelso**

Talking of history, on the 3rd April eight of us responded to the invitation to visit the store of the Southampton City Heritage Services. It was not at the Maritime Museum as we had expected but hidden away in the industrial units between West Quay Rd and No. 10 gate. Once inside we were like schoolboys let loose in the tuck shop: there were all sorts of delights to savour and remember. Ship models, flags, uniforms, livery, insignia, furniture from both cabin and public rooms, box upon box and rack upon sliding rack of water colours, pictures, posters and paintings. All the nautical paraphernalia of mainly the past two hundred years of maritime Southampton. And we only had time to skim the surface. On top of the maritime stuff there was a tram, a penny farthing bicycle and all sorts of other things just in storage and waiting for the right occasion, if it ever comes, to be displayed.

While at the museum store we literally stumbled over this wooden tablet, which is the right hand one of a pair of panels that used to be in St. Augustine's Church at Northam in Southampton. It has also been displayed at the Maritime Museum itself in the past and maybe the left hand one is still on display there.

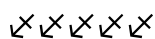
It commemorates thirteen men, names Jago - Young, mostly engine-room and boiler-room hands, including two with the name Arthur May. Father and son apparently, the father being the firemen's messman.

The left hand panel has the names of fourteen other men, with names beginning with A-H, also mainly engineering hands but including a butcher, a baker, a couple of stewards and a "boots".

The two panels therefore detail the twentyseven crewmen from the Northam area who lost their lives.



Another Titanic Memorial



Another history lesson took place in the Club Room on the evening of 2nd May. The occasion was a Club Supper and the speaker was Dr. Win Harwood, wife of Past Captain Simon.

Her subject was the Brokage books of Southampton, a unique local record of trade in the mid to late 15th century. Every cart and wagon that passed through the Bargate was dutifully logged, its contents and destination/origin recorded, together with taxes, dues or levies paid. Around thirty such Brokage books survive and form a valuable historical insight into just how varied, organised and far-reaching that trade actually was at that time.

To be able to decipher the books Win had to learn Medieval Latin and her studies have earned her a well deserved Ph.D. That it was obviously a labour of love for her came across distinctly during her very interesting presentation.

A ship, two dreams and a coincidence.

From the 15th century Europeans venturing to India by sea soon realised that the seamanlike qualities of the inhabitants of the lands they "discovered" made them eminently suitable to engage in almost any seafaring capacity and, by the 17th. century, the number employed in British ships was so great that laws were enacted to restrict their employment.

The term "Lascar" was first used to describe "an Asiatic seaman, native of the British Empire" but soon the name was applied to seamen from any country east of the Cape of Good Hope. As global trade – and the Empire – expanded, more and more British companies recognised the obvious advantages of employing these loyal, versatile and hardworking seafarers – at a fraction of the cost of their UK counterparts –and eventually many British shipping companies established the practice of manning with lascars crew members and UK officers.

Thus it was that at the outbreak of World War 2 many of these seafarers found themselves serving in ships that ran the gauntlet of daily attacks by submarine and aircraft and many – with their lascar crews – were lost.

In October 1941, the general cargo ship "EMPIRE DEFENDER" of 5649 gross tons was requisitioned by the Ministry of War Transport to engage in a "special mission" to deliver much-needed stores and ammunition to the besieged island of Malta. She was an old ship: Launched in 1910 as the German "Freienfels" of the Hansa Line she became a "war prize" in Calcutta in 1914 and subsequently sailed under the Greek and Italian flag before being once again requisitioned for wartime service.

The ship arrived in Glasgow during the first week of October, 1941 and began to load a varied cargo of munitions and stores urgently needed for the continued defence of Malta. The MOWT handed her over to Stanhope Steamship Company for management and that company manned her with their own Officers – and a lascar crew.

It was proving notoriously difficult to ensure that ships bound for Malta arrived at their destination. The Italian airforce paid great attention to any ship entering Maltese waters and German U boats and surface craft had gained significant successes in recent attacks on convoys – even the most heavily escorted ones. In a desperate attempt to get a ship through to Malta the British Admiralty had adopted various "ruses de guerre" and, in the case of the "Empire Defender" every effort was made to make her look like a vessel from a neutral country. Her drab wartime paint was overpainted with brighter colours, her minesweeping equipment was removed and her blackout equipment modified to allow some light to escape. Great care was taken with the marking of the cargo and most boxes and cartons bore the legend "Cape Town" or "Durban" to make it appear that she was destined for South Africa.

Eventually, it was agreed that she would be "in all respects loaded, provisioned and ready for sea" by October 23rd. and that she would proceed downriver to Gourock to join up with a convoy that would see her clear of the Western Approaches.

On the morning of October 20th. the Serang (the lascar Boatswain) approached the Captain and told him, in no uncertain manner, that not one member of the crew was prepared to sail in the ship. He told the Master that he (the Serang) had had dreams on successive nights and in both dreams "Empire Defender" had been "calash (finished/sunk) before the next new moon". He – and any member of the crew – would happily sail in any other ship from Glasgow or any port in the United Kingdom at any time and for any destination but they would, most certainly, NOT sail in "Empire Defender".

