

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS CLUB

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## Captain's Log

In addition to Christmas and its various festivities, something to look forward in December is the Winter Equinox; not, I hasten to add, for its own sake, but for the promise of lengthening days into the New Year. Even our blackbirds seem to dislike the dark, especially the one that wakes up at about 0630 – dark, of course – and then proceeds to give a prolonged alarm call outside our bedroom window! It is much better in the summer when (probably) the same bird celebrates the joys of life outside the same window. Mind you, at 0430 in June, even that becomes a little trying!

Our Clubrooms are looking very smart these days, as is the entrance lobby on the ground floor. The whole area was painted some time ago by a volunteer party of Cachalots and the new carpets in the entrance hall downstairs complement our own Clubroom carpets, resulting in a bright and “shipshape” appearance throughout. We hope to increase the “feel good factor” shortly, by making use of the small room with en-suite facilities opposite to the main Clubroom. This will become the ladies’ cloakroom and will undoubtedly make life more convenient (sorry about that!) for the ladies.

Several Club Members and their partners enjoyed a day out to Buckingham Palace on 15th September. Ann and I missed the trip because we were on holiday in France, enjoying a full blown Tramontane blowing at severe gale force for much of the time. I understand the day trip was very enjoyable and well organised. No doubt a full report of the day will appear elsewhere in this issue of The Cachalot.

The next Club function took place on 11 October at the Masonic Hall, Botley. This was our 80th Anniversary Dinner. Numbers attending were disappointing for such event, especially considering the quality of the dinner and entertainment thereafter. (Apparently there were a couple of other events on the same evening, hence the reduction in expected numbers.) The entertainment consisted of a talk by Honorary Member Captain Charles Reginald Kelso MBE; the subject being the history of the “The Cachalots”. As may be expected from Reg, the talk was well researched, well presented, amusing, and with just the right amount of reverence and pathos to remind us of the respect in which the Club and its membership was held over past years. Those of us presently in positions of responsibility for this Club have very large footsteps to fill.

We had only just recovered from the large dinner at the Masonic Hall on 11th October, when a week later there was a good turnout at the “Gurkha Kitchen” in Southampton. It was good to see the event so well supported. Being on the (under)ground floor, with a lift, it enabled some of our less agile members and guests to attend. We are conscious that our Clubroom on the first floor, without a lift, is not easily accessible, so it was wonderful to see you all. Needless to say the curry was consumed with almost indecent haste by some, testament to those who spent their early careers in Asiatic waters, or with Asiatic crews.

I make no apology for the plug, but many of us support the campaign fronted by Joanna Lumley, demanding that retired Gurkha soldiers who have served in the British Army should be allowed to settle in this country if they so wish. My father served with the Gurkhas in Burma and had total respect for the disciplined and “tough little men from the mountains”. Joanna’s email informing us of the High Court victory arrived as I was about to set out for the curry lunch. It tasted all the better!

I was privileged to lay the wreath on behalf of “The Cachalots” at the Cenotaph in Southampton on Remembrance Sunday, 9th November. As usual it was a sombre and moving occasion, made more so by the military personnel, reservists and cadets present in all their pomp. We are all thankful “...and at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.”

November was quiet from the social viewpoint. Although it was not a Club matter, we all enjoyed the departure celebrations of that essential part of Southampton over the last 40 years, “Queen Elizabeth 2”. She was such a familiar part of the landscape of Southampton Docks that they named the terminal after her! Mariners like to swing the lamps and give the impression that they are a tough bunch. Don’t believe a word of it! There were a few moist eyes on the evening of 11 November 2008; mine included, and I never set foot aboard her! Having missed out on Concorde and now QE2, Ann insists we should stay on her in Dubai when she is finally converted. I’m not so sure; a ship should be living thing, not a luxurious hulk permanently moored to the shore. We’ll see.....

Heartiest congratulations to Editor Terry Clark and several contributors for the excellent supplement “Cachalots and the QE2”, sent out with this edition of “The Cachalot”. The suggestion has already been made that a few copies should be signed by the contributors and kept safely for posterity. I think that is a splendid idea. How about it Terry?

Looking to the future, the Annual General Meeting will be held in the Clubroom on 22 January 2009. This will be followed by the Burns Night Supper at King’s Court, Chandlers Ford on 24th January and the Sea Pie Supper at the Guildhall on 6th February. Please buy your tickets soon; they are going quickly!

As I close this edition of the Captain’s log, I am conscious that while we are preparing to eat, drink and generally enjoy ourselves over the next few weeks, many of our young men and women are in harm’s way in foreign lands and at sea. Our thoughts and best wishes go out to them and their families over the festive season.

Ann joins me in wishing the members of the Southampton Master Mariners Club and all readers of “The Cachalot”,

A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year!

Leslie Morris  
Club Captain



## **Boatsteerer's Locker**

The Boatsteerer was unable to contribute his normal copy in time for this edition due to a bout of sickness and I am sure you will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery. However, he had already produced the following article which I hope will be the start of an occasional series.

### **IT'S GOOD TO GO TO SEA**

#### ***Background***

How many of us have, during the last decade or so, either actively participated in or sat on the sidelines and listened to conversations bemoaning the state of the sea going professions and the job as it is today in comparison with what it used to be like in the 'good old days' and have concluded that 'it's all going down the pan'?

That going to sea today is different from doing so thirty or forty years ago is undoubtedly correct. We would be amazed if within an industry that during this period has become global and benefitted so much from new communications and ship design and equipment technologies had not changed. So yes, life at sea today IS different. So is our whole social fabric. We now have a much higher level of sexual and racial equality. Improving international relations and the gradual dismantling of geopolitical and trade boundaries together with a much greater access into higher education has seen a massive increase in the professional classes and career opportunities. So the question: "So why go to sea today?" needs a multifaceted answer. One part of a response to that question is, in addition to terms and conditions, risk and return, etc, that potential new entrants into ship operations and seafaring need to know from people who are today's practitioners what life at sea TODAY is really like for them.

#### ***Introduction***

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club has for many years been either the instigator or supporter of maritime debate. Under the generic heading, "***IT'S GOOD TO GO TO SEA***", this and future articles will hopefully provide some 'good news' stories that will be of interest, not only for our members, but also hopefully for a wider readership. In this way perhaps we can make a small contribution to talking up this multifaceted industry of ours which is so desperately short of young professional people, both ashore and afloat, to maintain the high standards of maritime excellence that is our heritage.

This edition introduces two of our younger members who are professional seafarers and are both proud and happy to be at sea.



**Louise Sara**

Before embarking on a sea going career Louise was awarded a BA (Hons) Business and Law from the Southampton Solent University. Dad, a marine engineer with plenty of sea time under his belt, a stint as a principal lecturer at the Warsash Maritime Academy and now working for the MCA had spent eighteen years advising Louise not to go to sea. Against all these odds she decided that she wanted to go to sea. Louise is married, lives with her husband in Hampshire and is happy to be at sea.



**Heather Carlson**

A Canadian national who has been a British resident for two and a half years. Heather is married, lives in Hampshire and is happy to be at sea.

## Louise

**Sea time** Louise has spent eight and a half years at sea and signed up with P&O Cruises for a three and a half year apprenticeship. Louise is now serving as second officer with P&O Ferries on the Dover to Calais run and next year she will complete her studies and take her Masters Orals

**Why did I want to go to sea?** When I was eight, Dad took me to see Wendy Maugham at Red Funnel ferries and since that day, in spite of all Dads advice, I knew I wanted to go to sea (Ed's note – Wendy you must tell me the secret sometime!)

