

# ***The CACHALOT***

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB**

**No33**

**September 2009**

## **Captain's Log**

Our Spring curry lunch was, as always, very enjoyable in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The Nepalese concentrate on flavour rather than blowing your head off so that some people who rarely approach curries, and then with caution, are pleasantly surprised.

Entertaining the ladies of the watch ashore gives the Club a chance to show our appreciation of the work they do and the funds they raise for the benefit of seafarers. That lunch at the end of May was very well attended and with many of our guests having strong nautical links the conversation very interesting.

At the beginning of June Carol and I represented the Club at the Southampton Civic Service at St Mary's Church. The theme for the evening was "fostering a community of neighbours". With readings from representatives of every aspect of the Port and City interspersed with music and song from the Gospel Choir, Caribbean steel band and Asian music, it made for a foot tapping and entertaining evening.

Despite a week of inclement weather the evening of the Shipping Festival was dry and fine. It was a privilege for me to participate in this, one of the main events of the Master Mariners Club. The Colour Party under the supervision of Julia Whorwood was excellent and the music of the Cathedral Organist and Southampton Brass Band complemented each other to make for a superb service with a thought provoking and very apt address by the Revd Dr Andrew Wood. Afterwards in the Deanery gardens the band entertained us while we could all relax and enjoy a glass of wine and some excellent food. I think I can speak for everyone who attended the Shipping Festival in thanking the work



**The Guard of Honour, formed by local units of the SCC and led by Cachalot Julia Whorwood, is inspected by Dame Mary Fagan on her arrival at the Shipping Festival Service.**

of the Church Committee for a successful service. That evening was also the first opportunity to congratulate, on behalf of the Club, Stowaway, the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Dame Mary Fagan on her award of the DCVO.

Less than a week later a Club Supper was held after which the recently retired Port Chaplain of the BISS in Southampton the Rev'd Bill McCrea was presented with an Honorary Life Membership of the SMMC. Bill has always been a good friend of the Club and his acceptance speech was interesting and amusing as we all knew it would be. This was also the first time that we had used the Club Room for a silver service meal with catering by John Davis. All agreed that it was a great success.

It was a pleasure to preside over a new milestone for the SMMC with the presentation of our first bursary to assist a serving officer while he or she obtains their senior certificates. For many the presentation was the first chance to meet our selected candidate, Mr Matthew Nicholls, a Deck Officer with Carnival Cruise Lines. Everyone was left with the impression that the selection committee had made an excellent choice. The SMMC was grateful to the many guests who had taken the time to attend the presentation. Among them, Mr Stuart Greenfield, Operations Director for Carnival, Mr Allan Graveson, Senior National Secretary Nautilus, Captain Peter Roberts, Chairmain Southampton Ship-owners Association and Ivor Slater, Senior Lecturer at WMA who was also involved in the selection panel. I would also like to express the gratitude of the Club to David Healy our honorary Club Publicity Officer for his behind the scenes work on this and many other Club activities.

Our Club links with Business Southampton continue to grow and at the end of July we saw the publication of "A Transport Vision for the Southampton Region". This working document is the result of numerous meetings and a seminar held earlier in the year which Reg Kelso, George Angas and myself attended. The work is ongoing and George Angas is very successfully keeping the SMMC at the forefront of this important issue.

The end of July also saw the final function of this period when Carol and I were guests at the Royal Southern Yacht Club for the Commodores Cowes Week reception. On a pleasant Summer's evening we enjoyed excellent hospitality in a superb location overlooking the Hamble River followed by an equally excellent meal.

There were a few occasions when, due to work commitments, I was unable to represent the Club and I would like to thank those fellow officers who stood in for me.

John Mileusnic  
Club Captain.

## **BOATSTEERER'S LOCKER**

### **Response to the questionnaire "Why's the Clubroom not used more by members"**

1. Thank you very much for your responses. Seventy of you responded which represents approximately 17% of the membership. Richard analysed the responses to the individual questions and this analysis is produced below. So what, in an objective and non-critical way, can we take from your responses and the analysis? In general it can be seen that the number of questions that have not been answered (N/A) is high and this in itself begs another question, why?
2. Like all questionnaires, response to one question should not be taken in isolation from the others, e.g. Question 14: 'My work does not allow lunchtime visits'? should be taken, not only in the context of how many members use the Clubroom, but how many of those members are in full or part time employment. This question was not asked; indeed if we produced a fully comprehensive range of questions to cover all eventualities the questionnaire would be unmanageable, not responded to and self-defeating. It should be remembered that some of you that are in full time employment and cannot use the Clubroom have expressed a view that you object to your subscriptions being used to provide a service that you cannot use.
3. One interesting correlation has been checked in respect of Question 1. Membership records show that 194 of you live in the Southampton area (this includes the Romsey, Cadnam, Eastleigh and Lyndhurst areas). 85 of you live within the rest of Hampshire. 23 of you live in Dorset and 13 live in Wiltshire. The rest of you are scattered 'far and wide'. If the 43 members who responded that they 'live too far away' do live outside the Southampton area then there must be other reasons why those members that do live within the area do not use the Clubroom. If, on the other hand, those members that 'live too far away' do live within the Southampton area then the conclusion that reasons other than distance from the Clubroom exist and is reinforced.
4. The 'welcome' factor does not appear to be a problem. On the other hand, the food issue is mixed. Given the agreement that we have with the Southampton Seafarers Centre and the limitations of their catering provision we can not expect a varied menu for hot dishes on a regular basis and also that draught beer is not possible through the providers of the SSC bar gives an unsatisfactory rating, although the curries are Acceptable to Good. Also, there is a more positive response to Question 15 in respect of Club Suppers. Whilst parking is an issue it would appear that most of you accept that as a 'City' issue and not one that militates against Clubroom use.
5. The results from this questionnaire, together with a wider ranging review of Club finances have been discussed at length by the Executive and Finance Committee and their conclusions are as follows:
  - 5.1 Only 17% of the membership responded to the questionnaire.
  - 5.2 Only 12% of the membership uses the Clubroom regularly.
  - 5.3 The Club finances are such that it can, if it carry's on in its present form, no longer afford to provide a Clubroom - even at the current reasonable rent.
  - 5.4 Action must be taken to change the way in which the Club operates in order to maintain its Object and carry on its professional and social good work for the benefit of all its members.

### **Business Plan 2009 – 2011**

1. Since the June issue we have been busy looking at the options that we have open to us. We have considered the benefits of applying for charitable status but felt after careful consideration that there would be little real benefit to us as a Charity. We have now reached the conclusion that we have the following options available to us:-
  - 1.1 The worst case scenario would be for us to continue on as we are doing until 2013 when we will, if we do nothing, run out of money and face the possibility of winding the Club up. This is not acceptable to any of us.
  - 1.2 Move premises to a smaller Clubroom and office that we can afford.
  - 1.3 Accept, from the research that we have undertaken, that the majority of our members do not consider that having a Clubroom facility is critical to the successful operation of the Club and, until such time as this opinion changes, we should relinquish our tenancy agreement at the breakpoint date, live within our financial means and concentrate upon administering and manage the Club from an office only facility to support the professional and social activities of the Club.
2. The decision of the Executive & Finance Committee is to recommend to the General Committee that they instruct the Club's Officers to adopt option three above. The logic behind this is that option 1 is not acceptable. Option 2 was tried, with limited success, when we transferred the Clubroom from, what was then the BISS to the 1st floor of the Royal British Legion premises in Eastgate St and it was felt that to move yet again to more of the same would still be expensive

and not address the fundamental issue that Club members are saying, albeit indirectly, we do not have to have a Clubroom in order to operate the Club. Finally there did not seem to be an Option 4. If you think there is then please do not hesitate to contact us.

3. Obviously, if we are going to make such a significant change to the way in which we operate the Club we need to be very sure and look carefully at the implications of doing so. To that end your Officers and Harpooners are currently investigating the following aspects of change:-

3.1 Open positive discussions with the Landlord with respect to the rent that we pay and our options to renegotiate/withdraw from the tenancy agreement at the Breakpoint date.

