

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 34

December 2009

Captain's Log

There could be a food trend starting here because my last report started with the Spring curry lunch. I would have liked to have described the Autumn one but unfortunately for me an unexpected early morning telephone call sent me off to pilot a VLCC. Carol on the other hand enjoyed the meal and told me of the "what a shame" by many people while they devoured my share, and not even a doggy bag for me! The following day when once again I was afloat, the Cachalots were well and proudly represented at the Merchant Navy Association Memorial Service at Holyrood Church.

In early October the dinner dance at Brook House was an enjoyable occasion with an excellent dinner and drinks at reasonable prices. The band played a range of music to suit the evening and while a good number of people attended there was certainly room for more. The £250 proceeds from the raffle were donated to the Wessex Cancer Trust. Later in the month a number of the Club Officers met with the Master and Clerk of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, who were on a visit to the Southampton area, for an interesting informal discussion and exchange of views.

The Harpooners' Dinner in November is always a special evening. It gives the Captain for the year the opportunity to thank the Officers and various committee members for their contribution to the running of the Southampton Master Mariners. This year the dinner was held in the club room with excellent catering by John Davis.

Throughout this period there have been various meetings by the Officers and Harpooners formulating proposals in preparation for the Annual General Meeting on the 21st January 2010. Again I thank those Officers who, due to my work commitments, have stood in for me. At this point it is a pleasure to report that donations at the Shipping Festival resulted in both the Seafarers Centre and Winchester Cathedral each receiving £873.80. A gratifying amount in what has been a very difficult year for many.

I was very privileged to represent and lay the wreath on behalf of "The Cachalots" at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. The service was even more poignant this year by the many references made to our servicemen and women currently on active service. Afterwards it was an honour to stand with the mayor and representatives from all walks of life and view the parade march past.

Tickets for the Sea Pie Supper on the 5th February 2010 are now available through the club office. In December there are two popular functions; the Christmas lunch on the 5th and the Christmas dinner on the 12th. Both are held at the King's Court Masonic Centre in Chandlers Ford which has ample parking; directions can be provided by the office. Places need to be booked in advance either in person at the club, by telephone or by e-mail.

As we draw near to the end of 2009 and the festive season is fast approaching Carol and I would like to send our very best wishes to all members and their families for a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2010.

John Mileusnic
Club Captain



"250" CLUB

This scheme helps to bolster funds for the club and has proved very popular over the years. It has helped to avoid increasing the membership fees and certainly assists with our running costs. Increased participation in the "250" is always welcome from new members as well as additional subscription from existing members.

Each annual contribution of £5 gives you two chances to win £40 every month, with two prizes each month. The prize in December is £100 with far better odds than the lottery! You may of course enter as many times as you wish in multiples of £5. Winners names are printed in each edition of The Cachalot.

Payment details are on the club's subscription form and details can be obtained from the office.

GOOD LUCK

John Mileusnic Club Captain

BOATSTEERERS LOCKER

The Clubroom

As you receive this edition of The Cachalot the General Committee will have passed a resolution to the AGM for approval and acceptance at its meeting on Thursday 21st January 2010. Without wishing to prejudge the decision of the General Committee our financial situation has not improved this year and whilst we continue to find a different solution to withdrawing from our tenancy agreement in 2011 we are also actively looking for suitable alternative solutions to having our own Clubroom should this come to pass.

So far we have been looking for suitable organisations with whom to discuss the development of a longer term and more formal arrangement that will have benefits for all concerned. One such proposal is that the Cachalots and the Royal Southampton Yacht Club could open a dialogue to consider the development of a collaborative agreement that could include without being limited to:-

1. A form of reciprocal membership which could cover the use of the bar facility and a meeting room for an agreed number of lunch times/evenings. (E.g. One lunchtime per month plus a dinner evening four times per year. A meeting room from 1900- 2200hrs 10 times per year).
2. RSYC members could be eligible and welcome to attend TC social functions including the Sea Pie Supper and the Shipping Festival Service.
3. RSYC members could have observer status at TC AGM and General Council Meetings.
4. Members of the TC who sail could be eligible for a form of associate status.
5. RSYC members could be invited to join the TC professional activities
6. Identify and come to an agreement on the charges for such collaboration.
7. Agree to/or not to take any agreed proposals forward to the respective committee structures for approval and further specific development discussions.

We would hope that once such a dialogue commences other potential opportunities will emerge.