**What do I like about life at sea?** Every day is different, demanding schedules – out of port by midnight, ship handling under supervision and constantly busy watches. A 12 hours on 12 hours off routine encompasses both 'at sea' and cargo handling activities alongside and no, we do not get ashore very often, but I am home for every other week. In addition to watchkeeping duties I organise Safety Officers meetings and complete 'ships incident' report forms for first aiders. The salary is good and it is a job which my husband and I consider is very compatible with having a family. I consider that this is a career with bigger and better opportunities and many challenges. Oh yes, and being on the bridge during sunrise on calm, clear mornings with all manner of other vessels plying their trade with you is just something else!

**The bad times?** Yes, of course, show me the job that does not have a down side. Driving to Dover on Wednesdays at 04:00hrs is not a bundle of fun, missing the occasional social event can be disappointing, but all in all the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages.

**What now?** Once I have my Masters CoC I hope to get command within five to seven years after which, at this point in time, I see myself staying at sea for several more years.

## Heather

Heather did her first trip to sea as a cadet with Teekay tankers and then moved to Princess Cruises for the remainder of her cadetship. She holds a Diploma in Nautical Science from the Pacific Maritime Training Academy in North Vancouver and a Canadian 1st Mates Intermediate Certificate of Competence. As a Canadian apprentice she received a salary whilst at sea but no financial support from the company whilst studying. This of course was in stark comparison with her British colleagues. On October 21st 2005 she joined the P&O passenger liner Artemis as a 3rd Officer and will shortly sit her 1st Mates/Masters CoC and upgrade her Canadian national diploma to a Higher National Diploma.

Dad loved sailing and from the age of seven I always went with him on the lakes in rural Northern Alberta. One year he took us on a family holiday in the Caribbean. In the time it took to fly from our home in Edmonton, Alberta to the British Virgin Islands, we went from -35°C to +35°C and a whole new world opened up for me. I decide then that I belonged on the ocean. There was no information about shipping at school and I explored the options of joining the Canadian Coast Guard or Navy. By chance I found out about the merchant navy and the training academy in North Vancouver. I applied to the college and was accepted due to my time spent with the Sea Cadet Corps. After six months of college I started my first trip to sea with Teekay Shipping.

I have a wide range of friends in many parts of the world. They have a correspondingly wide range of interesting work and social lives but nowhere have I found or heard of a more interesting, varied, challenging and professionally demanding career than going to sea as a ships officer. From being 1,000 miles up the Amazon river one day to the Alaskan coast, back to the British Virgin Islands and many other places keeps me learning and looking ahead with anticipation. To be on the bridge on the 'four to eight' and experience some of the incredibly beautiful sunrises and sunsets. The night skies that are filled with such a mass of stars and planets that you can actually see with the only sound being the ocean sliding past the hull to disturb the peace (until the phone rings and somebody wants something!) and to be paid to do it all go towards making this career so attractive.

Yes, of course, when I started there were many horrible times, the culture change for one was very difficult and I did feel very homesick. There were times when being the only Canadian and also the only female I felt very isolated. The job was often not at all what I expected and some times it was tedious but you cannot just give up can you and I am so glad that I stuck it out. I feel fortunate that my first trip to sea was on an oil tanker because it has built my character and now all other experiences seem easy in comparison.

My current duties, in addition to being OOW, include compiling the daily passenger log and being the ships' Meteorological officer, as well as other passenger oriented duties. Once I have my masters CoC I hope to be appointed as an Environmental Officer with Princess Cruise Lines. How long I stay at sea and what I will do if I do 'come ashore' I do not know. At the moment I am very happy to be at sea.

## Master Mariners' Pilgrimage to Brittany

On 31<sup>st</sup> August some eleven master mariners and their ladies set out on what has become an almost annual pilgrimage to France. This is the time when we laugh, we socialize, we tell stories, we get to know one another better, in fact, we bond; indeed, you have only to think of Chaucer's motley band of pilgrims and you get the picture!

Our driver, who was introduced to us as Bert, (but variously known as George or Pierre, but who was in fact called Alan) seemed a little bemused initially by his changing identity. However, even by the time we reached Portsmouth, he was beginning to get the measure of his fellow travelling companions. Despite photos being taken in a restricted area, and regardless of an official insisting that the pictures be deleted from the offending camera, we were allowed to board the ferry. For some the chosen option was an early night; for others, a drink in the bar, a splendid meal and time to catch up with news.

The sun was shining as we sailed into the harbour at St Malo on Monday morning, and soon we were on our way to our first port of call, the walled Breton town of Dinan. Some of the intrepid travellers set off down the very steep medieval street, Rue du Jerzual, to explore Dinan Port on the Rance River; others decided to enjoy a more leisurely cup of coffee in the sun while watching the world go by.

Then we were on our way again. Our destination was Vannes, a delightful town in Brittany, situated in the Golfe du Morbihan, and where we were to spend the next three nights. We arrived there in the early afternoon and were given the opportunity to explore the town before settling into our hotel. It was a pleasant sunny afternoon and there was time to stroll around the harbour, to explore the delightful old town with timbered buildings; to enjoy refreshment at the street cafes, to be entertained by the resident violinist and his lady friend, or to visit St. Peter's Cathedral where our modern pilgrims walked the same well worn path of the immense ambulatory, which, in the middle ages had been filled with pilgrims who prayed at the tomb of Vincent Ferrier.

Our first evening in the hotel was marked by a Club dinner at which Captain Peter Marriott, the most recent past captain present, formerly welcomed us to Vannes. In true French style the meal was delicious, the company great and the evening was enjoyed by all. The holiday had truly begun.

On Tuesday we set off on what proved to be a long day out. Our first stop was at the delightful old town of Quimper, the oldest Breton city. Heavy rain on our arrival meant that many of us went straight to the beautiful cathedral church of St. Corentin whose magnificent spires dominated the urban landscape and whose beautiful stained-glass windows were a joy to behold. After a bite of lunch (a word of warning ... best not to ask for a sandwich in an upper crust restaurant... a word of advice.. the crêpes are certainly to be recommended!!) the rain stopped and it was possible to explore the cobbled streets of the medieval quarter.

At the appointed time we all returned to the coach for our onward journey (at the end of the holiday we were congratulated on our good time-keeping) which was to take us to the Crozon Peninsular and the Pointe de Pen-Hir in particular. Outstanding views of the rugged coastline were the backdrop to the Monument for those merchant seamen who had died in the Battle of the Atlantic. Given the nature of our group, it was a fitting and emotional place to visit. Huge anchors stood like sentinels on the pathway up to the site and it was here that we chose to take a group photograph. Having viewed the site and watched a video while lost in our own particular thoughts and memories, it was a pensive group of people who returned to the coach.



Vannes is home to some excellent restaurants and that evening some of us chose dine out, others, weary after their day's outing, remained in the hotel. Later that evening a group sat in the hotel foyer sipping coffee and reminiscing, indeed, just like Chaucer's pilgrims, they each shared stories and poems. The accolade must surely go to the Antipodean who was certainly the star performer!

There is something very attractive about French markets, and the following morning Vannes market certainly didn't disappoint. Colourful stalls lined the streets which were full of hustle and bustle. Some decided to go there on foot along the canal path, others by taxi. Some of us are still perplexed why a certain group travelled by taxi into town empty handed but walked back to the hotel when laden with heavy parcels! Perhaps they are weight training for 2012!

On Wednesday afternoon most of us decided to visit the pretty town of Auray. The old quarter is particularly attractive, with timbered buildings and a lovely 17<sup>th</sup> century stone bridge which spans the River Loch. In Auray, we split into groups, the gourmands sampled the local cuisine, others set off to explore the old port and to soak up the beautiful sunshine, while for a few a trip on Le Petit Train du Loch was a must.