3.2 Identify suitable alternative facilities to provide lunch/evening lunches/ dinners that are central, easily accessible, provide disabled facilities run by managements that are sympathetic to our requirements for a price that we can accept.

3.3 Identify acceptable office facilities that will enable us to continue to administer and manage the Club's business.

3.4 Calculate the cost of these changes to ensure that the savings made will restore our finances and sustain the Club's operation for the foreseeable future.

3.5 Investigate the possible sale of the Club's library, memorabilia and artefacts so that we can withdraw in good order if and when we have to.

3.6 Develop a timetable for any agreed change to take place and produce the necessary operating schedule to achieve it.

4. I hope that you think that we are taking both correct and timely action. Please do not hesitate to come and see us in the Club or contact us by phone or email if you would like to make any suggestions.

#### Bursary

The Captain, John Mileusnic, presided over the presentation of the Club's Bursary Certificate to our first bursary holder, Matthew Nicholls. Our guests included; Stuart Greenfield, the Operations Director for Carnival Cruise Lines, Allan Graveson, the Deputy National Secretary for Nautilus, Ross Sinclair, the Chairman of the Sailors Society and David Potterton the Principal Chaplin. Ivor Slater represented the Warsash Maritime Academy. David Healy had sent out press releases to the Lloyds List and Southern Daily Echo and a reporter from the SDE joined us to take photographs. He also forwarded copy to Carnival Cruise Lines, so we will get a mention on their intranet, in the company magazine as well as the LL and SDE. Unfortunately Peter Marriott, the Bursary Committee Chairman was recovering from an operation on his knee and not able to join us. A good buffet lunch was enjoyed by all after the presentation to Matthew who successfully passed his Chief Mates Orals on the 20th July and goes back to sea in August. We wish him well and look forward to hearing from him through future issues of the Cachalot.



**The Captain, Stuart Greenfield, Matthew Nicholls and the Boatsteerer**

#### Interaction with the wider Community

##### Business Southampton

1. Our involvement with Business Southampton continues and I presented a paper on the Maritime Integration Project to the Port City Futures Convention held in the new Ocean Terminal on 13th July. The response to this was encouraging and I hope to be able to report in future editions, the formation of a Solent Maritime Group within Business Southampton whose job it will be to provide a commercial umbrella to all the maritime industries operating within the Solent. It is proposed that SM will, through projects like the Maritime Integration Project provide a better understanding of what comprises the Solent's maritime industries. This is still in its formative stages and hopefully I will have more to report in the December issue. In the meantime and by way of introduction:
2. The maritime industries provide in excess of 25% of Southampton City's GDP yet there is no formal, authoritative understanding of what this 'industry' comprises of or its links with non maritime industries. When therefore, a significant commercial maritime opportunity arises for the Southampton maritime region there is no accurate way to assess what the



benefits to the City/industry are or, equally as important, what the consequences to the region are of not developing an apparent opportunity.

3. A major commercial maritime related development will usually be large enough to generate the requirement for an economic impact assessment, amongst others, in its own right. The theoretical criteria to be used for an economic assessment are to be found within the public domain. However, it is very wasteful if every time a project is to be considered the assumed beneficiaries have to start from scratch compiling relevant data from numerous, often unrelated, sources of information to make the case for such a development.
4. This proposal aims to identify all the players working within the Southampton maritime envelope, to show the operational/commercial linkages between them and non maritime related industries. To do this there needs to be a sectoral maritime industries data base which will be populated by those industries and maintained on a bi-annual basis. There will also need to be a generic set of criteria to be used when developing:-
  - Economic Assessment )
  - Risk Assessment ) Plans
  - Environmental Assessment )
  - Social responsibility Assessment )

Etc. These generic criteria can then be modified to suit any particular project, but there will then be an integrated maritime model that compares like with like and can be used, not only to assess new projects but can also be used to assess the on going development of existing projects thereby providing a clearer view of which maritime areas could be considered proactively for future development.

#### Southampton Ship-owners Association

We are currently in discussion with the SSA about the joint development of a Maritime Awareness Scheme and whilst this project is very much in its infancy it seeks to promote the shipping industry within the Southampton area by organising ship visits as well as going into local schools and passing on the message that there is a large shipping industry on their doorstep with plenty of job opportunities. Again, I hope to be able to report progress with this in later editions but if anybody would be interested in getting involve with ship visits and/or going into schools to talk about ships and the sea, please let me know.

#### Club Officer Vacancies

The following post holders will be retiring in February 2010:

- Boatsteerer.
- Entertainments Officer.
- Membership Officer.

It is appreciated that to take on any of these positions will need a carefully agreed period of understudying and handover. If any member would like to consider taking on all or part of the responsibilities associated with these posts please contact me or any other of the Club's Officers and we will be pleased to discuss them with you. We have a good team and none of the above is considered to be a one man band.

#### **G. Angas, Boatsteerer. August 2009.**



*It has come to your editor's attention that on our membership application form is a section entitled "Professional Experience (If you agree, we publish a "welcome to New Members section...")", in which new members are encouraged to submit a résumé of their career development for the edification of us all. All that was passed my way were the names which I have been in the habit of inserting in a little box where there was space. I can but imagine the disappointment for new Cachalots to find their personal contributions so callously shunned and can but apologise for the break-down in our line of communications. I will blame no-one but myself as, no doubt, I was present at some committee meeting or another where the inclusion of said section was approved. It's just that I need a prod now and again to make sure that I am still paying attention.*

*To make some sort of amends, here are the details as supplied by the new Cachalots who have joined us over the past year. It is a salutary reminder of what a wealth of diverse professional experience our members bring to this unique Club of ours.*

*Some of the new members added that they have joined the Club to meet like minded people in the maritime field and hoped, themselves, to be able to use some of their experience to further the interests of the Club.*

*Personally, I think it would be a great shame if we are obliged to follow the course as set out in the Boatsteerer's report above, as we we would then be severely restricted as to meeting places, particularly for casual or occasional visits. Admittedly, the club-room can be a very quiet - though safe - anchorage at times but none the worse for that. Most of us are beyond the needs of "Jack ashore" and the clubroom is exclusively "ours". There is an extensive choice of reading from the book shelves should you care to peruse them but don't expect to be able to have a quiet read on a Friday lunch time when, on occasions, the hubbub has even been known to overcome the noise of the traffic outside! .....Ed.*

## Welcome to New Members

### **Lt. Colonel Roger Vaughan-Stanley** *Elected 29/08/08*

Roger served with the RASC/RCT from 1959 to 1993 and commanded LCT Mk VIII operations out of Singapore to Malaya, Borneo and Thailand from '65 - '70. He was an Instructor with the Army Maritime Wing from '71 - '73 and retired as Lt. Col. In Aug '93. He then joined the Civil Service where he was responsible for chartering commercial tonnage and retired in 2005.

### **Mr James Norwood** *Elected 20/11/08*

After graduating with a Bsc (Hons) in Maritime Business with Marine Law, James Norwood spent 8 months as Marketing Manager at Portland Port. He joined the Royal Navy in 2002 and, following basic training at Dartmouth, was sent to Iraq in 2003 onboard HMS Ocean. After further training on HMS Ledbury he was appointed Gunnery Officer on HMS Shoreham and then Navigator before being fast tracked through to the Fleet Navigation Officers Course. He then spent 16 months navigating the River Class Offshore Patrol Vessel HMS Mersey. James has also studied for the RYA Yachtmaster shorebased and Coastal Skipper courses. He is a member of the Royal Institute of Navigation and the Nautical Institute and is currently Manager, Manoeuvring Simulations Division, for BMT Seatech Ltd.