Benefits

At this point in time any benefits can be 'assumed only', based upon each organisations understanding of each others operation. However, for the purposes of starting any discussions some potential benefits could be:-

For RSYC:

- Increased income.
- Increased membership.
- Wider range of activities for its members.
- Higher profile within Southampton City and its maritime environment.
- Increased potential to attract local youngsters into the maritime community.
- Increased use of facilities.
- Increased marketing opportunities.
- Provision of a very good quality meeting place for its members.
- Can continue to develop both its social and professional activities in a more effective way.
- Increased membership.
- Wider range of activities for its members.
- Higher profile within Southampton City and its maritime environment.
- Increased marketing opportunities.

To both organisations:

- We will be seen, from outside both organisations, to be consolidating resources whilst maintaining two distinct and separate identities.
- The whole will have a higher profile within the community than its separate parts.
- Is a more commercially effective way to operate.

A new Commodore has been installed at the RSYC and once he has his feet under the proverbial table we hope to be able to continue with this dialogue.

Another alternative would be for us to come to a commercial agreement with a suitable hotel that is conveniently located within or close to Southampton City Centre and is willing and able to provide us with suitable facilities and meals to an agreed annual calendar. One such hotel is the Elizabeth House Hotel on the Avenue not far from the Travel Lodge Hotel (ex Merchant Navy Hotel). If any member has any other suggestions please let us know and we will follow them up.

Visit to Christchurch College Oxford 10/09/09.

A small but *very select* group of members visited this august establishment on a lovely sunny day in September! Seventeen of us were shown around the College and Cathedral by a most knowledgeable and loquacious official guide. No doubt there were many anecdotes that we heard that owed their utterance more to a fertile imagination than to a strict adherence to factual history but it was none the less enjoyable for all that. Apparently it is true, even to this day, that because the Cathedral is built inside the College, then technically the Dean of Christchurch College can prevent the Bishop from entering his cathedral. I would like to see the newspaper headlines if he tried to!!

A photo of this *very select* group in the main quadrangle is appended herewith.

Interaction with the wider community

Business Southampton – I am pleased to say that Business Southampton has raised the money to be able to award the Supply Chain Mapping project to a successful bidder. This is part of the Maritime Integration Project. Once the SCM is complete we will, for the first time, be able to identify the extent of and the interdependencies between the maritime and non maritime industries within the Solent region. The selection of the successful bidder and the start up of this project should commence in January 2010 and we will, as members of the Port and City Futures Group, be actively involved in this project so 'watch this space' and if any of you are interested please let me know.

Maritime Awareness – We have been invited to present a paper to the Southampton Shipowners Association management committee on December 16th. This sets out how the Cachalots and the SSA can work together, not only to get into schools and talk about the potential of a career within the shipping and maritime industries, but also develop a timetable of ship visits to those members of SSA who support this initiative. Please let me know if you would like to be involved with this project.



George Angas. Boatsteerer. 17th November 2009

We have received this update from bursary holder Matt Nicholls:

After my short trip back on Queen Victoria, I managed a week at home before heading down to Australia to cover a compassionate leave on the Pacific Sun. It was a really good opportunity to gain experience of an older ship, where life isn't perhaps quite as straight forward as on the Queen Victoria! I thoroughly enjoyed my short trip, only three weeks, and went straight from there to Amsterdam for a course. Carnival have a new simulator and training centre in Almere, thirty minutes or so by car from Amsterdam, and it's very impressive. The bridge design of the simulator is identical to most of the ships in the Carnival UK fleet and the SAM Electronics equipment which is now standard on most of our ships is also used. It's a great opportunity to experience situations in the relative safety of a simulator which will help you in the real world should you ever be faced with them.

Following this course I anticipated a few weeks at home before my wife's due date of 22nd October. I was then however asked if I would like to cover three weeks

onboard Ocean Village Two, arriving back in the UK on 22nd October! On the premise that this would allow me more leave after the babies due date to enjoy being a Dad, I decided to take it. Unfortunately the baby wasn't consulted on his arrival date, and so decided to enter the world on 21st October! I arrived home on 22nd and went directly to the hospital, and was able to collect my wife and son the following day to bring them home. So the last three weeks have been very hectic indeed. The arrival of baby Samuel (after a few famous maritime Samuels - Cunard, Plimsoll...) would have been disruption enough, but we are also in the process of moving house back towards my wife's and my parents in Oxfordshire! Last week I received an email from the office asking me to attend another course in Almere, and so that is where I am now. On Friday I return home for a few days, and join P&O Aurora in Rhodes on 26th November where I will be until March.