The Captain was dumbfounded, the managing company thunderstruck, the MOWT outraged – and the lascars unmoved. Promises of more money and extra leave, visits from the mullah at the local mosque, the presence of the local police and threats of arrest and deportation – all were unavailing. Any other ship from any port to any destination at any time – but NOT "Empire Defender".

As loading neared completion the entire crew moved their belongings – and their cooking utensils – to a nearby warehouse, prepared their sleeping equipment and made it absolutely clear that they were not going to be shanghaied on the ship when she sailed. The managing company finally accepted the situation and started to look for a new crew. Other lascars in the port refused to even discuss sailing in the ship and eventually the company turned to European manning and advertised for a large crew in the local shipping office.. Lascars accommodation was invariably not up to European ratings standards and as there was no time to carry out any alterations every man "signing on" was given a bonus – in cash – of £10.00 in notes. Big money in those days. As soon as they had signed the Articles of Agreement the crew, to a man, disappeared "up the road" to spend their newly found wealth but – next morning every man reported for duty. The Captain was the only person aboard who knew that the ship was bound for Malta and as the new crew prepared to "single up" and "let go" they were watched by a silent bunch of lascars still sitting on the floor of the warehouse. The ship cleared the berth but as she did so her stern contacted the vessel astern and tore her from her berth. As she steamed down river a newly constructed vessel was being towed to her berth and as "Empire Defender" approached, the steering gear failed and in the ensuing collision both ships were badly damaged.

Repairs were carried out and "Empire Defender" finally joined up with an outward convoy from Gourock and proceeded towards the Bay of Biscay and South Africa.

By arrangement, as she approached the coast of Spain she detached from the convoy, hoisted Spanish colours and made her lonely way towards the Straits of Gibraltar.

Later, the Spanish ensign was replaced by an Italian one and "Empire Defender" steamed surreptitiously towards Malta, hugging the N.African coast as she did so.

All was going supremely well and the ship's company started to prepare the ship for arrival – and a hero's welcome.

On November 14th. 1941, off Galeta Island, as the sun went down on the day before arrival in Malta a lone Italian bomber –returning from a fruitless patrol – spotted the ship and scored a direct hit on her. Within minutes the ship was ablaze but, almost miraculously, there were only four casualties and as the surviving crew took to the boats and rowed away from their sinking ship there were two resounding explosions and "Empire Defender" slid beneath the waves of the Mediterranean Sea.

Next day the survivors were picked up by an Italian warship and landed to a French (Vichy) internment camp in El Kef, Tunisia. Some of the older ones were released in 1942 but most remained for a further year.

THAT is the end of MY story about "Empire Defender" but, as the result of an amazing coincidence, it is not the end of THE story about the ship.

Last year, at the B&ISS AGM and Annual Service in London, on October 23rd. (some two days after I read the story of "Empire Defender") I met up with two old friends, both stalwart supporters of the Society, Bill McCarthy, a recently retired P&OCL Chief Engineer and his wife, Caroline. As we enjoyed our buffet luncheon Caroline said "My Grandfather was one of the two Second Engineer Officers serving in a ship called " Empire Defender" and I am trying to find out about his ship".

CRK 30.10.07

Subsequent to Captain Kelso's submission of the above, Caroline McCarthy sent him the following narrative, which rounds off the story nicely. It is entitled:

REPORT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE 2nd ENGINEER, MR J.S. STRUTHERS, SS EMPIRE DEFENDER

1. We were bound from the Clyde to Malta with a cargo of 9,000 tons of military stores. The ship was armed with 6 machine-guns (Lewis), 2 P.A.C. rockets, and we had kites fitted but were not flying them. All the large guns had been removed before leaving Glasgow. The crew, including naval gunners, numbered 64 of whom 4 men are missing, the Wireless Officer was injured and 58 men are still interned in El Kef Camp, Tunisia. All confidential books were thrown overboard in a weighted bag. Degaussing was on.

2. We left the Clyde at 0500 on the 27th October 1941 in a convoy of 12 merchant vessels with a naval escort. We proceeded without incident until 11th November when, about 30 miles from Gibraltar, we left the convoy with the S.S. EMPIRE PELICAN, and continued together, escorted by one destroyer, the main convoy proceeding to Gibraltar. The EMPIRE PELICAN then went ahead and we reduced speed, going slow throughout the 11th for a period of about 16 hours to allow the EMPIRE PELICAN to get a day's steaming ahead. We increased speed again on the 12th and after passing through the straits of Gibraltar the ship's name was altered to JOSINA and we had the Spanish flag painted on the ship's

side amidships. After two days the name was again changed to NEVADA, and the flag on the ship's side changed to the French flag, all machine guns being removed from the deck. A large aircraft sighted us at about 1100 on the 14th and shadowed us throughout the day, keeping well out of range, about 3 miles distant. The crew were told to keep below as much as possible, and when on deck to keep under cover.

3. Weather on the 15th November was fine with good visibility, moderate sea and Westerly wind force 4. We were steaming at 10 knots steering approximately East. At 1600 I went below to the engine-room, and at 1640 A.T.S. on the 15th November 1941, in position 18 miles South of Galeta Island, Tunisia, there was a tremendous explosion, which seemed to lift the ship out of the water. I understand a plane had machine gunned the decks, circled away, and 10 minutes later was again seen approaching, when he dropped a torpedo, the wake of which was clearly visible as it approached the ship, then it struck on the port side abreast of the foremast. I stood by in the engine room awaiting orders, and receiving none, I went to my room for my lifejacket and then on deck.