### **Capt. Stuart J. Lawrence MBE**, RD RNR *Rejoined 9/1/09*

Stuart is an Old Conway(1957 - 1960) and went to sea with Canadian Pacific Steamship Co., acquiring with them winter navigation skills in the Gulf and River St. Lawrence from '66-'69. In '69 he did Extra Master's at Sir John Cass College and joined the British Antarctic Survey as navigator in 1970. He served as master on both RRS *Bransfield* and *Ernest Shackleton* until 2003. Further to his interests in polar history and his experience in high latitude navigation and ice pilotage he was awarded the Polar Medal and Clasp in '81 and '92 for Services to Antarctic Science. He was the UK Representative at the meeting "Polar Code" at Hamburg in '97 and has acted as Ice Pilot for the *Saga Rose* and the *Artemis*. He is now Sailing Directions Editor with the UK Hydrographic Office, currently editing the Antarctic Pilot. He was a founder member of the Nautical Institute, is a member of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners and is a Fellow of both the Royal Institute of Navigation and the Royal Geographical Society.

### **Lt Cdr David Lee**, (SCC) RNR. *Elected 9/1/09*

David is currently an Enforcement Officer with the MCA and his qualifications include RYA/MCA Yachtmaster (Ocean) Instructor, endorsed for Square Rig. He originally trained as a Radio Officer on leaving school in 1965 and then worked for Plessey Marine as an Electronics Officer. He joined the Metropolitan Police in '68 and entered Thames Division River Police in '72, serving in all ranks up to Inspector. He trained as Yachtmaster with the RN and SCC, joining the SCC Offshore as full time skipper and qualified as Captain to TS Royalist. In 2003 he joined HM Coastguard as a direct entry Watch Officer at Solent MRCC and was appointed Instructor S.A.R. At HM Coastguard/ MCA Training Centre in 2006. He has been with the Enforcement Unit at MCA Headquarters since 2008. He is an Associate Member of the Nautical Institute.

### **Mr John Francis McMinn**. *Elected 9/4/09*

John was an Engineer Cadet with Cayzer Irvine starting his apprenticeship in 1964 at Southampton and now has over 40 years marine engineering experience, including 23 years seagoing service, on a range of vessels, including Passenger and Ro Ro Ferries, Passenger ships, Bulk carriers, Coastal and Bitumen Tankers, Container and Refrigerated and MPP Cargo ships. John was Chief Engineer on board RMS St Helena during the Falklands conflict and for 13 years he was Fleet Superintendent for a major ship manager. More recently John has undertaken the role of Marine Consultant and Surveyor. He is a member of IMarEST and a Member of the Society of Consulting Marine Engineers and Ship Surveyors.

### **Mr Richard Thornback**. *Rejoined 9/4/09*

Richard is a solicitor working as a consultant to Viva Law Solicitors.

He is a member of the Law Society and the Hampshire Incorporated Law Society.

His interests are sailing and power boating and he is a member of the Royal Southern, the Royal London and the Island Sailing Clubs.

He is a trustee of The Tug Tender Calshot Trust Co. Ltd.

Richard is a former Mess-Mate, "re-joining the fold" , and first joined in the '70s when he was proposed by Captain Guy Farmiloe.

### **Mr Robert Hill**, C.Eng, Bsc Hons, F.I.E.T. *Elected 8/7/09*

Robert was at sea with the P&O Passenger Division from 1967 - 79 as Radio Officer on *Oronsay*, *Arcadia*, *Himalaya* and *Oriana*.

From '80-'85 he was with Vigil Radar as Sales Manager and from '90-2000 was Managing Director of Brookes & Gatehouse, another marine electronics company. From 2000- '06 he was MD of Whitlock Steering and is now MD of Chemring Marine, the world's leading supplier of marine distress signals.

He is chairman of the Marine Sector Advisory Group to the Minister of Trade Marine Industries Leadership Council - BERR - and a member of the Marine Export Committee of the British Marine Federation.

Other involvements include the Sailors Society and HQS Wellington.

Robert has been a guest at the SeaPie Supper three times where he has always had great fun swapping contacts and stories about time at sea.

## *YUGOSLAVIA - SNOVIS*

Mistaken identity is a constant hazard in high-speed actions between small craft. One night at the end of December there was a battle between our own destroyers and our own MTBs over in the islands.

Admiral McGrigor in Taranto decided that it would be necessary to have an "Operational Authority" in Vis to take charge; it was clearly impossible to exercise close control from a distance. Up until this time the MTBs had been seeking targets by night and hiding themselves by day for fear of enemy air attack. One expedient adopted by David Scott, CO of a Vosper, was to hide his boat in a cave and put his radio aerial on a boat-hook up through a hole in the top. In this way, and with only one radio operator, communication was, to say the least, intermittent.

Admiral McGrigor ordered Captain "Chilly" Black (a called-up retired officer - in naval slang a "retread") to take charge of all the operations from the island of Vis. He had a proper Operations Room set-up, a radio station and a number of Naval telegraphists, coders and cypher staff. By chance, Captain Black was involved in a motor smash the night before he was to go over to Vis. To fill the gap I was shaken in the middle of the night in the Albergo Imperiale, and ordered to take charge of his team. I was told that this would be only for a week and that when Captain Black's leg was better he would take over again. However, his leg did not heal and he had to be invalided home. So, luckily for me, I had the job for a year instead of a week.

We were sent over to Vis Island in a captured Italian ferry. When she berthed in Komiza harbour in the dark, the Partisans had a huge bonfire burning and its flames illuminated the beautiful old mediaeval fortifications. Grouped round the fire were about 100 Partisan soldiers and Partisankas - female soldiers. Their singing was quite beautiful - and the whole effect was rather like grand opera.

My party and I were made welcome by Partisan representatives and we were taken straight to what became my "Navy House", a spacious modern house immediately overlooking the harbour. We had the top two floors and a building next door for the radio station, Ops rooms, Coding room etc. I had been ordered by the Admiral to take charge of all the naval operations in the islands, which at first consisted of small numbers of Motor Torpedo Boats. I was to use the call sign SNOVIS.

My contact with the Partisans was through Admiral Josip Cerni, who was in charge of the handful of fishing boats which was all that the Partisans possessed. Cerni had been a Chief Petty Officer in the Royalist Yugoslavian Navy pre-war. He spoke quite good English, was a very pleasant chap and I had very close contact with him throughout 1944. His office was in a farmer's cottage in Borovik, a couple of miles inland. We had a field telephone between us and I would usually go to visit him at least once a day. The value of working closely with the Partisans was that they knew the whole area in every detail, and they were the source of an amazing amount of Intelligence about German movements - both at sea and ashore.

The situation was that all the off-shore islands and much of the coastline had been taken over by Tito's Partisans after the collapse of Italy. The fiercest fighting between the Partisans and the Germans was a long way inland. Admiral Cerni's preoccupation was to send his small craft from Vis to creeks and coves on the mainland to hand over the supplies which were now arriving in Vis in larger and larger quantities. The Partisans' boats normally used Vis harbour on the east. Komiza, on the western end, was used almost entirely by the Royal Navy.

Life on the island was very busy, very interesting, very cold and quite enjoyable. The lower part of "Navy House" was the Headquarters for No. 2 Commando of the British Army under Colonel Jack Churchill - an amazing character and a very famous Commando leader. As time went by more and more British troops began to be sent to the island, to strengthen the Partisans garrison. This was necessary because the Germans began to re-occupy the coastline, driving out the Partisans back to the islands. Then the Germans began to attack the islands too, and to reoccupy them, against stubborn Partisan resistance. Some of the Naval Liaison Officers which I had sent to the islands earlier on kept in contact with my HQ so we knew more or less what was going on from hour to hour. However, the Partisans were very inadequately armed and it was not long before the Germans occupied all the islands except Vis. All the Partisans retreated to Vis which, by the early summer, had a huge Partisan garrison (over 12,000) and, as I shall recount later, many thousands of British forces.

At this time the Germans still had large forces in Greece and in Crete. Their difficulty was to supply them because the activities of the Partisans on the mainland made road traffic increasingly difficult. The German High Command therefore assembled in the northern Adriatic large numbers of Siebel ferries and F-lighters (large steel cargo carriers) which they armed with heavy machine-guns and the very effective German 88mm guns. They also collected some old destroyers, mostly ex-Italian, many E-boats (motor torpedo boats) and a variety of old coasters and tugs and wooden trading schooners. The sea passages along the coast and between the islands right down to the south became of vital importance to them.