Best wishes,

Matt

Our congratulations and best wishes to Matt, his wife and baby Samuel. Matt will endeavour to write some more for us when he can find time in his obviously busy life.



Merchant Navy Association Memorial Service Holyrood Church, Southampton 6th September 2009

Another photo-opportunity that our Captain missed! (*see Captain's Log*)

Left to right:

Capt. George Angas, Boatsteerer.

Capt. Reg Kelso, Hon Life Member and past Boatsteerer.

Gerry Cartwright, Staff Captain.

The "Coastal Forces" which we were operating from Vis consisted of torpedo boats (MTBs), motor gunboats (MGBs), B-type MLs (motor launches) HDMLs (harbour defence motor launches). Coastal Forces were really a development of the coastal motor boats (CMBs) like the one which "Gus" Agar used in World War I as already described.



Shortly before World War II an enterprising man called Hubert Scott-Paine, who ran the British Motor Boat Company in Hythe near Southampton, built high-speed motor boats designed to carry two torpedoes. The idea was that they could sneak up unobserved at high speed and torpedo large enemy targets. This was, of course, before the days of radar. Scott-Paine offered these to the Admiralty, who bought some for trials and development. The Admiralty also ordered the famous firm of Vosper Ltd in Portsmouth to produce alternative designs. Their most significant prototype was MTB102 - an enormously successful design. MTB102 was of a very striking, racy appearance and extremely high speed and she was used at one stage by King George VI during the Naval Review at Spithead in 1937.

Photo courtesy of the MTB102 Trust, which now runs this historic vessel, www.mtb102.com and the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships www.adls.org.uk

The particular feature of MTB102 was that the two torpedoes were carried on deck, one each side, in close-fitting lightweight tubes. They

could be discharged from these tubes at whatever speed the boat was moving by a small explosive charge which pushed them out ahead of the boat. Apart from the torpedoes the MTBs were quite lightly armed - only some machine-guns. MTB102's most distinguished C.O. was Commander Christopher Dryer, DSO, DSC, RN.

These "Vosper" boats were beautifully built of wood and were driven by three Issotta-Fraschini engines of about 1000 hp each. This gave them a speed of about 35 knots. With minor variations they were used very extensively and with great success throughout the war. The engines, being Italian, were replaced by similar sized Packard engines bought from the USA.

The next development in Coastal Forces was to produce larger and more powerful MTBs, built by the Fairmile Company. The Fairmile "D" design became standard and they were collectively known as "Dog Boats". These were larger and heavier, about 115 ft long and had four Packard engines. They were more powerfully armed than the Vosper boats, but not quite as fast.

It was soon found necessary to produce motor gunboats as protection against the German "E-boats". Our motor gunboats were the same hull as the "Dog Boat" MTBs, but instead of torpedo tubes they had much larger gun armament - usually either Bofors or 6-pounders: These packed a terrific punch and were outstandingly successful throughout the war.

The third main category of Coastal Forces craft were the MLs, designed primarily for the protection of small coastal convoys. These were also produced by Fairmile, were round bilged and much slower than the Dog Boats. They had Asdic submarine detection gear and carried depth-charges. They were driven by two 500hp Hall-Scott engines, which were very much more reliable than the bigger engines in the Dog Boats. An interesting point about the B-type MLs was that they were, so to speak, pre-fabricated; the component parts of their wooden hulls were mass-produced and then delivered, one load at a time, to various yacht builders all round the English coast. Thus, even small unsophisticated yacht yards could assemble these quite large hulls without the need for complicated wood-working machinery. These MLs were very successful - good sea boats, quite long range, a useful turn of speed - 16 knots - good-looking and very useful indeed.

The fourth minor category were the smaller harbour defence motor launches (HDMLs). These 72' boats, as their name implies, were intended for local patrols round important harbours. They were designed by Laurent Giles - a famous yacht designer. They were extraordinarily good sea boats and had two diesel engines (either Gardner, Thornycroft or Ailsa Craig). They were the only craft

in Coastal Forces which ran on diesel fuel. They were not fast, but they had anti-submarine equipment and were altogether very useful little boats. They were extremely well built and many survived the war and made excellent motor yachts in peacetime.