4. The two starboard lifeboats had already been lowered and the crew were jumping into them. The engines were still running, but labouring heavily, and the ship was turning slowly to starboard, so I went below to shut off the steam. I returned to the deck, by which time the engines had stopped, and grabbing a rope I slid down into the starboard after lifeboat. About a minute later the lifeboat pushed off, many of the crew had dived over the side into the water, and we started picking them up. The ship rose out of the water, turning as if on a pivot amidships, and plunged straight down by the stern, disappearing at 1655.

5. We continued to pick up the men from the water, dividing them equally between the two boats, and extinguished the lights on the rafts. Shortly after this we saw a vessel passing ablaze with lights, so everyone stopped smoking and talking until she had gone, then we lashed the two boats together and rowed towards the coast, which was about 15 miles away. We pulled all the night and landed at a place called Dabarca at 0600 next morning, 16th. A number of officials met us, all of whom appeared to be quite young boys, dressed in some kind of uniform, they kept us for some time on the jetty, then marched us off to a large hall in the market-place where they gave us coffee and hot food, and at 1100 we entrained for Bizerta, arriving at 1900 the same day, 16th. We put into the Naval Barracks, and the Officers of our ship remained there for 4 days, until the 20th November, when we entrained for Tunis, the remainder of the crew having been sent on two days previously together with some members of the crew of the S.S. EMPIRE PELICAN which we learned had been torpedoed the day before us.

6. We slept that night in a Fort, and next day proceeded to El Kef Camp. I remember one incident particularly. When we were marching through the streets of Tunis to the station we passed a crowd of civilians who handed us packets of cigarettes. When we were on the train the Wireless Operator asked me if I had opened my packet, and told me to do so, but to open it carefully. I did so, and inside was a small piece of paper, no larger than a cigarette paper, on which was written, "I am a pupil learning English at school and I say to you, all the French of Africa are with you. Long live England: Long live France: down with the tyrant Hitler". Another incident, which struck me very much, was that at the railway station there was an old lady with a little girl. They saw us waiting to get into the train and the woman handed the child a large parcel which she was carrying, and motioned her to give it to me. I accepted it, and when I opened the parcel found it was a lovely cake.

7. We left Tunis by train at about 0800 on the 20th and reached El Kef at 2200 that night, being marched to the Camps, where we were housed in wooden huts. We had mattresses, 2 blankets each and sheets. For the first three months in the fort we were in the control of the military authorities, and if anyone was ill they were sent to the Military hospital. The Military authorities were very friendly towards us but were obviously afraid of the Germans and Italians. After 3 months we were removed to another camp down the mountain, and housed in large wooden huts, under the control of the civilian authorities and they did their best to starve us, the only food we had being half a cupful of food a day, macaroni in the morning and "kush kush" - a mixture of canary seed and sawdust - at night. We were surrounded by barbed wire and guarded day and night by Arab sentries with fixed bayonets.

8. It was the Red Cross, which saved our lives, when their parcels arrived after about 5 months, and later, when we received our money allowances from England, we were able to buy some food. The U.S. Consul in Tunis was very good and sent up clothing for us, also the Maltese community in Tunis. They knitted us socks and pullovers, and sent us any small comforts they could, and the English Chaplain visited us once a month. The Maltese community in Tunis are very pro-British and there was nearly a riot when the men from HMS HAVOC were passing through the town. (*Havoc ran aground on coast of Tunisia on 6th April 1942 while bound for Gibraltar for repairs..Ed*) The Italian authorities had ordered that there were to be no demonstrations, but the Maltese lined up along one side of the street (with the Italians on the other side) and showered the British sailors with cigarettes, fruit, and gave them cups of wine.

9. There were about 120 of us in the camp, including the crews of the S.S. EMPIRE PELICAN and the S.S. PARRACOMBE. (*This vessel had been sunk in minefields off Cape Bon on 2nd May 1941, 18 of her 47 crew making it to the shore..Ed*) I was there for about 8 months, until the 3rd July 1942, when I, and a fireman who was supposed to be dying of tuberculosis, were both released. We left the camp at 0500 that morning and were motored down the mountain to the aerodrome at Tunis, under the guard of a Police Inspector. We were given breakfast at the aerodrome then given seats in a small 6-seater passenger plane, which took us to Algiers. We were given lunch at the buffet at the aerodrome and waited for the Casa Blanca (*flight*), but when it arrived there was not room for us, so we were taken to the Police Station in Algiers for the night. The pilots and other airmen were all very friendly, and so were the Police officers. Next morning, they took us back to the aerodrome and we boarded the plane for Casa Blanca, where we were housed for a further three days in the Institute, being kept under constant guard. We were then taken to the Shureti, where we met the American Consul who obtained parole for us and found us a hotel. At 1400 the following day, on returning from a stroll, the Consul telephoned to ask me how long it would take me to pack. I told him I was ready packed, so the Consul came round, took me to see some Shipping Officials, and booked our passage in a small Portuguese Schooner. He then took us back to the Police, wished us luck, and left, after which the police saw us safely on board the Schooner, and