So the strategic importance of Vis was that we were perfectly located to interrupt these sea supplies by the use of our "Coastal Forces" i.e. Motor Gun Boats and Motor Torpedo Boats.

We now know from German records that they regarded Vis as a great danger which must be eliminated. We also now know that they assembled large numbers of landing-craft in and around Split, and Luftwaffe gliders etc to mount a major attack on our island. This was known to Admiral McGrigor in Taranto and he arranged to send British destroyers to operate round Vis by night, and to withdraw by day. Up to six or eight British destroyers would be there each night when conditions might be suitable for a German invasion. Admiral McGrigor said to me "You are like a tethered goat to attract a tiger. I hope they will try to come and get you because I am sure they will get a bloody nose". We now know that by midsummer the German Command had concluded it would be too hazardous an undertaking and their plans were cancelled: But of course we did not know this at the time.

One important aspect was that the Germans had relatively weak air power in the area. We were bombed occasionally in Komiza, but gradually as the months went by the Allies gained almost complete air superiority.

An interesting side-note is that there existed an Allied contingency plan to cross the Adriatic and advance up through Yugoslavia, because the British and American armies were making only slow progress on the Italian mainland. As part of this plan Vis was to be a focal point and "springboard". In fact this was not really practicable because of the mountainous territory and poor communications in Yugoslavia. I suspect that the existence of such a plan was "leaked" to the enemy, who would thereby feel it necessary to divert strong forces to Yugoslavia.

It should be emphasised that much the greater part of the fighting occurred in the interior in Yugoslavia. Tito and his Partisans fought a completely mobile guerrilla campaign. They had no heavy weapons and were unable to undertake a pitched battle of any sort. They were so short of supplies that in the mountains they actually attacked the Germans in the snow in their bare feet. They had no transport, and led a sort of hide-and-seek existence in the forests. More and more thousands of the population gathered to Tito's Partisan bands in all parts of the country. For the Germans this was a very frustrating time because "every man's hand was against them" throughout the land. Therefore they could only establish strongpoints in villages, defended by barbed wire and mines etc and they could only move between these villages with strong defensive patrols.

A terrible aspect of this whole campaign was the appalling cruelties inflicted by both parties. This is perhaps no new thing in the Balkans. But any Partisan or supporter captured by the Germans got no mercy. A very striking photograph used for propaganda at the time shows a young Partisan, with his Red Star on his hat, standing on a platform and waving his clenched fist just as he was about to be executed by being hanged by telephone wire. If one of the German convoys was ambushed or targeted by snipers, the nearest village would be surrounded, burnt to the ground and every inhabitant, man, woman or child, put to death. Some of the worst atrocities were carried out by the Ustachi, who were in fact, criminal bands of Croats recruited into the German Army.

Similarly, Germans who fell into Partisan hands received equally cruel treatment.

As an illustration of this, a small German tanker southbound anchored in a cove on a small island and covered herself with nets and branches for concealment from the air in their usual way. On board this little ship were a few German troops and a small group of girls (what we would call an ENSA party). A young German Army officer caught the eye of one of the concert party girls and took her for a walk on the island during the afternoon. When they arrived back at the cove they were horrified to see that the German ensign had been hauled down and replaced by the Partisan flag with its Red Star - during their absence the ship had been attacked and taken over by the local Partisans.

His reaction to this was to pull out his revolver, shoot the girl and then shoot himself.

I know this awful story to be authentic, and it shows the terrifying cruelties which were perpetrated both by the Partisans and by the Germans.

*Continued over*



As a further example of this, from my office in Komiza I sometimes saw a column of German prisoners captured by the Partisans being marched down to the quay and being put into a fishing boat and taken over to Bisevo Island, which lay about a couple of miles offshore from Komiza Bay. We knew that on arrival the Germans would be compelled to dig their own graves and then be shot into them. I once saw a young Partisan boy of about 15 coming back from one of the expeditions still carrying his automatic rifle. He grinned, waved the rifle to and fro and said "Ha, ha, Tedesci" (Germans).

Through Brigadier Churchill we made representations to the Partisans' Command in Vis; we suggested that the German prisoners who the Partisans had captured in their raids on other islands could be transferred to Italy and put in the POW camps there instead of being murdered. We made it clear that the Germans would still be regarded as prisoners of the Partisans and not of the Allies. But the Partisan reply to this suggestion was "Yes, if we send them over there, they will be given food and boots and greatcoats, but when we ask you for more of these things for our men who are fighting the Germans inland, we are told that you are already sending us all available supplies". This was not an easy argument to counter.

The Partisan fighters in the interior regarded the Partisans serving in the islands as having rather a soft time - a better climate and something to eat.

Because of the threat to the island, more and more British troops were soon sent over. To reinforce the No. 2 Commando came No. 43 Royal Marine Commando and No. 40 Royal Marine Commando. Also a battalion of HLI (Highland Light Infantry). Then two anti-aircraft batteries and No. III Field Regiment Royal Artillery, with their 25 pounder guns. All these forces were under the command of Brigadier Tom Churchill, who commanded the 2nd Special Service Brigade, and was the garrison Commander. To administer this large force there was a "Beach Unit", which had to receive and distribute all the supplies and raw material which was coming over in greater and greater quantities, both for the British units and for the Partisans. Tom Churchill was the younger brother of Jack Churchill of No. 2 Commando. I had to work extremely closely with him as well as with the Partisans, which continued very smoothly throughout the year.

In this background naval operations began to intensify very quickly. The pattern was that available MTBs and MGBs would be sent over to Komiza to be sent out on offensive patrols every night. In ordering these patrols I was of course enormously assisted by the up-to-the-minute intelligence which Josip Cerni was able to provide. The south-bound enemy shipping proceeded by night: By day, their ships would lie up among the islands, covered with camouflage nets, branches of trees etc. Our Coastal Forces would thunder out at dusk to try to find them as they got under way. It was of course a perfect hunting ground for our boats. Neither side had radar in those days, and our technique was to make full speed to the chosen area and then cut engines and lie right inshore as close as possible to the rocks or cliffs. When an enemy convoy appeared the MGBs would roar out and attack them. Very fierce actions would take place, especially with the escorting German E-boats. But sometimes perhaps a single schooner might be the target, in which case the MGBs would range up alongside and send over boarding parties. Frequently our boats would carry some Royal Marine commandoes or soldiers as boarding parties, and often the crews in the enemy vessels could do nothing but surrender.

On one such occasion, a large schooner, the STELLA BIANCA, was towed into Komiza as a prize. The supplies which she was carrying were unloaded - very welcome - and the boat herself was handed over to the Partisans. They took her round to Vis harbour where they had a little shipyard, lined her bulwarks with planks and filled the spaces with shingle to act as armour plating. Then they bolted on a wonderful assortment of captured Italian machine-guns, etc and soon she emerged again as the flagship of the Partisan fleet - the STELLA ROSSA!

As spring drew on more and more Coastal Forces were sent over to Komiza. If they had been shot up, or broke down, or were in need of replacement torpedoes etc, I would send them back to Italy to the Coastal Forces bases in Bari or Manfredonia. So we had in Komiza only operational boats; all the repairs, administration etc would be done in Italy: A perfect arrangement.



### **A Visit to Oxford University's largest College**

We have arranged for a visit to Christ Church College and Cathedral on Thursday, 10 September. The coach will pick up in the docks at VTS at 0915, where car parking for the day has been arranged, and then from outside the Club at 0925. There will also be the usual stop in Chandler's Ford at approximately 0945. There will be a ten minute stop at Chieveley services, after which we expect to arrive at Oxford at 1115ish. The Christ Church water meadows will be open, with free access to the Thames and Cherwell. If the weather is fine then picnic lunches may be the order of the day. Otherwise Oxford city centre is nearby with many restaurants/hostelries to take luncheon. The guided tour begins at the visitors entrance at Christ Church water meadow at 1400 and lasts until about 1530. The return coach will leave at 1545 and our ETA back at VTS, after similar stops on the way, is 1730. The cost of this interesting and pleasant day out is £29 per person, which includes the coach fare, guided tour of Christ Church College and Cathedral, and all gratuities. There are still a few of the 36 places available.