We had just returned to the hotel and were anticipating a cup of tea, or a chance to soak our tired feet, when an urgent phone-call resulted in us all walking at the double down to the water to catch the good ship Rhuy's for our evening boat trip. (A little bird informs us that on hearing about the rapid change of plan, one who shall remain nameless all but choked on what he was eating but then quietly composed himself and phoned all the rooms to ensure that no one would miss the boat). It was worth the rush. The sun shone, the sea sparkled and despite being well wrapped up and protected against the wind, we had a wonderful view of the Golfe de Morbihan from the sea. Suffice to say the views were fantastic.

Although the hotel was an easy walk into the town, at night Alan, alias, Burt, George or Pierre, dropped us off and picked us up at pre-arranged times. That evening he was back on duty, and once again we all enjoyed another great meal, our last in Vannes. The following morning we started to make our way home and by lunch time, Mont Saint Michel, the famous Normandy landmark and for centuries a place of pilgrimage, was in sight. The wind was blowing and it was cold but we made a brief visit before heading to Caen for our ferry home.

The whole group dined together on board, this was the final highlight and an excellent end to our trip. Quite memorable, too, for those who ordered the lamb, they certainly bit off more than they could chew!! The portions were enough to feed a family of four.

Typical fare of pilgrims, once probably bread and ale, has today been supplemented by our customary pear drops (now wrapped, undoubtedly to conform with EU standards!) and also by pastilles, sherbets, toffees and Werthers, suggesting that the Master Mariners love their sweeties! Two of our ladies demonstrated their business acumen by between them purchasing two bags of mini Toblerones and thereby gaining a third bag free which were then shared amongst us all.

What else can we tell you? Well, Chaucer described his pilgrims, their appearance, their clothes, and we are left wondering about what he would have thought of the Mariners' 'silly hat day', when a Foreign Legionnaire's hat, a tartan beret, a straw panama and a canvas safari hat, not to mention the knotted handkerchief, were worn by these upright gentlemen of the Master Mariners' Club! And, furthermore, regular pilgrims will recall that a certain member is always keen to display his knees on such occasions, donning his shorts at the first opportunity. This holiday was no exception, we were not disappointed; indeed, he had competition when our esteemed leader appeared wearing a very snazzy pair of shorts and displaying a fine pair of legs!

However, these two fashion buffs should be thanked for all they did to make our holiday such a happy one, well planned and certainly one to be remembered.

#### Pilgrims Anonymous



Stripes or wrinkles?



Calls itself a Pub? They only serve *cold* beer!

The scene : *Le Rafiot*, a small streetside cafe in Vannes.

The players : Four *rosbifs*, the *Patron*, various locals.

The *Patron* has just resignedly fetched a warmed glass for the *très froid* beer of the 1st *rosbif*.

After much deliberation the *rosbifs* daringly decide to go native and order *Croque Monsieur*.

1st *Rosbif* : "Do you have any Worcestershire sauce?"

*Patron*, (raised eyebrows) : "You are in France now, Monsieur!"

## MALTA & ALGIERS

### *Le Fantasque*

The worst of the Blitz in Malta was now over. Towards the end of 1942 I was suddenly relieved from my duties with the Fleet Air Arm and sent to Malta to become Staff Officer Operations to the Captain Coastal Forces. I was rather sad about this because I was becoming very interested in aircraft operations.

For me a personal consideration was that the Australian Division in the Middle East was recalled to Australia at about this time. With them, of course, went their military hospital; and with their hospital my friend Pamela. I cannot now remember whether she or I left Alexandria first - and neither can I remember how I actually got to Malta. All I can be sure is that - as so often in wartime - it was a "pierhead jump".

The job in Malta was very interesting and gave me the opportunity to find out a lot about Coastal Forces (i.e. motor torpedo boats and motor gunboats etc) which stood me in good stead later on in Yugoslavia.

Before long I was back in Cairo attached to a planning group, which was supposed to be working on future ideas for the next campaign in the Mediterranean. After quite a short time in Cairo our whole team was ordered to move to Algiers. "Operation Torch" - the Allied landings in North Africa - had taken place before this and the Naval Commander in Chief Mediterranean now had his HQ in Algiers (1943).

Our little team in Cairo had somehow acquired a three-ton truck. I asked for permission to drive this thing to Algiers overland, accompanied by my friend "Flatfoot" Pearson. However, at the last moment I was told that I must go by air with the rest of the staff, so Flatfoot set off on his own. The rest of us took off from Cairo in an RAF Hudson. Hudsons were good modern American-built aircraft, but they had a reputation for swinging dangerously on take-off or landing.

We were routed to fly via "Marble Arch", an RAF landing ground in the Libyan desert. It was called "Marble Arch" because it was located near an enormous concrete ceremonial arch which had been built on Mussolini's orders so that he could make his hoped-for triumphal arrival in Libya when he had conquered it.

The Hudson duly landed, it was fuelled with petrol and we were fuelled with coffee. We got into it again for take-off. It thundered down the runway, swung violently to the right - so violently that both legs of the undercarriage broke off and penetrated the fuel tanks in the wings, both of which caught fire. Very fortunately for us the rear door had not jammed (which sometimes did happen). So out ran a Wren, a Sub-Lieutenant, a Lieutenant (me), a Lt. Commander, a Commander, a Captain, an Admiral (Geoffrey Miles) in that order. The pilot got safely out of the front. We ran to a safe distance from the aircraft and watched it burn like a torch, with all our possessions inside it. So there we were in the Libyan desert with just the khaki shorts and shirts we stood up in. The local RAF were very helpful and gave us toothbrushes. Later on the same day we continued safely to Algiers in another aircraft.

I was based at Algiers for some considerable time, continuing this planning work. I remember that we concentrated on the idea of invading Sardinia. This was, of course, not where the eventual landings took place and with hindsight I suspect that some of the work we did was leaked to the enemy in a roundabout way as part of a deception plan.

Strangely unreal things were going on, and one sideshow we planned was to invade the small island called Pantellaria. In fact this did not happen until many months later and when it did take place there was only one Allied casualty - a Naval Warrant Officer bitten by a donkey!

Early in September 1943 I was sent for by the Chief of Staff and told that the Italian surrender was imminent and that the American 82nd Airborne Division was going to be dropped on Rome - behind the German front line. I was to be sent in charge of a unit of three landing-craft (LCIL) which were to take reinforcements and huge quantities of small-arms ammunition up the Tiber to reinforce the Americans. The Salerno landings, Operation AVALANCHE, were in progress and I was to report there for final instructions. I went to Bizerta to take over the landing-craft, whose CO's did not particularly impress me. I was told that one landing-craft had a broken stern winch, was unable to weigh her anchor and therefore could not go. It was late in the evening and I could not get any technical help from the landing-craft base. But something had to be done, so I went ashore and telephoned Captain Grindle, a very senior and very fearsome RN Captain who was in charge of the entire landing-craft component of the Fleet - many hundreds of them of all shapes and sizes. He was not best pleased by being rung up in the middle of the night personally by a Lieutenant with a stuck anchor-winch - and I got quite a flea in my ear. Nevertheless, within the hour a party of artificers arrived on board and fixed the winch - so off we sailed. When we got to Salerno a couple of days later I reported to the biggest ship I could see, which was the American HQ ship "Ancon". From there I was sent over to see Commodore Oliver in charge of the British section in his much smaller HQ ship "HMS Hilary" (a converted meat-ship from the pre-war South American run). I was told that the

operation to drop the Airborne Division on Rome had been cancelled, and that instead I was to take the American troops and land them at Amalfi - a pleasant holiday resort on the north side of Salerno Bay. As I set off for Amalfi my friend Peter Manisty, who was the navigator of HMS Orion, flashed a signal "You are standing into a minefield". So I altered course. (I did not know it was him, so could not thank him until many years afterwards). That evening we reached Amalfi and landed on a beautiful sandy beach, without any enemy opposition at all. While the ammunition was being carried ashore I walked up the beach to see what was happening and found the Colonel in charge of the Americans sitting happily in a little restaurant eating a huge water-melon and spitting the seeds out of the window.