With minor variations, Coastal Forces consisted of only the above four categories. However, just as a matter of interest, it may be mentioned that a very few absolutely excellent MLs were built by Camper & Nicholson of Gosport to their own designs. These were intended for the special service of collecting loads of ball-bearings from Norway and Sweden in the early part of the war.

I should make it clear at this point that by far the greater proportion of Coastal Forces of all types were employed in the English Channel. Despite the bad weather, frequently unsuitable for small boats, MTBs and MGBs in particular fought a long and fierce campaign in home waters throughout the war. The amazing exploits of these huge numbers of small craft were very vividly described by Peter Scott in his book "The Battle of the Narrow Seas"; this is really a saga of extraordinary bravery and endurance by the crews, almost all of whom belonged to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.



This is in every way a great story, but I cannot describe it here in any detail because I was only concerned with Coastal Forces in the Mediterranean myself.

A recently (1998) published work "Dog Boats at War" gives a very interesting and detailed description of these Coastal Forces craft. The author is Lt Cdr Len Reynolds, OBE, DSC who was CO MGB 658 at Vis. He has also written another book "Mediterranean MTBs at War". He kindly asked me to write its Foreword.

(left: MGB 658, and a sister ship, at Vis)

By 1943 all these boats were being built in very large numbers in the UK, and in increasing numbers they were sent to the Med. Mediterranean conditions and weather were much more suitable for them than the English Channel. However, until the Allied campaign in Italy began, there were relatively few areas where targets could be found. From the beginning of 1944 a large force of MTBs and MGBs was operating up the west coast of Italy, under the orders of Commander Bobby Allan (afterwards Lord Allan, of the Financial Times). His forces achieved great success and many of them were the newer type of craft - including the "Elco" PT boats built in the USA. These were the first boats to be fitted with radar, which was an enormous advantage.

Even larger numbers of Coastal Forces were deployed in the Adriatic, to Brindisi, Bari and Manfredonia, and later further north. By far the most targets available were in the Yugoslavian islands. Throughout 1944 more and more MTBs and MGBs were sent to me in Vis because, as it was said at the time, the Navy had "run out of war" in other parts of the Mediterranean.

No words can describe my admiration for the officers and ratings who served in Coastal Forces. With very few exceptions all the CO's and the officers belonged to the RNVR. Once trained they usually remained in Coastal Forces and were not often exchanged with bigger ships. The ratings also tended to stay in the same boats for perhaps two years at a time. They lived cheerfully in extremely cramped conditions, in boats which were violently uncomfortable at sea, and they were involved in battle far more frequently than the crews of larger ships. There is also the point that all their fighting was at night, and that normally they would remain at action stations night after night, whereas the crews of bigger ships would more often be on watch four hours on, four hours off.

It was a particularly dangerous existence. Actions would be violent and at very short range; also, which is an extremely important point, all our MTBs and MGBs ran on high octane petrol. It was a terrible thing to send these young men into action with thousands of gallons of petrol, which could be exploded by just one shell or tracer bullet. By contrast all the German E-boats throughout the war ran on diesel and not on petrol. The distance from the MTB base in Bari to Vis was about 120 miles. One aspect of operating MTBs is that they used a great deal of petrol and had to be refuelled after every night at sea. In Vis this had to be done from 40-gallon drums brought over from Italy by landing-craft - a wearisome and dangerous task.

To be continued

"OLYMPIC" - One of "TITANIC'S" two sisters.

Scarcely a month passes without the Southampton paper announcing the arrival of “the largest ship to visit the port” and, despite the economic downturn, all the indications are that “gigantism” is on the increase and the dictates of “economy of scale” will mean bigger ships carrying more containers or more passengers.

At the beginning of the last century the accent was on speed and on the prestigious North Atlantic passenger run the competition to establish a new “record” was fierce.

Eventually, the management of the White Star Line concluded that this was a financially unrewarding policy and they decided to build three luxurious ships, each of about 45,000 tons – undoubtedly the largest ships in the world at that time but not the fastest.



The White Star naval architects decided on a relatively simple hull design with the accent on hull strength, operational economy and passenger comfort and they approached their traditional builders – the Belfast shipbuilders Harland & Wolff – and sought their opinions.

The builders agreed with, and contributed to, the design but their existing yard could not build ships of that size and weight – so, after some discussion and assurances they agreed to virtually rebuild the yard to allow construction to begin. Three building berths were demolished and replaced by two bigger ones equipped with overhead gantries and cranes and, by 1908, they told White Star that they were ready to build the world’s largest ships.