*Our thanks to Cachalot, Major Bill Wynn-Werninck, whose memories were sufficiently jogged by a couple of articles in the last edition to inspire the following contribution. (More of something similar will always be appreciated.)*

### ANOTHER STEAM CRANE

Seeing the photograph of EMMA LOUISE with the old steam crane alongside, immediately reminded me of a similar steam crane in Douglas Harbour, IOM

In 1947 I was in command of a LCT IV (star) which was my pride and joy. She was a good ship, her hull strengthened for service in the Far East with slightly better accommodation. She was manned by a fine crew of RASC soldier seamen and marine engineers. She was stationed at Abedovey, N. Wales in support of the RASC Amphibian Training Wing at Towyn. One task we were given was to go to Douglas, pick up a load of airfield maintenance machinery and take it to Birkenhead. We arrived in Douglas on the previous evening and berthed under an elderly steam crane to be used for loading us. Next morning I had to go ashore and came back a couple of hours later to find the crane was getting up steam and the old crane driver, sucking his pipe, standing on the quay edge looking down at my ship.

"Good morning" I said. "Is this yours?" he asked. "Yes" I said with pride. "Well" he said, "If my old uncle who went to sea in sail could see this ship and then that man it he would drop down dead on the spot" "Oh" I said "What did your uncle do?" He then told me an astonishing story. Apparently his uncle and a friend got a top-sail schooner built in Peel, north of Douglas. On completion, he loaded her to the gunwales with wheelbarrows, picks and shovels and sailed for Australia to take part in the Gold Rush. She was christened VIXEN. They got to Australia, sold everything and had a go at getting gold. They got a fair amount and then decided to go ranching in western America. They sailed there and bought a lot of cattle. Hearing the money was better in eastern America, he drove the cattle across America, presumably to the New York area where he sold the animals. In the meantime, his friend sailed the VIXEN round Cape Horn and fetched up presumably in New York.

They then decided to sail back to Douglas, IOM which they did. Unfortunately, due to heavy fog, VIXEN was wrecked on the Calf of Man. They rescued their money and got back to Douglas and settled there again.

The old crane driver ended by saying his uncle was a fine looking man. When he walked along Douglas promenade in his white suit, 10 gallon hat and walking stick, all the girls were after him. If I wanted to read about the VIXEN, to go to the Douglas Museum. I thanked him for a most interesting half an hour and after the ship was loaded I walked up to the Museum. Sure enough the story of the VIXEN was there.



(And at [www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/famhist/v04n3.htm](http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/famhist/v04n3.htm) .. Ed)

I was very interested to read Rear Admiral Sir Morgan-Giles story about Yugoslavia and Bari. I was stationed in Andria a short distance inshore from Barletta as workshops officer of a RASC motor Transport Company and had to go to Bari on several occasions for raw materials. There was a military hospital in Andria and I became friendly with an attractive QA. One day we organized a run to Bari for a day out. I had to go to the Area Headquarter-a very nice hotel building on the north side of Bari harbour. Everybody seemed to have a comfortable office with a view across the harbour. After that visit we had a pleasant lunch at the newly formed Officers' Club in the town and after a walk round, returned to Andria. Two days later I met my MT Sergeant, who told me about the air raid. He had been talking to the driver of one of two tank transporters parked near the Area Headquarters. The air raid suddenly took place followed by a colossal explosion. He and his friend dived under the nearest transporter just as a large tidal wave crashed over them. Just after that they saw the Area HQ in which every window was broken. So much for the comfortable offices!

I was also very interested in the Admiral's arrival in Luka when he and Fitzroy Maclean were greeted by a rifle shot which apparently cleared their entry. The RASC had a number of requisitioned Italian schooners which, amongst other duties, supplied the Partisans with ammunition and stores, being unloaded at Split. The RASC crews got fed up with the Partisans who gave fire-work displays with the ammunition they had brought over from Italy. Barletta was used by these RASC schooners, I remember seeing one efficiently preparing for sea and setting off for Yugoslavia.

(There is a memorial in a church in Venice to the RASC Water Transport crews)

Bill Wynn-Werninck

## Goodbye, Calcutta

In Conrad's story "Youth", Marlow, the narrator, drank and said, "Wasn't that the best time when we were young at sea?" His listeners nodded, the man of finance, the man of accounts, the man of law, all of whom had begun life in the merchant service.

Joseph Conrad was himself one of the countless number to be found in almost every walk of life whose early working years were spent at sea. Tommy Steele, entertainer; John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister and entertainer; John Masefield, Poet Laureate; Sir Frederick Bowhill, Air Chief Marshal and Extra Master; Sir Bushby Hewson, Extra Master and Admiralty Judge; Dennis Wheatley, prolific writer of thrillers; Sir Robin Gillet, Lord Mayor of London and Master Mariner. Those are but a few.

Amongst others is the lad who on October 10, 1876, his sixteenth birthday, joined the full-rigged vessel *Blair Athole* at Cardiff. He was accompanied by his father who agreed with the *Blair Athole's* Master that his son should join as an apprentice. The boy however flatly refused to sign indentures on the grounds that he did not wish to be tied for a period of time. His father did not particularly want him at home any longer and, after some angry words, it was agreed he would sign on as a member of the crew, namely as ship's boy, the lowest possible rank.

The captain of the *Blair Athole* was a tough Scot from Stirling, Alexander Taylor. The officers were British but the crew included Germans, Swedes, Portuguese, a Frenchman, an Italian, an Austrian and a Brazilian. There were also two apprentices. The bosun was a bully, disliked by the other crew members. The ship's boy's pay was to be ten shillings a month.



The iron built ship of 1,777 gross tons took more than seven weeks to reach the coast of Brazil, with salt pork and biscuits the staple diet for the crew, but the biscuits were infested with weevils and the crew decided to send a representative to the master to complain. Perhaps because of his obviously superior education, (he had attended University College School in London,) they chose the ship's boy. Surprisingly, Captain Taylor listened to him and agreed that in future the biscuits should be baked. This meant that they could be broken with a belaying pin and the weevils much more easily removed before the biscuits were eaten.

When the ship reached Rio harbour the boy decided to desert and made his way beyond the city limits, hoping to hide until the *Blair Athole* had sailed. After a day or two with no food and no money he became faint with hunger, but was picked up by a stout negress who took him to her shack and built up his strength by feeding him on bananas. The lady however made it clear that she expected some return for her generosity. Many years later his son said "his generously proportioned protectress began to make advances to him as unmistakable as they were unalluring" When the lady's attention was otherwise engaged, he escaped and made his way back to the docks.

He thought of joining another ship bound for a British port and so took a bed in a seamen's lodging house, but was apprehended by the local authorities and, as a punishment for deserting, was set to shovelling coal from the dockside into ships' bunkers, the only white man in the gang. After a months hard labour he was ignominiously returned on board the *Blair Athole*.

The ship sailed on 12 January 1877, across the South Atlantic and round the Cape to India, where the coast of Bengal was sighted fourteen weeks later. For the boy the voyage was not uneventful. After putting up with every humiliation and much bullying from the bosun, matters came to a head one tropical night when, in front of the whole crew, the boy knocked-out the bosun. This made him something of a hero with the crew.

The *Blair Athole* anchored off the mouth of the Hooghly River, where the pilot came on board wearing a uniform with brass buttons and wearing white gloves. The boy was ordered into the pilot boat and told to carry the pilot's bag on board. He considered this to be the proudest day of his life.