Eventually we got back to Bizerta with the empty craft, but I have two afterthoughts from this expedition. Firstly we were fortunate that the trip up the Tiber had been cancelled, because we now know that there were two German Panzer Divisions in the area and that the Tiber River was the boundary between them. Also the expedition was arranged in such a hurry that I am not sure that the masts of the LCI's would have gone under the bridges. When I queried this before setting out I was told "Oh, the Partisans will blow up the bridges for you"!

My second memory is a happier one in that Pamela and I took our children for a holiday in Amalfi when we were stationed in Trieste many years after the war.

Next I was sent off to be the British Liaison Officer in the French destroyer leader "Le Fantasque". Le Fantasque was a fine, large, very fast ship which had decided to work with the Allies after the fall of France; she had been sent to the USA and equipped with radar and a quadruple Bofors gun-mounting. When she joined the Fleet in Algiers my orders were to "make sure that the French do what they were told", and to help them to understand the RN signals and way of doing things. I was the only Englishman on board except for one RN signal rating, so it was a little difficult to know what to do if the French did not do what they were told.



I only had schoolboy French and they did not speak English - so I had to learn rather quickly. I did not particularly enjoy my time in this ship. We did a number of fast trips from Bizerta to bombard targets on the west coast of Italy. Once in Bizerta we were very short of fresh water. The French do not drink the stuff, and do not seem to wash very often. When we signalled for fresh water we were told to go inside the inner harbour and fill up from a tanker. The Captain refused. He said "Only small ships go inside; Le Fantasque is larger than a destroyer and we should have it brought out to us like other big ships". So there was an impasse; but eventually he went in.

My feeling at the time was that the French were too excitable, and certainly they were not up to date with wartime operational techniques, and were very reluctant to take any advice.

When I had finished my time in Le Fantasque I was sent to do the same job in an Italian ship called "Legionario" which had come to work with us after the Italian surrender. This was a strange experience too, but on balance I preferred the Italians. Legionario was an extremely fast ship, but not particularly reliable. If anything went wrong in the boiler-room, standing on the bridge one would realise the ship was slowing down; the boiler-room hardly bothered to tell the bridge. Then after a short time she got going again. I noticed that on leaving harbour the Italians all put on their life-jackets and inflated them, and they never left the upper deck until they got back into harbour again. They would eat their meals at action stations, round the guns. In fact this was not a bad idea for a short-range navy like theirs.

Legionario was very lightly built. I had been given a splendid cabin with a full-length mirror on the door of the wardrobe with little daisies engraved on it. But when I went down there in the morning after steaming at full speed all night, my cabin was about 6" deep in oil fuel. The ship was so lightly built that the rivets in the oil fuel tanks had shaken loose. I was only quite a short time in the Legionario, but I liked the Italians and thought they were good seamen.

One small incident in Algiers: I saw a large factory named "Prosper Durand", but it had been bombed and the wall marked "Durand" had been demolished. I remember thinking at the time that Prosper would be a good name for a boy, so many years afterwards my eldest son was christened Philip Francis Prosper.

In October 1943 I was ordered back to Alexandria for an altogether much more interesting project. For this I was promoted to Acting Lieutenant-Commander.

# Southampton Master Mariners Cricket Team - Report for season 2008

Played 10 Won 8 Lost 2 (Five matches lost to the weather)

Despite another below par summer, weather wise, the SMMCC managed to play two thirds of their matches and ending the season winning eight out of ten matches - well above par I am pleased to report!

Results aside it was another enjoyable season, lots of good humoured banter, meeting past players at games who have 'hung up their boots' and all matches played in a good spirit and for me a joy and easy to captain.

Hardmoor was a picture and in wonderful condition when we turned up for the first game of the season and all credit to the ground staff there who have done such a good job preparing an excellent square and outfield.

This season 29 players represented the SMMCC with a 'younger' team in the first half of the season, whilst we had the services of the Warsash students, but ably carried on by the more 'experienced' players in the latter half. Some weeks it was almost possible to put out two sides and provide a scorer and two umpires - a headache for the selector!

The season got off to a good start with three wins on the bounce against Shirley CC, home and away and an away win against Porstdown, the latter match against a good youthful side that gave the mariners their belief we could push on and have a good season. Then followed a first defeat of the season against a strong Southampton Solent University Staff side at Hardmoor.

However the Mariners bounced back from this set back with five wins on the trot against the MCA, St Cross, Shirley CC (for the hat-trick), Overseas Mapping and the 'big one' against Winchester College Staff before losing the final game of the season, two days after the Winchester game, against Swanmore CC.

The 'unlimited' overs game against Winchester was a fixture that was resurrected after an absence of several years and was sorely missed from our fixture list. To be fair the Mariners used to see this fixture as a victory if we held out for a draw! Going back through the record books I have not been able to find a victory before now against this side.

On the hottest day of the year and played in the picturesque 'Walled Garden' ground, the mariners lost the toss and Winchester elected to bat. No one was more surprised than us to see Winchester struggle to 30 runs off the first 20 overs and the 50 coming off 30 overs. Winchester finally declared at 129 for 7 after 59 tiring overs in 29 degree heat, leaving the Mariners only 15 minutes and 20 overs, by the rules of the day, to achieve a win but win we did passing their total in only 27 overs with only 5 wickets down and five overs to spare. My thanks to the quartet of Red Funnel and Wightlink mariners who stepped in at short notice to cover regular Mariners holiday commitments!

Winchester were initially 'not impressed' by this vastly changed mariners side but sportingly said afterwards they enjoyed the experience of facing up to such a strong bowling attack and to their credit we were unable to bowl them out.

Playing Swanmore two days later was a match too far with a number of players feeling the effects of the Winchester game. However this is a relatively new fixture and one hopefully we can hold onto.

A new fixture for once would have been against Tangmere CC on the 5th October. Far too late in the season was the initial thought but although called off the day before due to horrendous weather, if it had been arranged on either of the two previous weekends or the weekend after, it would have been played in glorious sunshine under cloudless skies. Next year we hope to have a fixture in June against Tangmere.

Some facts and batting averages for 2008

Bowling (Nineteen bowlers used)

Most wickets in the season - Mike Atkelsky 16 for 187 (12 runs a wicket)

Best bowling performance - Mike Weston 4-11 (including a wicket with the last ball of the game to take the final wicket in his last match for SMMCC, for the time being.

Batting

Best batting average - Ian Bagshaw ( 66)

Most aggregate runs - Ted Banks 105 (Average 26)

Most runs in an innings - Mahmood 57 (against Winchester)





It was also pleasing that there were only 7 ducks from the Mariners, one of which was from a young guest colt, in the whole season and bearing in mind three ducks came in the last match. A good all round effort. Also it is good to see the 'more experienced' players can still 'cut the mustard' and feature in Best Performances.

There are a lot of new faces representing the SMMCC with players regularly turning out from the MCA (3), MAIB (3), ABP (2), Warsash Maritime Academy (6), Wightlink (2), and Red Funnel (2) and not forgetting our players serving at sea who we see on an occasional basis and the retired Mariners still regularly turning out.

During the season we have had to say goodbye to Mike Weston our club secretary for many years after he immigrated to Australia to join up with John Lloyd in Tasmania. Along with one or two other players they almost have enough players for a SMMCC touring side!

My thanks to the regular umpires of Ian Bagshaw, George Gifford and Keith Edwards for their sterling work each week and playing when the necessity arose.

It was good to see John Hughes at several of our games, one of our regular guest players for many decades, who is recovering well from a serious stroke.

My thanks to all the SMMCC players who made captaining the side a most enjoyable chore.