To return to the RAF at Shallufa, it was a very busy time. I wanted to be flown to a neighbouring airfield about some urgent matter but it was Christmas Day. I was told that no pilots were available. I said "It's very urgent that I go". Somebody suggested to the Duty Officer that Flight Sergeant Querk might be available. He smiled a curious smile and said "Oh yes. Querk". Querk was hauled out of the NCO's canteen where he was enjoying his Christmas Day. He swayed across to the hangar where there was an "Oxford" communication aircraft. I climbed in behind him. The beer fumes were overwhelming in the cockpit. He started up the engine, opened the throttle wide, shot out of the hangar without any preliminary run-up, straight onto the runway and into the air. The journey was not far but I did have to shout at him from the back seat and explain that he was attempting to land at the wrong airfield. However, if he ever reads this, I must say it was very kind of him to help me on Christmas Day.

This development work for dropping torpedoes from the Wellingtons continued. The system worked quite well but of course lots of practice was required by the pilots for flying these big aircraft at such a low height. For the month of January 1942 more and more practice runs were carried out in the Gulf of Suez; sometimes I went with them.

On the 2nd February 1942 a friend of mine, Lieutenant Arthur ("Spider") Webb, came to supper with me at Shallufah. He had never flown before so, with the Wing Commander's permission, he came with me for the evening's flight. I was standing up beside the pilot. There was a good moonpath and we ran up and dropped the torpedoes at the practice target which was a requisitioned yacht. After the drop the pilot banked to the left a little bit too steeply and the aircraft crashed into the sea and sank immediately.

The next I knew, I was swimming round and saw the rubber dinghy. I swam towards it and the pilot and I climbed in. We could see no other survivors. Then there was a large piece of wreckage which was grunting and which turned out to be my friend, Webb. We pulled him into the dinghy too. I do not know now how many people had been in the aircraft altogether, but I think it was six. Only the three of us in the dinghy survived.

We were picked up by the target yacht and taken to Suez and I was taken up to the Army hospital because my face was badly smashed in. Amazingly the other two were unhurt. I was in hospital for many weeks, and for some time my jaws were wired together so that the lower jaw would be a splint for the upper jaw. Luckily for me the surgeon who looked after me had, in peacetime, been a Harley Street face-lifter. He was Colonel Donald, and he did a wonderful job of patching me up. Morgan's luck!

Incidentally, my Father was told by telegram from the Admiralty that I had been seriously injured. He did not get any further news for six weeks, until he went up to the Admiralty and demanded it.

I was wonderfully well looked after in this hospital. One incident which I remember was when Major Bernard Fergusson (the "Gallop Major" from our troopship) was brought in on a stretcher. He had been a long time in the desert with his regiment, the Black Watch, and had such bad "desert sores" that he could not walk. He said to us "I'm going to India in three days time". We laughed and said "It's easier to get into this hospital than out". But he did manage to get himself carried onto a ship going to India - on the special orders of General Wavell. He had been General Wavell's ADC and he subsequently made a great name for himself as leader of the original "Chindits" operating behind the Japanese lines in Burma. A book which he published after the war called "Beyond the Chindwin" is a classic. After the war he became Governor-General of New Zealand.

Another incident I remember in hospital was being visited by Rear Admiral Sir Gerard Wells. He was a retired British Rear Admiral who had taken a job as "Director General of Ports and Lights" (a sort of one-man Trinity House) and he was an employee of the Egyptian Government. (He will appear later in this story). Anyway, Admiral Wells was a very fine looking, tall, handsome man. He came into the ward in a full British Rear Admiral's uniform up to the neck: But on his head was a tarboosh (or fez): Altogether a fine figure!

To complete this story, the development and training of the torpedo Wellingtons continued on an increasingly large scale. Before long the whole of 38 Squadron was converted to this role. The scheme worked wonderfully well because the Wellingtons had the long range necessary to attack the enemy convoys which were beyond the reach of the Fleet Air Arm Swordfish. Wing Commander Chaplin led 38 Squadron with great success and in due course was awarded the DSO.

I was no longer anything to do with this, but I did hear of some of their experiences. Once he was flying up in daylight to an "Advanced Landing Ground" in the desert to refuel. He was bounced by an enemy fighter and shot down. He made a successful crash landing, but the aircraft was on fire. The crew got out but the fighter was still strafing them. He had the quick-wittedness to make his crew crawl away from the aircraft because otherwise their long shadows on the sand from the evening sun would make them easier targets for the fighter. But it was a hell of a decision because he was expecting the two torpedo warheads to explode at any moment.

In their wonderful light-hearted way the Royal Air Force called these torpedo Wellingtons "Fishingtons". The reconnaissance aircraft which worked with them were called "Goofingtons"; and if they crashed they were known as "Prangingtons".

Altogether this original idea from Commander Dymock Watson proved a great success, although the casualty rate was high. When Commander Watson was trying to persuade the RAF and Naval staffs to develop the scheme he had a little pamphlet printed, with

its page divided into two halves. On the left was a photograph of a lot of German Army trucks straggling along a desert road. Bombs from the RAF were dropping beside them but no hits. In big letters underneath this photograph was "HITS - Holes in the Sand". The other half of the page showed an enemy ship sinking with a full deck-load of lorries and tanks etc. Underneath this was "HITS - Havoc in the Supply Lines".