After an enjoyable month in Calcutta the pilot came on board again to guide the ship down the river and the boy watched and wondered whether he could ever one day be as grand as that Hooghly pilot. Many years later he recalled the day he left Calcutta: "I have often wished that I could have seen ahead. I have often dreamed of that time when I stood at the capstan head and helped to heave my small weight at the capstan bar with the rest of the company on the forecastle, to get our ship into a proper position to be towed by the tug to take us down the Hooghly until we could sail. I remember, as we were drawn from the quay by hauling at the capstan, we sang as we paced the forecastle: "Hooray, my boys, we're homeward bound!" and "Goodbye, Calcutta". I, in my dream said, "Goodbye Calcutta, I shall return, but not on the forecastle head".

The *Blair Athole* docked in London just short of a year of when she first set sail. The boy jumped onto the quayside, leaving his gear behind. He had been properly discharged this time with the sum of £3-11-0, the balance of wages due to him as ship's boy. He never regretted his sailing experience. It left him with an abiding love of the sea, which was to persist for the rest of his life.

It could not have been within the wildest dreams of the barefooted ship's boy that the next occasion he would sail the Hooghly would be forty-four years later and in a much grander uniform than the Hooghly pilot – that of His Imperial Britannic Majesty's Viceroy of India, to the accompaniment of a salute of thirty-one guns.

Since the time of the transfer of the Capital from Calcutta to Delhi ten years previously, the Viceroy had been accustomed to spend the month of December in the old capital of British India, and on one visit the ship's boy, now Viceroy, accepted an

invitation from the Chairman of the Calcutta Port Authority, to take a day off from his public engagements and go for a cruise on the river Hooghly in the Port Commissioners sloop *Pansy*.

It was a small party, the only other guests being half a dozen of the leading business men of Calcutta. The Viceroy was in an expansive mood and at the breakfast table he went back forty-four years to his first visit to Calcutta and his experiences as a ship's boy on the *Blair Athole*.

A sequel to his reminiscences was later described by Sir Clement Hindley, the Viceroy's host for the day:

"We got into wireless touch with *HMS Southampton*, the flagship of the East Indies Squadron, then proceeding up river on an official visit to Calcutta. The presence of the Viceroy on board was communicated to *HMS Southampton*, and we were able to arrange to pass her in a long open stretch of the river, which formed an admirable setting for the dramatic scene which then took place.

As *HMS Southampton* came round this wide curve of swiftly flowing water in brilliant sunshine, she fired a salute of 31 guns, and the whole ship's company were paraded on deck, while the Viceroy of India stood alone on the upper deck of the *Pansy* to acknowledge the salute, his own flag flying from *Pansy's* main mast. When the two ships passed we heard the National anthem played by the band, the Marines drawn up on deck presented arms, and the white ensign at the stern dipped.

Not one of those present aboard the *Pansy* can ever forget the impression made by the solitary figure of the Viceroy standing bare-headed in the sunlight to acknowledge these royal honours, remembering as we did the simple words in which he had just been telling us of his humble visit and the incident of the pilot, which had taken place almost at the same spot so many years before. There can be very few Viceroys who have received a Royal Salute from one of Her Majesty's ships afloat, and certainly no other Viceroy in such circumstances."

The Viceroy was not often given to outbursts of emotion. But on this occasion he was seen to brush away some tears, which had come into his eyes.

The ship's boy was Rufus Isaacs: barrister, Queens Counsel, Bencher of the Middle Temple, Member of Parliament, Solicitor General, Attorney General, Lord Chief Justice of England, High Commissioner and Special Ambassador to the USA, Viceroy and Governor General of India, Secretary of State for Foreign affairs, Captain of Deal Castle and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The first Jew to be successively Attorney General, Lord Chief Justice, Ambassador, Viceroy and Foreign Secretary in Britain, and the first commoner to rise to the rank of Marquess since the Duke of Wellington, as the 1st Marquess of Reading.

Trials in which he figured either as Counsel or Judge are those of Whitaker Wright, who committed suicide in the Law Courts after the verdict; the poisoner Seddon; and the Irish patriot Sir Roger Casement, whom Reading sentenced to death for high treason.

Reading's apparent success story did not mean that his life was always plain sailing, however. Before going to the bar Rufus Isaacs joined a firm on the Stock Exchange run by his brother in law as a clerk, with a view to becoming a fully fledged member of the Stock Exchange. In this respect he was unsuccessful and was in fact "hammered" as a defaulter with debts amounting to the large sum of £8000, yet when he died aged 74 he had long since paid all his creditors in full and left over £250,000.



**Rufus Isaacs, Viceroy of India**

Some years later, in 1912, Isaacs became involved in what became known as the Marconi Scandal. Godfrey Isaacs, Managing Director of the Marconi Company in Britain, negotiated a contract with Herbert Samuel, the Post Master General, to erect a series of wireless stations round the Empire. The following month shares in the American Marconi Company were secretly bought by three Liberal Ministers, Lloyd George, Alexander Murray, the Master of Elibank and Chief Whip, and Rufus Isaacs (the brother of Godfrey), who was the Attorney General. Soon rumours were heard about insider trading and corruption over the Government contract, with exaggerated charges fuelled in some cases by anti-Semitism. In the House of Commons debate Isaacs was somewhat disingenuous in denying that he owned shares in "that Company" (the British one) thereby giving the impression that he owned no Marconi shares at all. A Liberal Select Committee exonerated the Ministers but amongst members of the public who felt the affair "stank" was Rudyard Kipling who, on hearing in 1913 that Isaacs would become Lord Chief Justice, was inspired to write his poem "Gehazi". The idea of Isaacs as Gehazi came from the Old Testament. Elisha, a "Man of God", from Kings ch.2.v 25, cures Naaman of leprosy but refuse to accept the patient's proffered payment; Gehazi, Elisha's servant, then runs after Naaman, pretending his master has changed his mind so that he can embezzle the money himself, but Elisha, on realising what Gehazi has done, punishes his servant by transferring Naaman's leprosy to him and his seed forever.

The poem was not published until 1919, but the verses "circulated". Isaacs, who became Lord Reading in 1914, did not sue for libel, although the poem was potentially libellous.

Perhaps, while mixing with the great and good, holding high offices of state and coping with the vicissitudes of fortune, Rufus Isaacs, one time ship's boy, was heartened and sustained by the knowledge that if all else failed there remained still the possibility of a Mate's job on the coast.

Hamish Roberts

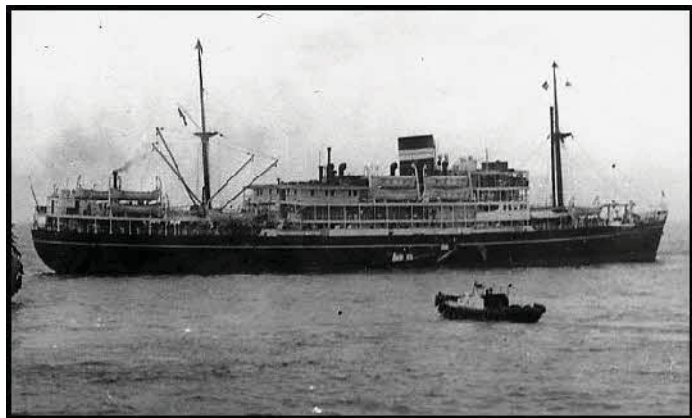
*Kipling's "Gehazi", and a very interesting paper on it by Julian Moore, can be found at*

[www.kipling.org.uk/rg\\_gehazi\\_moore.htm](http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_gehazi_moore.htm)



*An original story written for the 2003 British India Steam Navigation Company reunion in Auckland , New Zealand, by Barry Young.*

*Captain Barry Young, Extra Master , an ex BI officer , originally from South Africa , ex General Botha school and retired lecturer at the Maritime College in Auckland, has given me his permission for this delightful story to be reprinted here in The Cachalot.*



Mr Banerjee had been the mail wallah in Bombay since the end of the Second World War. His job was to meet each ship on arrival and take delivery of the Royal Mail which that ship was carrying. He also visited mail ships before departure to load outgoing mail. His trim, neatly dressed figure was a familiar sight on the water front in the nineteen fifties and sixties. He was always accompanied by a gang of six or so porters who carried the mail bags one at a time balanced on their heads, between the ships mail room and the hatch square. Mr Banerjee and I had established a good working relationship. He was both friendly and efficient so I enjoyed his visits .I discovered he liked a glass of gin and tonic while completing the paperwork in my cabin. I always kept a bottle of Gordons in my locker for this purpose and made sure that some tonic and ice was handy on the days he was due to visit our ship.