Ken Warren

Appearances

		Raza (Red Funnel)	3
Ken Warren (ABP)	10	Ian Bagshaw (Retired Mariner)	3
Mike Atkelsky (Honorary Mariner)	10	Tom Kane (Warsash)	3
Jon Bennett (Mariner)	8	Emeka (ABP)	3
Ted Banks (Retired Mariner)	6	James Foster (P&O)	2
Dan Walker (Warsash)	6	Edmund Hughes (MCA)	2
Josh Hawken (Warsash)	5	Peter Hunter (Warsash)	2
Richard Dunham (MAIB)	5	Chris Walford (Retired Mariner)	1
Mike Weston (Warsash)	5	Mike Roles (Guest)	1
Mike Evans (MAIB)	5	Simon Oakley (P&O)	1
Tony Gill (MAIB)	5	Mahmood (Red Funnel)	1
David Turner (MCA)	4	Yasir (Wightlink)	1
Ian Lawrence (Warsash)	4	Fiaz (Red Funnel)	1
Nick Salter (MCA)	4	Mike O'Brien (Guest)	1
George Gifford (Retired Mariner)	4	Mathew Culmer (Guest)	1

**Distinguished Speaker  
at the  
80th Anniversary Dinner**

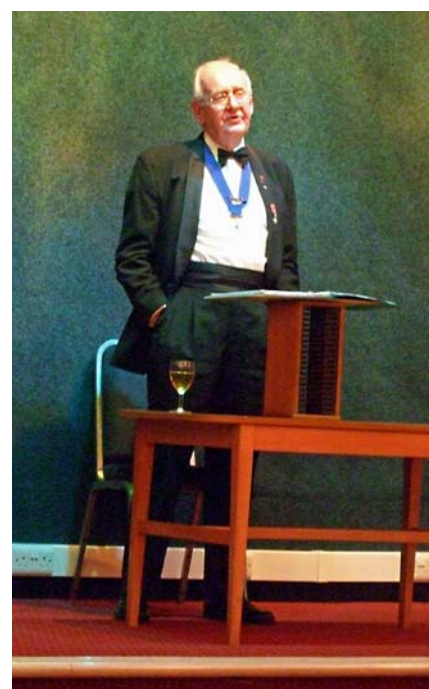
A most interesting history lesson was served up on the occasion of the Cub's 80th Anniversary Dinner at Brook House on Saturday 11th October, by Captain C.R. Kelso, MBE, Past Captain and Honorary Life Member.

After a splendid , but perhaps over-filling dinner, his offering

*The History of the Cachalots*

was well received and appreciated by those present.

Some regular attendees at such occasions were unable to attend so at popular request we bring you the full unexpurgated version over the next few pages.



## HISTORY OF THE CLUB.

In 1928 Southampton docks was in the midst of the most ambitious scheme of dock extension ever contemplated in the history of the port – the provision of 7000 feet of deep water quays, a twelve hundred foot long graving dock and the requisite equipment, sheds and railway sidings.

It was of course – the early western docks development - and Cunard's "Mauretania" was the first ship to berth there in 1932.

Southampton was home port to many of the largest ships in the world – Aquitania, Majestic, Alcantara, Leviathan, Mauretania, Empress of Britain, Carnarvon Castle and host port for many others – Ile de France, Bremen, Nieuw Amsterdam.

And ships were getting bigger and bigger –hence the thinking behind the Chairman of Southern Railway's - Sir Herbert Walker's - plan for the western docks. The majority of these huge passenger vessels – irrespective of their flag – had something in common: to serve on them as a bridge watchkeeping officer in any capacity – even fifth officer - one had to hold a certificate of competency as Master of a foreign going ship – in sail or in steam, and that requirement persisted until the outbreak of the Second World War.

These large ships spent an average of 60 hours in Southampton and this afforded their crews ample opportunity to enjoy shore leave. Invariably the officers chose their favourite watering hole – Cunard and Canadian Pacific favoured the Dolphin Hotel, P&O and Royal Mail - the Star Hotel, Union-Castle - the Red Lion and the Germans, Dutch and Americans used all three. The Royal Navy had clubs in London and Portsmouth – the mercantile marine had nothing locally, and so- in 1927 - many of the marine superintendents of the various shipping companies got together and decided that – as they had no recognised meeting place - they should organise occasional luncheon meetings on board available ships – and there were lots available. The cost of a shipboard luncheon with wine was about 12/6 - it worked well and each lunch had a speaker or discussion topic but to quote that great club historian – Commodore MacLean:

“Because so many of the shoreside office management attended, the unique camaraderie of the deep water sailorman failed to break surface”.

And so, in late January 1928 - before I was born – 21 master mariners – the majority being holders of certificates of competency as master of a sailing vessel – were invited to a meeting in the offices of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in Terminus Terrace on February 15th.

On February 14th the following notice appeared in the London Gazette:

*His Majesty the King has for some time been considering what steps can be taken to bring the British Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets into line with the other great services of the Empire, by having at their titular head some member of the Royal Family. With this end in view, and in recognition of the splendid service which the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets have rendered to the Empire for many centuries, both in peace and in war, his Majesty, after taking Ministerial advice, has asked H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to assume the title of "Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets"*

This appointment made the Prince the titular head of one third or more of the shipping of the world and was the first occasion that the term Merchant Navy was used (prior to that it was Mercantile Marine or Merchant Service) and in 1937 King George VI assumed the title and in 1953 it was conferred on Queen Elizabeth the Second.

And so, on February 15<sup>th</sup> –when I was a mere six days old —17 of the 21 invited square rigged master mariners attended the meeting in the Royal Mail offices. They did two things ; they sent a telegram of congratulations to HRH the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House offering their “loyal congratulations and keen appreciation of the honour His Majesty has conferred on the Merchant Navy by the Prince's appointment” and then they elected to form a club exclusively for the holders of certificates of competency as Master of a foreign going ship.

The shipping correspondent of the Southern Evening Echo was invited to attend -- and at the end he was appointed the Honorary Recorder of the Club and, without a doubt, that was a vital decision that was to serve the Club well over many many years.

From the outset the Club was a resounding success and the Recorder saw to it that its activities were reported in very great detail by Lloyds list and the Journal of Commerce, together with the local – and often, the national –press.

Some time earlier the author and Master Mariner Frank T Bullen had been a guest speaker at a shipboard luncheon and his whaling stories had so impressed the others that they now decided to adopt whaling terminology, hence the origin of the name Cachalot – the whale that has the thickest skin, blows the hardest and spouts the most, as might be evident tonight.

And the various titles bestowed on club officers: Boatsteerer , Storekeeper etc.

The Club motto -In Omnia Paratus (in all respects ready) was chosen “Because so many were Marine Supts whose job it was to ensure the readiness for sea of their charges”.

This was the era when there were few families in Southampton and its environs without a relative or friend serving in one or other of the great liners and there was a great interest locally and nationally in shipping and each evening a large section of the local paper was devoted to shipping and invariably the Club got a mention.

It was established as a weekly luncheon club and the South Western Hotel became the Club's venue. Luncheon days would be on alternate Mondays and Thursdays but there would always be a lunchtime table reserved for members to allow them to meet informally. There was always a speaker followed on most occasions by a discussion.

Various functional committees were formed –the General Committee, the Executive and Finance Committee and a Banqueting Committee to be followed later by the Church Committee who appointed the padre of the Southampton Missions to Seamen as the Club's first Honorary Chaplain. The first Divine service was held in All Saints Church in Southampton on Trafalgar day October 21st 1928 and the Bishop of Winchester was the preacher. In 1931 the service was moved to Winchester Cathedral where it continues to the present day.

Some time later a Sports Committee was formed and this resulted in a highly successful golf section, unhappily long defunct and, more happily, a very active cricket section which played its first match at the County Ground in 1936 and today still carries our name to cricketing battlefields near and far.