At this point there is another story about torpedo bombers. My friend Lieutenant Anthony Oxley was flying a Fleet Air Arm Swordfish to attack a convoy which was at extreme range. He flew out with overload tanks etc., but could find no target and being short of fuel, had to turn for home. It was a lovely, calm, Mediterranean night with a full moon. But they had been airborne for a long time. Suddenly he heard on the voice-pipe his Observer shout "Are you all right, old boy". He replied "Yes of course I am all right": and he was all right - except that instead of the moon being up above the aircraft it was down underneath it! So he put the aircraft the right way up again and said brusquely to the Observer "Where are we?". The Observer replied "I don't know, my chart board fell out when you were upside down just now". All they could do was to press on to the south, until eventually they saw a dark line on the horizon which must be North Africa. So Oxley thought "Turn left parallel with this and I'm bound to get somewhere", but they were desperately short of fuel. After some time they saw runway lights on the shore. He did not know whether it was a friendly or an enemy airstrip but he realised he must get down and hope for the best. He made a good landing, but the first thing he met on the "runway" was a huge boulder. The aircraft hit this, nosed in and fell over on its back leaving the crew hanging by their straps. But bi-planes are kind to their crews and they were O.K, although the aircraft was a write-off.

This was one of the dummy runways which the British used to light up at night a little distance from their real landing ground so that the enemy would waste their bombs. Perhaps the last word about these dummies was had by a German pilot with an unusual sense of humour who flew over and dropped a wooden bomb on the dummy!

Anthony Oxley was the chap who eventually became my brother-in-law -although this is another story.

Eventually I got out of hospital and Commander Watson told me to go off on sick-leave. I decided to take the train up to Beirut and to go ski-ing in the Cedars of Lebanon. I joined the train at Kantara, where the railway crosses the Suez Canal. The train took a very long trip across the Sinai Desert, because it kept stopping. At one time when it stopped I wandered along the corridor and came face-to-face with the most staggering-looking girl I had ever seen in my life - a blonde with huge saucer-blue eyes. She was in pale blue uniform. She explained that she was a nurse with the Australian Army. "Come and meet the others" she said. So I followed her along and there were a couple of compartments full of these gorgeous girls. One in particular I remember, sitting by the window, and I thought "That must be this girl's sister". It was PAMELA BUSHELL.

Their story was that they had come out from Australia with an Australian Army Hospital to serve in the Middle East. The 7th Australian Division was up in the desert but their hospital was located near Haifa. The girls had been to Cairo for a few days leave. I was very interested in their story and even more so in the girls themselves. But they got out at Haifa and I went on to Beirut.

To continue this saga, a few weeks afterwards I was in Alexandria harbour walking down the jetty at the Royal Egyptian Yacht Club when there were two girls dangling their legs in the sea. I recognised them and they recognised me. One said, speaking extraordinarily fast "I'm Pamela Bushell and this is Amber Bushell".

My children know of this story. Without it they would not be in this world, because four years later Pamela Bushell became my wife.

At this time I was stationed at the Fleet Air Arm base in Dekeilah. The Australian Hospital had moved to Busilly which is just to the east of Alexandria, in the Nile Delta. We had exchanged telephone numbers and the girls used to come into Alex for dances at the Union Club and to go sailing in the dinghies which were available at the Yacht Club. This very happy state of affairs continued for several months. Fortunately for me I had a large Ford station-wagon allocated to me by the Fleet Air Arm because I used to have to go up into the desert very frequently. So this also proved extremely handy for taking the girls to and fro from their hospital.

Soon afterwards I was standing at the bar and by complete chance standing beside me was Anthony Oxley. I said to him "Come and help me to take care of a couple of birds this afternoon" - or the equivalent in the slang of those days. He did: And a few days later he said that his aircraft (Swordfish) needed a test flight in the early morning. Would I like to go with him? We flew over to Busilli, whereupon all the nurses ran out of their tents and began waving pillow-cases etc. at us. This happened several times and developed into a technique by which we would glide very low over the tents, lean out and drop stones with impassioned notes wrapped round them for Pamela and Amber. This only stopped when the matron complained about the low flying.



Pamela and Amber as V.A.D.'s

DEPARTURE TIME, 1300 HOURS, FRIDAY.



Edinburgh Castle on 102 berth

The Union-Castle Line inaugurated a weekly service from Southampton to Cape Town in 1936, the passage time being 13.5 days, and this ran until the outbreak of WW2. Sailing time was the much publicised “Every Thursday at 4.0 o’clock”. After the war the service –requiring eight mail ships - resumed in October 1950 and continued until the sailing of Stirling Castle on 8 July 1965 when an “accelerated service” was introduced using only seven ships running at a higher speed and reducing the passage time to 11.5 days. This service was intended to be provided by the first post war rebuilds, Edinburgh Castle and Pretoria Castle, the “new” Pendennis, Windsor and Transvaal Castles plus the two new cargo mail ships, Southampton Castle and Good Hope Castle. In the event, delivery of Good Hope Castle was delayed by a builder’s dispute



Good Hope Castle on her final call in Capetown

and she did not enter the service until January 1966. In the interim Capetown Castle took the scheduled sailing. Departure time from Southampton was 1300 hours every Friday and the new service commenced with the sailing of Windsor Castle on 16 July 1965.