In 1961 I was a newly promoted second mate on Dumra, one of the four Gulf D's running between Bombay and the Persian Gulf. My shipboard duties included being responsible for the loading and discharging of the mail bags and the security of the mail locker below decks. The gulf D's averaged one port per day, so almost every day I would unlock the heavy steel door of the mail room deep within the bowels of the ship. Each mail bag would then be tallied in or out of the mail room. Special care was taken with the red labelled registered bags. They were stowed separately from the ordinary mail .On completion of the loading and discharging of mail at each port, the registered bags in the room were counted to make sure that none were missing .The loss of any mail was a serious matter but the loss of registered mail could , depending on the circumstances , result in demotion or even dismissal. At the very least the loss would trigger an avalanche of paperwork which would continue for months and which would include the inevitable " please explain " letter addressed to the ships captain. This was bound to incur his wrath. Not the sort of thing a newly promoted second mate needs!

This story is really about the voyage on which I lost a registered mail bag. I discovered the loss while the ship was in the Persian Gulf when I routinely made a count of the registered bags in the mail room. I still don't know how the bag went missing. Each bag going in or out was counted by both myself and the mail wallah independently so a miss-count was out of the question. I suspect that the Bombay bag was stolen while my back was turned or my attention distracted. I shall never know what actually happened. To say that I was worried would be an understatement .When I first discovered the loss I spent hours counting and recounting all of the hundreds of bags in the mail room. I did not report the loss to the Captain as I should have done because I kept hoping the bag would turn up. It never did. By the time the ship berthed at Ballard Pier, Bombay, I was really worried.

Mr Banerjee greeted me with a friendly smile as he reached the top of the gangway. I led the way down to the mail room and on the way I tried to tell him that a registered bag was missing, but he cut me short saying, " No, no, don't worry Mr Young , I know you. You would never loose a registered mail bag." There seemed little point in arguing at that stage so we continued on to the mail room which I unlocked and we began the counting. One of us stood on each side of the door and with the porters passing between us, each with a bulky mail bag on his head and shoulders. As each one passed we would click our little chrome plated counters. It took about twenty minutes to discharge the ordinary mail, then we started on the registered mail.

The mail room was alongside the engine room bulkhead and it was always uncomfortably hot down there but on this day I was perspiring even more than usual. My white uniform was soaked. Crunch time was rapidly approaching! The pile of bags remaining in the room grew smaller until one remained. A porter hoisted it on to his shoulders and passed it between us. I clicked my counter, looked at it and then held it up towards Mr Banerjee for him to see the numbers. " There, you see Mr Banerjee, we are one bag short" Without hesitation he smiled back at me and said. " No, no Mr Young, don't worry, the tally is correct, Didn't you see the last man had two "bags" on his head! Without another word he turned away and headed up to the fresh air and my cabin for the signing of the paper work.

Nothing further was said about the missing registered mailbag. I can't imagine how it was accounted for at the post office. In India there are mysterious ways of dealing with situations of this sort. I "do" know that it was a very relieved and grateful young British India officer who poured the mail wallah a particularly large peg of gin to go with his tonic and ice.

As he sat on the edge of my settee sipping his drink and enjoying the cooling flow of air from the cabin fan, Mr Banerjee said, "I like coming aboard DUMRA. We never seem to have any problems on this ship".



# BECALMED

*Have you ever been becalmed on the vast Pacific ocean,  
without a breath of breeze or rippled sea?  
Have you ever seen the glassy swells roll beneath your boat?  
Then you've shared this experience with me.*

*Have you ever seen the twinkling stars reflected in the sea,  
the sky so bright the milky way shows clear?  
Your masthead light sweeps arcs and circles in the sky.  
Then you've shared this experience with me.*

*Sometimes you wonder if the wind has died for good.  
Has your boat been left to roll it's life away?  
Have you ever checked your supplies of water and of food?  
Perhaps you'll share this experience one day.*

*Have you ever tried to move a bit by hoisting up a sail  
and seen it bang and crash from side to side?  
At times like this you might be pleased to experience a gale,  
or even just some movement from the tide.*

*Have you ever watched the sun go down mirrored on the sea,  
and green flash light the heavens in the west?  
Perhaps you will remember this sight you've seen for free  
for you've seen the great Pacific at its best.*

*Sometimes in life's great rush we are forced to take a pause.  
Be patient - a breeze will come, you'll see.  
Relax, tidy up or do some of those chores.  
Enjoy this experience with me.*

*For when the wind returns and blows you on your way,  
you'll soon forget this time of peace and calm.  
I bet you won't remember this, one year from today  
when the entry in your logbook said 'becalmed'.*

*Barry Young on his 9 meter yacht ORCA, becalmed 600 miles north of New Zealand  
for three days in October, 1995.*

# **A TALE OF TWO COQUETS.**

## **COQUET 1.**

My grandfather, Birtley Botcherby, was Chief Engineer Officer of the British flag steam powered cargo ship Coquet in 1899 and, on October 16th, the ship was steaming eastwards out of the Atlantic in rough weather when, in position about 10 degrees west and 58.05N, i.e. to the west of Lewis, there was a loud knock and the main engine started racing. The engine was stopped and an inspection of the shafting revealed no problem but looking over the counter it was seen that something must have struck the propeller which had lost all four blades.

Despite rigging a jury staysail and a sea anchor the ship drifted north west towards the Faero Islands. On the 20th October they were sighted by a barque the Captain of which provided potatoes and a case of meat and stated he would report the drifting Coquet as soon as possible, this obviously being before the advent of radio.

On 23 October the ship drifted within sight of Monk Rock (Munken), the southernmost point on the Faero's and to avoid foundering the engine was worked in the hope that the remaining stubs of the propeller would have some effect and in conjunction with the sails keep the ship clear of the rocks. The ship just passed the broken water but some sails were lost.

Westerly gales pushed the ship towards the Shetland Islands until 29 October when it was sighted by another steamer SS Berwick which took Coquet in tow using a 3.5" wire rope which broke later the same day. On the 30th the Coquet's crew using oil drums, floated down a 5" wire and two new 6" manilla ropes and a second tow was attached but these ropes snapped the next day. SS Berwick stood by until 4th November whilst carrying out her own engine repairs at which time a third tow was organised using 5" and 3.5" wire ropes. Early morning on 5th November these last ropes parted and the Berwick signalled that she had to leave as she was running low on coal. It was hoped the Berwick could send a tug to the rescue. At this time the position was 61.46N, 0.05E, well north of the Shetlands. Ironically, when the 2nd attempted tow broke on 2nd November, the ships were almost within sight of Lerwick on the Shetlands.

The ship drifted further north and east for many more days until 18th November when it was agreed by Captain and crew that they should abandon the ship and take to the two well provisioned lifeboats. A day or so later one of the boats, which contained about half the crew including the Captain and my Grandfather, was found by Norwegian fishermen and brought into Kristiansund where they recovered from exposure before returning to England. The other boat, commanded by the Chief Officer, was never found.

The Coquet continued to drift and was eventually wrecked on the coast at Brakvar and presumably considered a CTL.

Back in England, the owners of Coquet, having not heard from their ship considered she was overdue and presumably lost and had informed next of kin accordingly...

My Grandmother had therefore considered herself a widow and a memorial service to her lost husband had been held in Thornhill Methodist Church, Sunderland. My mother was born on 26 September 1899 and hence was considered orphaned at birth.

However, there was great joy when Grandfather returned home safely and a year or so later, a son was born and christened Birtley Henry Botcherby, the Henry being after the Coquet's Captain who shared Grandfather's ordeal in the lifeboat.