The keel of the “Olympic” was laid in December of that year and almost two years later – on October 20th. 1910, she was launched. Her overall length was 883 feet and she was 92 feet 6 inches wide with a load draft of some 35 feet. The builders said that they used 3 million rivets weighing 1200 tons in her construction and boasted that she was the strongest, most luxurious and safest ship sailing the world’s oceans.

If her design was revolutionary then her machinery was equally so and the company agreed to install coal burning propulsion machinery originally designed by Harland & Wolff for the White Star “Laurentic” - and which had proved to be economical and efficient. The system incorporated reciprocating engines and a turbine, driving three screws. The two outside shafts were driven by 4-cylinder triple-expansion engines and the centre one by a low-pressure turbine. There were six separate boiler rooms within individual watertight bulkheads and they housed 24 double-ended boilers. Overall, the machinery and boilers took up 520 feet of the ship’s length. Her immense passenger complement comprised 730 First Class, 674 Second Class and 1026 Third Class and she had a crew of some 865. Throughout, the passenger accommodation and facilities were the last word in luxury.

The “Olympic” ran acceptance trials towards the end of May 1911 attaining a speed of almost 22.0 knots and, on May 31st. she left the builder’s yard – and on the day she did so her sister-ship “Titanic” slid down the slipway in Belfast. After a call at Liverpool, the ship proceeded to Southampton - her home port - and entered the North Atlantic trade together with three smaller White Star ships. She left Southampton on May 14th with bands playing and a star-studded list of First Class Passengers and despite inclement weather she averaged 21.17 knots for the passage to the Ambrose Light Vessel.

The ship fully lived up to her owner’s expectations and she soon became a firm favourite with discerning travellers, but then, disaster struck and on September 20th. 1911 she collided with, and sank, the cruiser HMS Hawke in the Spithead Channel off Portsmouth. The ensuing investigation found the Olympic “wholly to blame” but the verdict was unsuccessfully appealed for several years. It was suggested that the immense amount of water displaced by the huge liner had contributed to the warship’s inability to avoid collision but this “theory” was firmly rejected. Today, the concept of “interaction” is widely accepted. With a huge hole in her side Olympic returned to her builders yard for repairs before re-entering service.

In February 1912 she lost a propeller blade and again had to return to the big drydock in Belfast to have it replaced and, on her return to service, she was joined by her new sistership “Titanic”. In almost every respect the ships were identical but the new ship’s forward promenade deck was glassed-in whereas the Olympic’s was open.

The Titanic departed Southampton on April 10th. 1912 and on April 15th. at 11.40pm she struck an iceberg and sank with the loss of 825 passengers and 673 crew - and the rest of the story is history.

Now the huge Olympic fell under the safety spotlight as indeed did every operational aspect of passenger shipping and many changes were hastily introduced. under the auspices of The Convention for The Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

The disaster that befell the Titanic undermined passenger confidence in travel by sea and the ripples of this were felt throughout the entire UK shipping industry.

The Olympic made a few more voyages and then White Star deemed it wise to send her back to Belfast for a highly-publicised upgrade of many of the components contributing to safety. The job took more than six months and she did not rejoin the service until the Spring of 1913 when she was joined by the third newbuilding –the “Britannic”. This ship’s construction

period coincided with the loss of Titanic and her owners ensured that many of the safety recommendations resulting from the enquiry were incorporated in the new ship.

Olympic was now regarded as one of the safest ships afloat and she soon regained her earlier popularity with the travelling public. Her First Class complement had been reduced, lifeboat capacity almost doubled and watertight integrity improved and soon the memories of the Titanic disaster started to fade from the minds of trans-Atlantic passengers.

The outbreak of the Great War saw her on a commercial voyage to New York and she continued the voyage almost normally but on her return to the United Kingdom she was diverted to the Clyde which now became her “home” port. In October 1914 she diverted to assist the battleship HMS Audacious which had struck a mine and although Olympic earned many plaudits for her rescue (in very adverse weather) there were many who thought it unwise for a huge merchant ship with a full passenger complement to venture into a minefield.

In September 1915 she was taken over by the Admiralty as a troop transport and, in February 1916, on two occasions she narrowly avoided being torpedoed. Her sister-ship Britannic - the third of the triumvirate - had been converted to a hospital ship but, in November 1916, she struck a mine in the Aegean Sea and sank: Olympic was now the sole survivor of the three great ships.