Club membership was restricted to holders of Masters Certificates of Competency (of any nationality – with certain safeguards) with the addition of the two honorary officials- the Recorder and the Chaplain but - most importantly- there was provision for a membership category termed “Stowaway” for “persons whose national status or service to the country rendered it desirable that they be made honorary members” and I doubt if there are many clubs in the United Kingdom with such a distinguished and wide ranging roll of honorary members.

The Club’s first Stowaway was the Right Reverend F T Woods, Lord Bishop of Winchester and the second – in 1929 – was Admiral of the Fleet, the Lord Jellicoe of Scapa whose father was a Royal Mail shipmaster.

In fact, over the years – no fewer than six Admirals of the Fleet have been appointed Stowaways.

The annual subscription was ten shillings and as the Club grew in stature with an international membership in excess of 300, word of its creation spread throughout the maritime world and many in shore based management, locally and further afield, expressed a desire to be allowed to attend the luncheons so pressure grew for another grade of membership.

Indeed, almost from the Club’s earliest days discussions about eligibility for membership arose very frequently. I could spend the rest of the night dwelling on the discussions (many extremely heated) that finally brought us to the happy outcome arrived at a few years ago – a Masters Certificate is not a pre-requisite for membership and with the exception of Stowaways – today we are all Cachalots.

The title of Messmate was introduced in 1932 and it was ruled that they would be honorary members or temporary members for as long as the Committee saw fit. Access to functions was limited and Messmates could not serve on Committees but – for many years they paid no subscription.

Happily, pragmatism prevailed and those who were once classed as Messmates today make a very significant contribution to the Club.

In 1932 – shore based members paid 25/ , shipmasters paid one pound, and retired members 15/ annually and in addition to the weekly lunches an evening function called a “Hot Pot Supper” was introduced - the cost was 3 shillings -and this proved very popular as a discussion forum.

It is probably fair to say that – in 1928 – the Cachalot’s attitude towards women reflected the attitude of the day and ladies were not welcomed at luncheons or Hot Pot Suppers. Happily – this was to change – but slowly, and it was not until 1991 that Captain Wendy Maughan - with a Masters F G certificate in her hand – became a Cachalot in her own right.

Soon the Club membership exceeded 400. It was truly International and the weekly luncheons and suppers often attracted 100 diners with speakers from many backgrounds – not least the Royal Navy.

In 1928 there had been a crew mutiny aboard “ Jervis Bay” and this gave rise to a luncheon discussion on “Discipline at sea”, then came:

“Women on the bridge” (64 present – voting was 2 for, 62 against ... how wrong they were)

“The earning capacity of ships”

“Problem of stowaways” (this was the era of great recession in the USA and many disillusioned Irish emigrants stowed away in droves on western ocean ships to end up in Winchester prison)

“The MN in war and its service to the Nation”

“The training of seamen”

“Is the steam whistle efficient in fog?”

“The practical value of the Club to the Merchant Navy” and last, but by no means least,

“Should sailors marry ?”

These discussions were all reported at length – almost word for word - in the Journal of Commerce, Lloyds List and the local papers – and most are still available in the clubs archives.

By now there was a Club badge (two shillings) a silver whale for evening wear (three shillings) and a Club tie and blazer from Tyrrell and Green or the Boatsteerer) and – of course, the Club flag.

By mid 1932 membership stood at 500 – and when the Royal Mail Officers Club on the second floor of the Royal Mail offices in Terminus Terrace became vacant – the SMMC moved in and remained there for many productive years before moving to Stella Maris in St. Michaels square.

Many shipping companies made gifts of shipboard furniture and carpets and soon the clubroom was up and running with its own bar and lunchtime catering. Initially cooking was done on two paraffin primus stoves until some years later the club was given a gift of a gas cooker. Opening hours might best be described as generous and wives of that era must have been extremely long suffering and understanding.

The clubroom opened at 10 a.m Monday to Saturday and closed at 11.0 pm and, on Sunday, opening hours were 6.0pm until 10.30 pm. ....and this continued up until the outbreak of war.

Now – ladies could attend a maximum of six speaker luncheons in any one year and they could attend the Club (provided they were properly signed in) but... they had their own room and they were not welcomed in the long room. They sat and conversed and drank in their own room at the back of the Club. The Club Steward was assisted by two ladies who did the cooking and served the food and drinks. There is a famous story - probably apocryphal - about the wife of a titled Commodore of one of our best known shipping companies.

She and her husband arrived one Saturday morning and in keeping with tradition she was dispatched to the back room, served with a drink and the knight of the realm joined his friends at the bar in the long room. After some time she poked her head around the door and in a loud voice proclaimed, “Steward – tell the Commodore I would like another drink”.

The steward – the redoubtable Mr. Sleep – an ex Cunard chief bedroom steward who suffered from a complaint known as western ocean feet which meant that he plodded rather than walked - seemed to take some delight in announcing “ I would gladly do so my Lady but the Commodore and his friends left about twenty minutes ago – but I’ll buy you one ?”

A happy consequence of the membership rule changes was the creation of a pool of widespread expertise in most maritime matters. The membership now included experts in many and varied fields. Board of Trade surveyors of both disciplines together with the surveyors and naval architects from the principal classification societies –especially Lloyds – became members as did the managers of the local ship-repair firms and technical representatives from numerous electronic equipment suppliers. The majority Master Mariner membership represented scheduled passenger lines, refrigerated and dry cargo trades together with cruise ships, cable layers, ferries and oil tankers and, of course, Trinity House pilots.

Knowledge of this widespread expertise soon became known throughout the maritime world and the Club's views on professional matters were sought and respected locally and nationally.

Southampton Water lacked a fog signal between Calshot Spit and the dockhead and – at the Club's suggestion – almost certainly initiated by the Trinity House pilot members - one was fitted on Fawley Beacon.

The w/t direction finding beacon on the Nab tower was also the result of the Clubs intervention and David Logie Baird used the Club and its members as a sounding board for his inventions which contributed so much to television and radar.

The government sought the Club's advice on the great debate that was raging about that time on changing helm orders to bring the United Kingdom into line with the rest of the world – and after long debate .the club finally recommended change which HMG described as “authoritative and compelling”. Much later – in 1963 – the Technical Committee at the request of the Ministry of Transport produced a report entitled “*The development of the Port of Southampton*” which was given widespread publicity locally and nationally – the government bought ten copies. The scheme envisaged the building of jetty-type berths at right angles to the shoreline on the western side of Southampton Water and projecting into deep-dredged water where very large bulk and general cargo carriers could be accommodated. Inshore of these would be built berths for shallower-draughted vessels which could off-load from the larger and then transport their cargoes coastwise as required, thus saving costly road and rail charges.

The plan was considered ingenious and geographically economical but as the concept of Containerisation had already begun to germinate it “withered on the vine”.

It is interesting that the concept of maritime motorways (sending goods around the coast by sea to get lorries off landbased motorways) is very much in the news today and throughout the Mediterranean they are used extensively and their use is expanding. The following year a very similar report was issued by the Trinity House pilots. I am told that both reports are in the Guildhall library.

In 1970 the Club submitted to the port authority a feasibility report “on the siting of the proposed computer-assisted harbour surveillance radar installation for the Port of Southampton which involved the use, for the first time, of micro-waves which beamed the radar picture picked up by the unmanned radar tower at Calshot through to a repeater station at Hythe and thence across the water to the newly-erected Port Control Centre at Dock Head (Berth 37)”. By the Autumn of 1972 the Surveillance Radar Station was fully operational.

Time does not allow me to dwell too much longer on the historical background of our great club but I would like to share a few happy reminiscences with you.

I obtained my Masters certificate in 1956 but it was not until January 21<sup>st</sup>. 1957 that I returned to Southampton and the mail service. The second thing Captain Storr Hodson did was to tell me of my duties on Edinburgh castle – the first was to whistle me round to the clubroom, buy me a drink and submit an application for Club membership.