(Birtley Henry, my uncle, became a marine engineer and was eventually Chief Superintendent, New Construction, of Shell tankers.)

## **COQUET 2.**

It would seem that the Coquet's owners, The Mercantile Steamship C. of London, built another ship of the same name in 1904, and this ship of 4396TDW had a sad and eventful end during WW1 when she was passing through the Mediterranean en route to Rangoon with a cargo of salt. Some 120 miles SE of Malta she was stopped by a German U boat whose crew ransacked the Coquet's stores before setting time bombs which sank the ship. The crew in their lifeboats had to surrender all charts and navigating instruments to the U boat save one lifeboat compass and were told not to leave the area and would be picked up later by a small French steamer. The U boat departed and later, in the dark, a vessel did approach. The survivors set off a red flare to attract attention but the ship steamed away presumably fearing a trap. One boat carried Captain Groom and 16 crew including the 2nd officer, 2nd and 4th engineers, plus deck, steward and engine ratings. The Chief officer's boat carried the balance of the crew but in the storms which followed for several days, the boats became separated and the latter was never again seen.

After over 4 days in bad weather, the captain's boat landed on a rocky beach on the North African coast near Benghazi, whose light they had seen during the night but not recognised due to the lack of charts. One of the crew, a Greek fireman, had earlier, worked for the Tripoli police and had the impression that their landing was some 30 miles east of a small port called Marsa Susa so with the captain's approval he and another fireman, a Swede, set out to walk to an Italian army outpost some 10 miles away.

Meanwhile, the rest of the party built a fire and slept amongst the sand dunes. The following morning they heard gunfire and were attacked by bandit Arabs who killed several of the crew, ordered the remainder to march out of the dunes leaving behind Captain Groom and a Negro seaman, both wounded and considered likely to die.

Some time after this the Greek and the Swede made contact with the Italian outpost in the Jabal Akhdar hills and explained the situation. The Italians took them on horseback to the port of Marsa Susa; here the naval authorities dispatched a tugboat to patrol the coast and search for the remaining crew. They found the abandoned lifeboat but no crew until the wounded Captain was sighted. He, the Negro and the bodies of three dead sailors were taken back to Marsa Susa. After recovery in hospital the captain was returned to England via Malta by the end of March.

Meanwhile, the bandits had led their captives to a cave already occupied by regular Senussi soldiers who took over control of the prisoners when they heard of the bad treatment they had received at the hands of the bandits. The Senussi had been fighting the Italians for years but had no quarrel with the British (despite Italy and Britain being allies in WW1) so treated the crew well before taking them on a long march to the town of Djabia which was the HQ of Sheik Idris of Djabia. Here they were detained for some time until they heard news that their captain was not dead but in England and that they would now be taken by camel to Zwedina on the coast; it would appear that some negotiations had taken place between the Sheik and the Governments of Egypt and the UK as a 500 ton steamer flying the Egyptian flag was at anchor. A boat from this vessel came ashore carrying a British army colonel, an RNVR lieutenant and an Egyptian army bey. The remaining crew of Coquet, now only numbering nine, were taken aboard the ship and eventually returned home.

References. New York Times, 30 March, 1916.

"True tales of Sail and Steam" by Shalimar. Oxford University Press, London 1943.

David Aris

# Rope Ends



## AUTUMN DINNER DANCE

Saturday 10th October

Brook House Masonic Centre, Botley

*Egg & Prawn Salad  
with a Dill Mayonnaise*

*Medallions of Pork Fillet  
With a Calvados Sauce  
Seasonal Vegetables & Potatoes*

*Strawberry Shortbread*

*Cheese & Biscuits*

*Coffee & Mints*

**A non-alcoholic fruit punch will be served on arrival**

**Drinks at sensible prices**

**Music by**

***Harmony House***

Black Tie,  
1915 for 2000.

Priced at **£29** per person.

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



The Reverend Bill McCrea receives Honorary Life Membership of the Club from Captain John Mileusnic at a most convivial Club Supper which was held in the clubroom in June to mark the occasion.

Bill regaled us with an account of his recent world cruise aboard the *Saga Rose* and finished with some music on his harmonica.

Bill's full account of his and his wife Roseleens' trip can be found under "Club Supper June 09" on our website:

[www.cachalots.org.uk/Contents.aspx](http://www.cachalots.org.uk/Contents.aspx)

and some more pictures are posted on the Gallery page.

\$\$\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

\$ **250 Club** \$

\$ June K. Dagnall  
\$ M.R. Donaghy \$

\$ July M. Grey  
\$ L. d'Espagnac \$

\$ August R. Bloom  
\$ G. Cartwright \$

\$\$\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

Just to remind you that this newsletter is now posted on our web site as soon as it is ready to go to press. Bearing in mind yet another rise in the postal costs, if you would like to join the growing band of members who are happy to read it on-line rather than receive a printed copy just let us know your e-mail address and we will notify you as soon as each edition goes online. You can, of course, then print off any pages that you want on your own printer.



You may already have found a copy of this in your inbox; this one is from Paul Davies.

You might be interested in this petition:

[www.maritimeheritage.co.uk](http://www.maritimeheritage.co.uk)

As an Island nation, our maritime history is inextricably linked to our evolution, our prosperity, and our survival, both in times of peace and in war. Historic vessels carry the least protection of any heritage assets in the UK. It is time that our historic ships were afforded the same protection as our historic buildings, in order that present and future generations may get the opportunity to enjoy, and appreciate our rich maritime history. If, as I am sure, you agree with me, perhaps you would take a couple of minutes to go to the link above and support the request for the draft Heritage Protection Bill to extend protection to historic ships.

The closing date is 10th October 2009.

Best wishes,

Paul Davies

Also at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/historic-ships/>



### From sewage ship to national Flagship:

Southampton vessel *ss Shieldhall* is awarded new status as 2009 Flagship for the UK's Historic Ships

*ss Shieldhall* was built in 1955 as a sewage disposal vessel for Glasgow, but is now a familiar sight on the Solent coastline, running passenger trips to Dorset or round the Isle of Wight, and hosting events in her magnificent panelled saloon. She is a valued member of the UK's National Historic Fleet and has been awarded the accolade of Flagship of the Year 2009 by National Historic Ships, in recognition of her wide-ranging summer 2009 cruising programme. In this role, *Shieldhall* will be promoting the 1,200 other vessels on the National Register of Historic Vessels as she visits a variety of ports along the south coast and welcomes hundreds of passengers aboard for wonderful days out on a fascinating ship reflecting Britain's rich maritime history.



Image by David Rose-Massom

**Cachalot Barry Eagles, Chairman of Solent Steam Packet Ltd, and Hannah Cunliffe, Policy & Project Manager, National Historic Ships, display the special burgee awarded to the *Shieldhall*.**

National Historic Ships, which is sponsored by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, is the official voice for historic vessels in the UK. We offer advice on ship preservation, promote historic vessels throughout the UK, and run a Strategic Grants scheme for the benefit of historic vessels on the National Register. Now, for the first time, we are launching 'Flagship of the Year' as a new, groundbreaking award to recognise those historic vessels which are still in operation and offer the Public unique experiences afloat.

The Club room is currently open three days a week, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 1130 - 1500. Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink and she can take your orders for meals, sandwiches and snacks.

Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this newsletter will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.

The Club's address is:

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

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### Dates for your Diary

Sat	Sept	5	Curry Lunch, Gurkha Kitchen
Thu	Sept	10	Coach trip to Christ Church College
Sat	Oct	10	Dinner Dance, Brook House, Botley
Sat	Dec	5	Christmas Lunch, King's Court
Sat	Dec	12	Christmas Dinner, King's Court

### CURRY LUNCH

The next Curry Lunch will be held on

**Saturday 5th September**

By popular request we shall be returning to

The Gurkha Kitchen

1200 for 1230

**£11.50 per head**

You may still have time to book, if you are quick.

### NEW CACHALOT

**R. Hill**

### Gone Aloft

**D.A. Smy**