In May 1918 she was carrying American troops when she came under attack in the Atlantic by U.103 and as she manoeuvred to avoid the torpedoes the huge ship ran down, and sank, her attacker. At the end of the war it was estimated that she had steamed some 184,000 miles carrying 200,000 souls without loss or damage and the end of hostilities saw her return to Belfast for a massive refit (and conversion to oil fuel) - and on July 21st 1920 she departed Southampton on the resumption of her peacetime role.

In 1927 The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company acquired the White Star Line (although the name was unchanged) and Olympic fell under their operational control and, once again, she returned to Belfast for a further refit and a reduction in her total passenger complement.

1930 saw the North Atlantic served by six large British flag passenger vessels together with ships from France, Germany and elsewhere and when America and Europe were hit by The Great Depression and the trade rapidly fell away the White Star Line and the competing Cunard Steamship Company engaged in merger discussions. Eventually, in April 1934, Cunard-White Star came into being and thereafter Olympic flew the Cunard houseflag under her White Star one at the masthead

The great ship was now some 24 years old but had, in the intervening years, been extensively refitted and modified and her popularity on the trade seemed to be virtually guaranteed but – on May 16th. 1934 –scarcely a month after resuming service-disaster struck again. Approaching New York in dense fog she ran down and sank the manned Nantucket Light Vessel and seven of the light vessel's crew were lost. There could only be one outcome to the enquiry and her owners were forced to pay massive compensation to the U.S Government.

Early 1935 saw the “rationalisation” that invariably follows mergers and Olympic, together with many of the other ships trading with her, was sold for breaking. She left Southampton on October 11th. 1935 for demolition in Jarrow – work that was completed in Inverkeithing two years later.

Over the years there have been many stories about this great ship and quite recently one of these suggested that because divers had found her "name and number" on some of the equipment salvaged from the sunken wreck of her sistership "Titanic" she actually WAS the original Titanic and that the ships and names had been "swopped" when she went back to Belfast for repairs following the collision with HMS Hawke.

To say that this is unlikely is a massive understatement!

Crk 16/5/09



Heave Tight Aft!

My! - how ships' names have changed over the years.

This picture forwarded by Tony Ireland from Gibraltar who reckons it's a hell of a name for a vessel full of seamen.

Tsk! You should know better, Tony!

During the mid sixties - early seventies, Cachalot, Cdr David Gibbons RD RNR served as a junior officer in the stone frigate HMS WILDFIRE. One of his commanding officers, who David went on to succeed, was Ralph G. Sheffield OBE VRD RNR. Ralph sadly died in the '80's and during a recent clear out David came across this account of convoy SC 94 which Ralph had written in '77. We don't believe that it has been published before and in no way do I think that I should edit it down from its original 19 pages. So I shall bring it to you in serial form in the hope that the anticipation of reading the next edition will compensate for the frustration of not being able to do so in one go. Ralph appended a two page glossary of RN nautical terms and any that I think may be unfamiliar to you I will insert in the appropriate place. - Ed*

THE BATTLE OF SC 94

By

Commander R G Sheffield OBE VRD* RNR

PREFACE

SC 94 was a slow convoy comprised of 34 merchant ships bound in August 1942 from Halifax, Nova Scotia to the United Kingdom at a speed of seven knots.

During the battle one third of the convoy was sunk, two escorts were damaged and put out of action and three U-boats were destroyed, one by aircraft on the last day. Hundreds of lives were lost and over 500 survivors rescued. At its height 23 U-boats were estimated to be in contact with the convoy. The report of proceedings covers many pages. Sir Winston Churchill devotes one short sentence to it in his extensive history of the Second World War. Thus is demonstrated the true measure and extent of the Battle of the Atlantic.



INTRODUCTION

Now, almost 35 years later, I am going to try and tell what happened. For reference I have only a short article I wrote many years ago for the Naval Club Magazine, based upon Admiralty records made available to me at the time. Those records were complete, extensive and exhaustive: hence the preciseness of some of the detail. In them I found copies of signals sent at the time and the original report of proceedings written by my Commanding Officer; it was all there, a complete story of death and disaster made less by determination and, above all, by the courage and guts of the Merchant Navy.