In those days for a young man joining the Club almost everyone was Sir ...you did not call Captain Cooper “Percy” or Captain Farmiloe “Guy”. Sir they were and Sir they remained for many years.

Undoubtedly they comprised some of the most interesting men I have ever met and - like today - in their midst were many characters.

In 1967 I took up a 3 year appointment as Asst. Marine Supt. for Union Castle in Southampton – and came to live in Bursledon - and that allowed me to attend the Club on a pretty regular basis.

Saturday morning was a normal working morning in the port. The rig of the day was sports coat and flannels and the majority of the marine, technical and cargo superintendents worked from 0900 until noon. First thing was a visit to whichever ships of the company were in port, then back to the office for a bit of paperwork and then – at 1200, up to the Master Mariners Club.

Saturday mornings were always busy and the Club was usually crowded until about 2.0 o'clock – and sometimes much much later, something to which captain O'Connor and I can testify.

I was starting to become accepted and that allowed me to talk with and get to know some of the characters.

Captain Charlie Watson was a founder member of the Club and he had been the choice pilot for Union-Castle and Canadian Pacific and one Saturday morning –when he was long retired and well into his 80's – he started to talk to us about his life.

He obtained his certificate of competency as a Master in sail in 1907 and was immediately appointed Master of a very famous racing yacht – but during the shipping depression – he had taken a job as second cook in a large steam yacht cruising the fjords. Before he joined his mother spent two nights showing him how to bake bread, know when potatoes were boiled and how to break an egg into a bowl without half the shell. His pay was 7 pounds a month.

At the age of 19 he had been an able seaman on King Edward the Seventh's yacht “Britannia” and when Her Majesty Queen Alexandra was embarked Charlie was responsible for her personal safety at all times when she was on deck. He said that he had been told that if anything happened to her he would end up in the tower.

He attributed his good health - and he lived well into his 90s – to the fact that he kept a ball of well tarred spunyarn by his bedside. I never dared ask him where Mrs Watson slept.

Charlie Pearce was another Trinity House pilot - his daughter Betty still visits the Club today - used to tell a story about the shipowner – Sir Walter Runciman - and his schooner, Sunbeam 2.

Sir Walter invited about a dozen square rigged club members for a day sail around the island and Charlie was appointed Master. She was a big craft – and although she had electric winches for the sheets and halyards – Sir Walter preferred not to use them as they used fuel – so they all got blisters and strains pulling on the ropes.

About noon Sir Walter announced it was time for refreshment and he then produced two white enamel buckets of lime juice and water with the dreaded words “I never allow liquor on my yacht”.

She tied up at the town quay about half past four and Charlie said “we had to wait nearly an hour for opening time but the Red Lion took pity on us and let us in the back door.”

Commander Donald Macmillan had been the hydrographic surveyor for the Harbour Board. He was a deeply religious man –when he died he was pastor of a church just outside Southampton - but he was a man who did not mix easily in a crowd and whenever he saw someone on their own he would usually sit down beside them and start a conversation – and it was always an interesting one.

He wrote a book called “*TIDES*” which was highly acclaimed in nautical circles and he wrote another called “*WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT*” which was published after his death. This was an explanation of bible prophesies and there used to be a copy in the Club.

He was an authority on pyramid idology and was President of the British-Israel World Federation - a body that relates the linear measurements of the great pyramid in Egypt to biblical prophesy.

Indeed .....even today some club members talk of little else.

Sometimes ...when I was on my own..... Commander Macmillan would join me –always carrying a small glass of lemonade – and he was always interesting and I enjoyed his company. One of his other talents was playing the bagpipes but I can never recall him starring at a Sea Pie Supper.

My first Sea Pie Supper , in 1968, was in the Polygon Hotel. Dress smart casual – again usually sports coat and flannels -and entertainment was provided by a singing group called,” the Vera Noyce Party”. Captain Percy Cooper was the Boatsteerer so they were known as “Percy Coopers Canaries”. They were mostly ladies of a certain age but – forty years ago – they could be quite daring.

The guest of honour on that occasion was *not* the Admiral of the Port, the Mayor – *because the Mayor was a lady and she had not been invited* – so we welcomed the Town Clerk – Mr Norman Schofield. The night went well and as was the custom – at the end Captain Cooper stood up to thank the singers. At that stage a Canary stepped forward, removed her hat and shawl and was immediately recognised as Mrs Katy Johnston – Admiral of the Port and Mayor of Southampton, in all her regalia. We all stood and cheered, Eddie Kirton the captain bought her a drink and thereafter ladies did attend the Sea Pie Supper.

I will leave you with a mystery –something to ponder over on the way home.

I was Captain of the Club in 1992 and the Sea Pie guest of honour was the First Sea Lord, Sir Julian Oswald and – as it was the year after the end of the Gulf war - the next most senior guest was General Sir Peter de la Billiere of SAS fame.

It was at the height of the IRA terrorist bombing campaign and there was a very heavy if discreet police presence and the Guildhall had been searched all afternoon by sniffer dogs seeking explosives.

After greeting Sir Julian - I met the General on the steps at 1900 exactly.

He was in an unmarked Morris Marina car with a driver in civilian clothes and it was agreed that the driver would pick him up at midnight.

Midnight approached and he said his farewells and we moved out to the steps by the west door to await his car - but no car was forthcoming.

By 1215 he was an angry man but by 1230 he was a worried man and he said, “That man has been with me for many years and he has never let me down..... where is there a telephone”?

I took him downstairs to the phone and he dialled - the telephone rang and rang. I am sure that that telephone was in his car.

It was now about ten to one ....and the Police Superintendent asked what the problem was and when I told him the Generals car was adrift he immediately rushed off and very soon we could hear police sirens from various parts of the city and a lot of police activity in the street in front.

It was then I had one of those strokes of genius so familiar to many of you here tonight ...I said to the Police Superintendent, “I’ll tell you what .....why doesn’t Sir Peter come home with me and when his car turns up you can collect him from there” - all in a broad Irish accent.

The Police Superintendent gave me a long hard look and then said – very slowly “the General is not going anywhere with you, Sir ....he is now under our care”. I got the message, said goodnight to a very worried Sir Peter and went to join the party at home.

That night I had a bad dream about me pouring Sir Peter a Guinness as the SAS came through the kitchen window on ropes.

Next morning – I rang the Civic Centre to be told that the General had been taken to the County border by a police car at 0240 and delivered to the care of another authority. He got home safely.

Three days later ...I had a letter of thanks from Sir Peter --- no mention of the missing car.

Six months later I was with him at a function on HMS Victory in Portsmouth – same Morris car, same driver. In his memoirs he mentions the SPS but no mention of the car. What happened to the General’s car on that night?

Answers on a postcard please.

Captain Morris, Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Cachalots

Like on that historic meeting some 80 years ago - I would now like to do two things.

The first is to pay tribute to the late Commodore Donald MacLean whose book “Cachalots and Messmates” was a source of inspiration and information and also to Simon Daniels whose several books on the Club will fill you in on almost everything I have missed out and a great deal more to boot.

The second is to invite you all – to charge your glasses and join me in a toast to a club that over 51 years has given much more to me than I have ever given to it,

The toast is

**The Southampton Master Mariners Club**

crk 10/10/08



## HOW THE “250” CLUB HELPS TO SECURE OUR FUTURE.

With this mailing you should receive your copy of the provisional programme for 2009 and your subscription form. On this form there is also a space for you to additionally subscribe to the “250” Club and I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the benefits of this scheme.

### **THE INCOME OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS’ CLUB IS HAVING DIFFICULTY KEEPING PACE WITH ESSENTIAL EXPENDITURE - DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?**

FOR MANY YEARS SUBSCRIPTION RATES HAVE NOT CHANGED. AN INCREASE HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BUT, FOR SOUND REASONS, THE CLUB HAS NOT SANCTIONED AN INCREASE.