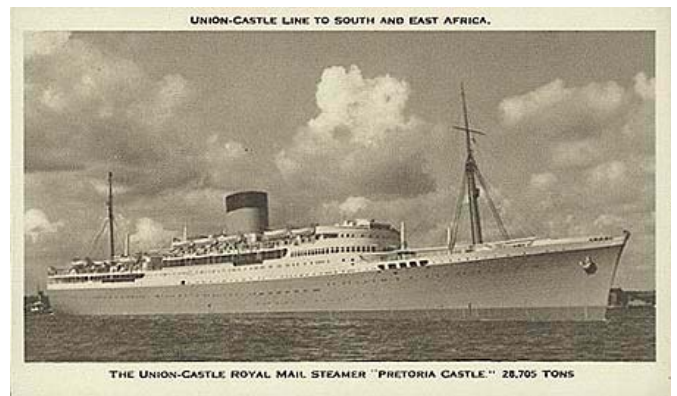


Windsor Castle on 101 berth

To the outsider this may have looked like a very smooth and simple operation but it was achieved only by the skills of, and a high degree of cooperation between, the various Company Departments –Technical, Cargo, Marine and Catering.

Inevitably, behind the scenes there were “problems” and a few of them, with the solutions that enabled us to maintain an almost uninterrupted service, are outlined below.

When the Edinburgh and Pretoria were built in 1948, 17 years previous, the faster service was under consideration and it was thought that these two ships would be hard pressed to maintain the higher speed required; to offset this problem both ships were drydocked, the underwater hulls grit blasted and the overlapping shell plating butts were “streamlined” with epoxy resin fillets to reduce hull friction. From time to time these fillets needed partial renewing but these older ships invariably maintained the service speed required.



Windsor Castle (1960) and Transvaal Castle (1961), built in different shipyards and having different main boilers, had identical power from Pamatrada turbines. In this respect they were considered (technically) to be “sister ships” and hence only one pair (LH & RH) of spare 4 bladed propellers was kept at the KGV drydock in Southampton. However, although of identical powers, the hull forms differed and Windsor had 4 bladed propellers whilst Transvaal’s were 6 bladed.

On one homeward passage Transvaal reported vibration on one shaft and reduced RPM until she docked. An emergency drydock revealed that one blade of one propeller had broken off. There was no alternative but to replace this six bladed propeller with the four bladed spare and to our relief the ship operated for many voyages with non matching propellers without any problem.

(It was later revealed through metallurgical examination that the propeller manufacturer had changed a material specification to our disadvantage and so they provided a replacement propeller without charge.)

During one Southampton “in port” period Pendennis Castle had been fitted routinely with a new superheater element in one boiler. This needed many “in situ” welds (and, consequently, several hydraulic tests) thus using up the ships distilled water reserve. Normally, the pre sailing routine included the operation of the evaporators to replenish this reserve but due to a misunderstanding this did not take place and the shortage was only appreciated a few hours before sailing time. To avoid delay the ship sailed at 1300 hours as scheduled, using only two of her three boilers, but off Portsmouth Harbour she anchored (most passengers were having lunch by now!) whilst a

prearranged RN water boat brought out a supply of distilled water.



Pendennis Castle rounding Calshot Light Vessel

*Picture courtesy of the artist, L.Sinclair,
www.lsinclair.btinternet.co.uk*

Pendennis Castle was undergoing an accommodation upgrade during a Southampton in-port period and this necessitated the shutting down of one section of the sprinkler system to modify pipe work. A fire broke out in the accommodation section concerned and major fire brigade units were called. The amount of fire fighting water used caused the ship to list and, to avoid a capsize, the fire brigade had to be advised to stop using the monitors on the two firefighting tugs fighting the fire from seaward. Shortly afterwards, using conventional methods, the fire was extinguished and the transfer of bunkers restored the ship to the upright. The gutted accommodation was panelled off and the ship sailed on schedule the following week but it took three in port periods to repair the damage. A major headache was removing the smell of smoke from the air conditioning trunking and this was achieved by installing large quantities of "air freshener" throughout the trunking!



Transvaal Castle at 102

Transvaal Castle had carried out a normal dock trial on the Thursday before sailing (our standard practice) but after the gangway had been removed on the Friday at 1300 hours it was discovered that one of the main turbine manoeuvring valves was stuck shut! Technical staff and some workmen from our ship repairer reboarded and, with great difficulty and in very hot conditions (the valve was at 750 degrees F), the valve was opened up and it was revealed that the internal sleeve had moved position, something new to us. Fortunately we had a spare sleeve which was cooled down in the refrigeration brine room and fitted to the valve which then operated correctly. The Area Director had demanded that we declare how long the repair would take (this before we knew what the problem was)

and we made a guess at 3 hours. The job was actually finished in 2.5 hours but we stuck to our guess and were later congratulated on our accuracy! This was one occasion when sailing WAS delayed but that ship easily made up the time.