If subscriptions are increased across the board this will penalise those retired members who are finding it difficult to make ends meet – and rather than change their Standing Orders, or pay the higher rate, they may allow their membership to lapse.

Several years ago we introduced a system of *a voluntary additional payment* (with the inducement of a prize) so that those who can afford to pay a little more will do so and those who cannot need not.

THE IDEA OF THIS “250” CLUB WAS SUGGESTED BY THE LATE CAPTAIN WILLIAM (“ROBBIE”) ROBERTSON WHO HAD USED IT TO GOOD EFFECT WITHIN ANOTHER ORGANISATION.

THE CONCEPT IS SIMPLE AND HERE IS HOW IT WORKS.

Each £5.00 you contribute gives you 2 chances, £10.00 gives you four chances and £20 gives you 8 chances to win one of the £40 monthly prizes (£100 in December); there are two prizes each month.

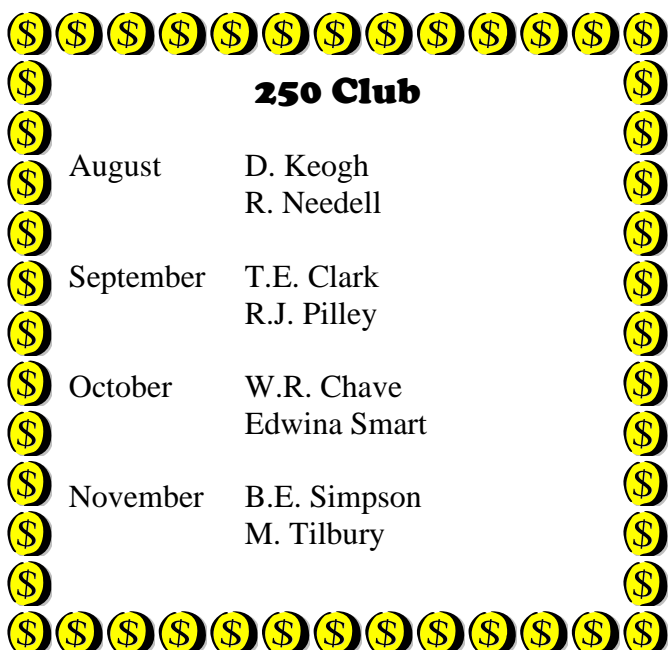
The odds on your winning are a great deal better than the Lottery and your contribution will help the Club to meet its financial obligations.

Please consider “increasing” *your* subscription by subscribing annually to the “250” Club.

Make your cheque payable to “The Cachalots”, write “250 Club” on the back and we will do the rest – and

GOOD LUCK.

Leslie Morris  
Captain of the Club



**Milk Bottle Tops for Gift of sight Appeal.**

Many thanks to all those who have started collecting and bringing in milk bottle tops. We have had a great response and taken several BIG bags to the Eye Unit at Southampton General hospital where they will be sold to raise money for their work.

Please keep them coming. Liz has a box at the bar for all you can bring.

Every little helps. Lots of people saving a few makes a huge difference.

Thank you again.

Judith Peck

*These are the modern plastic bottle tops, not the old style aluminium ones. I understand that they should be clean and free from cardboard inserts and paper stickers. Ed*

# *Rope Ends*

## Not only but also

With this mailing, not only the two inserts mentioned by our Captain opposite, but also the QE2 Special, which turned out to be a full blown colour supplement.

We were very pleased that one of our members, John Taylor, with the help of three of his old colleagues, came up with sufficient sponsorship money to enable us to bring each of you a copy, free of charge.

You may remember that I originally asked for “warts and all” contributions but you will see that the QE2 has remained relatively unblemished. There’s humour for sure, but no “black stuff”. Another indication of the respect and affection with which she will be remembered. Makes me ashamed to have revealed my own black tale in the last edition.

Inevitably, when producing such publications, especially when transcribing from hand written originals, some errors creep in and two such which have so far come to light are in Lionel Hall’s account. His trip with Julie was in ‘89, not ‘98, (that’s why he looks so young!) and at the bottom of page 12 the Titanic was infamously *charted*, not clouted, sorry Lionel.

If you would like extra copies of this unique supplement (they will make ideal small Christmas gifts for family, friends and colleagues) then they are available through the office at £4.50 each collected or £5 posted. This charge will allow us to recover the rest of the production costs.

## LIBRARY COMPUTER

CData Services, the company owned by Club member Clive Robinson and which hosts the Club’s website, has recently donated to the Club a newer and much faster computer for the Library Room. Both the computer and the software licences remain the property of CData Services.



Due to its greater speed and capacity over the old one, it is now possible to fully utilise it as an asset to the Library, and apart from being able to surf the web it now has the latest Adobe Acrobat Reader as well as Microsoft Office software. It already contains in the “My Documents” folder all the past editions of the Cachalot in PDF format and in addition the recent newsletters received from the Australian Master Mariners in Word format. It is intended that any other relevant newsletters or other publications of value to the members using the Club Library will be available on it.

The computer is not equipped with e-mail facilities, but of course any member in the Club Room who has an e-mail account with web mail is welcome to use it for this purpose.

This space was specially reserved so that the editorial staff could wish you all a very

**Merry  
Christmas**

## NEW CACHALOTS

**J. Norwood**

**Jenna Coles**

## **250th ANNIVERSARY BURNS' NIGHT SUPPER**



**2009 IS THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
BIRTH OF ROBERT BURNS IN 1759,  
SO MAKE A NOTE OF**

**SATURDAY, 24 JANUARY**

**IN YOUR DIARIES,  
(Yes, another change of date, this time down to us)  
AND BE READY TO**

**"TAK A CUP O' KINDNESS YET,  
FOR AULD LANG SYNE"**

Price and menu yet to be advised but I suspect it might have something to do with haggis, bashed neaps and champit tatties.

1900 at the King's Court Masonic Centre,  
Chandlers Ford.

Black Tie & Miniatures



## **SEA PIE SUPPER**

**Friday 6th February  
Southampton Guildhall**

This year the Principal Guest and speaker will be

**Commodore R. Thornton**  
Recently retired Commodore of the RFA

Tickets are now on sale and are selling briskly .

As notified in the previous edition, in order to provide a more prompt and efficient service to our members and their guests it has been decided to seat people at round tables for ten persons. We are assured by the caterers that this will mean that you will be served more promptly and efficiently and with food that is suitably hot. Parties of more than ten will be accommodated at tables nearby, thus ensuring that you will be able to lean back and converse with those at a neighbouring table. We hope that this new arrangement will make for a more comfortable and enjoyable occasion for all.

We have been trying to keep our cost down, but in the current economic climate, with prices in general on the increase, and food in particular, it has been found necessary to increase the ticket price. Each Club member is able to buy one ticket at £40.00. Tickets for non-members are £42.00 each.

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**

Sat	Dec	6	Christmas Dinner, King's Court
Sat	Dec	13	Christmas Lunch, King's Court
Mon	Jan	5	Docklands New Year Service, SSC **
Sat	Jan	24	Burns Night Club Supper, King's Court **
Thu	Jan	22	AGM, Club Room
Fri	Feb	6	SeaPie Supper, Southampton Guildhall
Fri	Mar	27	Skittles Evening, So'ton (Old) Green B.C.
Thu	Jun	18	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cathedral

*\*\* Please note change of dates*

## **Docklands New Year Service**

We are advised that the Annual New Year Service at the Southampton Seafarers' Centre is to be held at 09:30 on

**Monday 5th January**

Not on Friday 2nd as previously promulgated (not our error this time)

**Gone Aloft**

**Dennis Roberts**