During another "in port" period of Transvaal a bunker instanter valve needed to be overhauled. The repair yard fitters concerned did not act as instructed and this resulted in a massive oil spill into the alternator room bilges, heavy fuel oil to a depth of about 12 inches. It took the rest of the in port period to clean up the mess but sailing was not affected.

On one voyage Windsor Castle shed the HP turbine blades on one engine and this necessitated removal of the turbine rotor for reblading in Glasgow. The turbine casing was secured, emergency bypass pipes fitted and the ship kept schedule for at least two round trips before the turbine was refitted - and this with no loss of speed but with increased fuel consumption due to loss of efficiency.

As the Cape Mail service included the carriage of large quantities of refrigerated cargo (e.g. Transvaal Castle had 361,000 cu.ft. of refrigerated space) it was our practice to schedule all drydockings in the winter when the fruit trade was low. The ships had been designed at build for rapid removal of propellers and withdrawal of tailshafts and this included the provision of an electric capstan in the tunnel space, narrow gauge railway tracks and bogies beneath the shafting and transverse girders to stow drawn shafts. Our ship repairer, Harland and Wolff (and later Vosper Thornycroft) were well practiced in our plans and this resulted in our standard arrangement that if a ship was docked solely for cleaning and painting and perhaps some sea valve work then a period of 2.5 days "dry" (dock pumped down to flooding) was allowed but tail shaft withdrawal (both) required 4 days "dry". These extremely short docking times were almost always achieved and it is known that other passenger ship operators using the port did not understand how this was done! If stabilizer overhaul was required (in KGV dock only) then one stabilizer fin was removed at one docking and replaced at the next docking and the stabilizing system adjusted to give righting moments with only one blade extended. Hence it took 4 years (4 dockings) to overhaul a pair of stabilizer fins. (Windsor, Transvaal and Pendennis only).

David Aris, Technical Manager, Union Castle Line.1967-1976.



**Southampton Castle passing boat show pontoons off
Mayflower Park on her final outward trip**



“AURIGA”

Reproduced with kind permission of the artist, John Michael Groves, R.S.M.A.
(www.johngroves.org)

Ship Auriga
June 1876

My Dear Mama

I received your kind letter and also Argo's and Robert's. (*His elder sister and younger brother.*) I was very glad to get them as I had been waiting for them ever since we arrived and I should have been very much disappointed if I had not. I shall give you an account of our passage of what I can remember of it, as Robert wishes to know every particular. We sailed out of the Mersey on the 1st of March with a head wind. When we were off Holyhead at 12 o'clock the first night I felt rather sick. It was pretty rough then and I went down off the poop to turn in. I was just going in the door thinking I was going to have a nice comfortable sleep, when a big sea came over and sent me flying along the deck into the scuppers and after about five minutes wandering about in water I managed to get in our berth so you guess how I enjoyed the first night. The tug left us off Tuskar in very heavy weather. I should have sent you a note but I was so sick I could not manage to write one. The Bay of Biscay was still worse. The first fine day was off Cape Finistere. We were very close in to it and we could see the surf lashing round the rocks, but we could not weather it on account of being so near land and on a lea shore and we had to stand into the Bay of Biscay again where we got more bad weather. We were beating about the Cape and after six days we weathered it after nearly being ashore once and putting the ship about two or three times a day. After we got round the Cape we had fine weather all the way South except a few tropical squalls. We caught five or six albatross and numerous other birds going round the Cape of Good Hope which would make a nice muff for Argo or you. We had two or three gales in the Indian Ocean. Two or three days before we sighted the coast of Australia we had a very heavy thunderstorm. It began about 11 o'clock P.M. It was blowing pretty fresh and about 12 o'clock the thunder was something fearful, fork and chain lightning and not a breath of wind. It had gone down in less than ten minutes. It was pitch dark and hailing. Some of the hail was almost as big as marbles. The darkness was the worst part of it, all the men running up against the house and blocks and tripping over each other. I shall never forget that night as I nearly broke my nose. I tripped over a spar or block, I don't exactly know what it was but I came down on the deck like a hundred of bricks. Two days after this we were along Sandridge Pier and I am now sitting down writing this letter safe, well and healthy and now I think I have given you a very fair account of our passage out. We had over 30 steerage passengers with and in the rough weather their place was something awful. Some of them never came on deck for a month after we sailed but they were very good company for us. While we were in the tropics we played cricket, had all sorts of games on deck and if it was raining we would have concerts in the steerage, in fact I would not mind having passengers every voyage. We have now been in port nearly a fortnight and I have only been in Melbourne once so I can't tell you anything about it yet. The Captain is very good to us and so are all the officers and I like them very much indeed. I don't know where we shall be going and neither does the Captain until he gets a letter from the owners but I shall let you know in my next letter. I suppose you won't whether we have arrived or not until you get this letter as the tele between England and Australia is cut off or something to do with it as no communication goes on. We are very comfortable in our berth except in weather like we had in the Channel and Bay of Biscay when it was six or eight inches deep in water. Fancy if all the bedrooms were six inches deep in water for 3 weeks and no fire to dry your clothes with, you would all feel very comfortable I am sure. When I left, Mr McKenzie asked me to enquire at the Olive Branch Hotel about his son. I have not done as yet but I will, and let you know in my next letter, so if he asks, you can tell him that I have not been there yet. I suppose when you read all, you will be saying you will expect another soon but I don't think I can write more than two more. I expect we shall not stop here more than a month. Some of my things are not good at all and I have no boots, for they are not fit to go ashore with, for they all want mending. I shall write Argo and Robert as well as you next time so I think I shall do very well. I don't think I can find any more. I will close and hoping you will get this and that you are all well.

I remain

My dear Mamma

Your affectionate son

Geo. B. Thomson

P.S. Tell Robert that the fastest we have gone is 15 1/2 knots an hour and 309 miles in 24 hours.

Rope Ends



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, starting 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.

February	G. Angas J. Bowden
March	L.W. Hall F.E.G. Renshawe
April	B. Simpson P. Le Voguer



FUNCTIONS WITH PRE-ORDERED MEALS

The Club holds a number of functions during the year where it is necessary to know the number of attendees for a deadline, usually one or two days prior to the event, when the correct number of meals must be ordered from the caterer. This also implies that the number of meals ordered must be paid for by the Club. This is particularly the case for Buffet Suppers and similar events held in the Club Room.

When this circumstance arises the Functions Officer will include in the notice posted on the board the deadline by which not only must the places be booked but also paid for, and the list will then be closed. If we fail to do this either there will be insufficient food for everyone attending or, if anyone books but does not pay and then fails to attend then the Club may lose money on the function, and neither of these possibilities is desirable.

NEW CACHALOTS

M. Smedley
A. Blackler

Previously Elected

J. Taylor
D.W. Hopkins
C.F.G. Crookshank

Wine Tasting

The wine tasting arranged for the 9th May had to be cancelled due to lack of support due, probably, to the unfortunate clash with other events at around the same time. We are, of course, only able to arrange the tastings to suit the twice yearly visits of the producers to this country and hope to be able to arrange a future tasting at a more suitable time.

It has been drawn to my attention that the three "Previously Elected" members above were not acknowledged in previous issues of *The Cachalot*. My apologies Gentlemen, it was not a ruse to make you peruse the magazine from cover to cover, but a fault that most of us are guilty of, a break down in communications. I can only publish what I am given, or what I make up myself.

You may notice that this edition does, in fact, contain more editorial input than usual. This is because my sources seem to be drying up and unless someone can supply me with more copy we may have to revert to 12 pages again. Or publish those committee meeting minutes! - Ed

GONE ALOFT



Captain P.W. Love

Past Captain Peter Love died on 7 March, aged 77, after a fight against cancer.

Peter went to sea with BI in 1946 and joined P&O on gaining his 2nd Mates ticket., progressing through the ranks to become Master of the large passenger vessels such as Arcadia, Victoria and Sea Princess.

He was taken off the Island Princess on a stretcher due to ill health in '81 and on recovery became Marine Operations Manager for P&O Cruises in Southampton. He joined the Club in 1982 and was appointed Captain in 1985.

At around that time he became a Trustee of the Apostleship of the Sea and in April 2003 was invested with the title and insignia of a Knight of the Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory the Great in recognition of over 20 years service to the AOS. He was not just a friend to seafarers but to the homeless as well, being the founder of Yeovil Night Shelter in his Somerset home town. Lord Ashdown, who helped launch the night shelter, was among those to pay tribute, saying "I am very saddened to hear of his death and my condolences go to his family. He was an important part of the town's history and was at the heart of the community."

Peter was a popular and social Cachalot and is well remembered for his party piece, a song about the Elephant's bottom. It is said that he could sing a different verse at every rendition.

Our condolences to his wife of 49 years, Jane, and their three children and four grandchildren. His son, Simon, a first officer with P&O, described Captain Peter Love as: "an inspirational character."

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:

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Dates for your Diary

Fri	Jun	13	Club Buffet Supper (Max 40)
Thu	Jun	19	Shipping Festival Service, Winchester
Sat	July	12	Curry Lunch, Gurkha Kitchen
Fri	Aug	8	Cowes Week Fireworks cruise, Shieldhall
Sun	Aug	31	Coach trip to Southern Brittany, 5 days
Mon	Sept	15	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



On the evening of 28 March our annual skittles evening was held at the Southampton (Old) Green Bowling Club. Having been in training for several hours beforehand, a total of thirty-six fit, young and healthy members and spouses turned up, including one past captain/exboatsteerer who was accompanied by three ladies (including his wife). No prizes for guessing who.

At half time a healthy meal of fish and chips followed by profiteroles was enjoyed by all present.

Our Club Captain distinguished himself by being the only person to hurl three balls without felling a single pin. There is a suggestion that he may have done this on purpose, as the scorer had bet him a pint of ale that he couldn't miss all nine pins with three balls. In spite of all this he still did not manage to gain the dubious accolade of the wooden spoon, which was won by Louisa Turner. Also, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, the "Morris Maulers" was the highest scoring team, even without any cheating on the part of the scorer.

The prize for the highest scoring lady went to Anne Cartwright with 22 pins knocked down. Reg Pretty, who won the highest scoring gentleman for the last two years was obviously off form this year and the prize went to John Mileusnic also with a score of 22.. Our grateful thanks to those who helped replace the pins and return the balls after each game, and the skittles alley is now booked for 27 March, 2009 so put the date in your diaries and get in training now!