To supplement that, I have memories that are now like a dream, interspersed here and there by some sharp never-to-be-forgotten recollection of a moment of time, a fleeting glimpse of a face, a remembered name, bravery and fear, humour and sadness, and a large collection of fading photographs which recall the hour but none of the action because we were otherwise engaged; with hindsight we could have done better, but then we did not know how nor have the means. Overlying all there is some vast, indistinct picture of five and a half years with convoys, shrouded by the mists of time and age, and a lasting memory of the sea with its ever-changing moods - hated, loved and always respected.

I know as I set about this task, things that I thought I had forgotten will come back to mind and inevitably they will appear when I remember them. In reading the story, understand I can only tell it as I saw and remember it, and, as you do, appreciate we in the corvette *HMS PRIMROSE* were but a speck on a vast stage; others present at the time will have their own version of the tale as they saw it. With much of what happens at sea, only those who were actually present in a particular place will know exactly what happened there, for in war there is only time and space to tell of what has importance and relevance to the main issue.

What is told here when compared with today, and with hindsight, is a tale of bows and arrows, and the terminology used is like some ancient language; for those who are not old enough to understand it, there is a glossary at the end, but modern terminology will be used when it makes no difference.

I should be willing (if the body can take it) to do it all again and, if ever I have to, I shall be a damn sight better at it because I have remembered and learned the lessons. Unfortunately, they will have to be learned all over again by another generation. The enemy as a man is no better nor no worse than we are - but does he know how as we know how and have done since the days of Drake? I doubt it. Make sure of it by reading your history and remembering your heritage.

Lastly, take note that convoying is no story of great battles with the thunder of guns. It is a matter of competence, both ashore and afloat, unremitting watchfulness and constant readiness and wakefulness, immediate reaction to events as they happen, the whole overlaid with increasing tension like the string of a bow as the arrow is drawn back, only to be relieved by a short burst of action when the arrow is fired.

1942

By now many of us had been in the Atlantic since the end of 1940. Ashore, we were gay, carefree, confident, and generally rather ignorant about everything except when it came to our job. At sea, we were tough (you had to be to survive in a

corvette), hard and callous, often frightened, and took no chances. We shot first and asked questions afterwards if there was anyone left to question. Life was less complicated when there were none. In fact, particularly if you were young, unmarried and free of feminine attachments, life was completely uncomplicated provided you accepted that the Navy ordered and you obeyed.

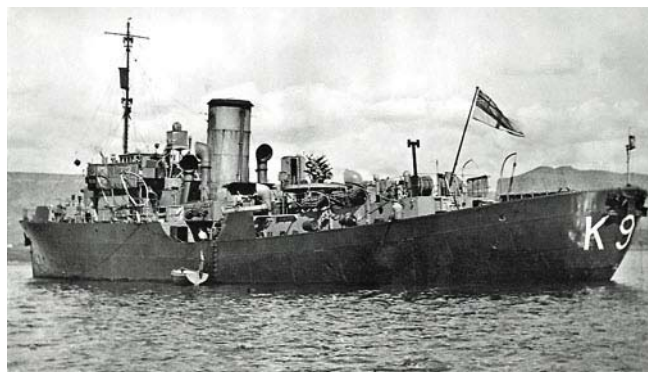
To us one convoy was the same as another. Like the weather, it was sometimes good and sometimes bad - and sometimes bloody awful. We knew the Atlantic and all its moods. We knew our ships, and nothing the sea could do would stop them even if it bent them, for corvettes were the best sea-keeping vessels the Navy ever built. Living was mostly uncomfortable, wet and cramped. For the ratings it was far worse, except they got more sleep and had less responsibility, which gave them more time to be frightened. They saw life as their officers did; all of us were very young, confident of winning the war, although it did not seem much like it at the time (we left that to our elders to worry over while we concentrated on staying afloat -literally!)

We knew the German submariner. He was brave, good at his job and ruthless, but on even terms we could tan the pants off him. Few could eat much of the last meal before sailing, and most went about preparing for sea and making ready for war with butterflies in the stomach. Having a hangover made it worse unless you happened to be beyond feeling; then you just felt more sick and queasy when you got to sea. The receding shore was another world sliding behind and slowly disappearing into the horizon, which put your heart into your boots with homesickness just for the land. But a meal under your belt, and a short sleep behind you quickly brought back our world of a warship at sea settled down to its familiar routine with a job to do, a job that was supposed to be the same but never ever was.

So it was when we sailed from St. Johns, Newfoundland in the forenoon on 3rd August, 1942.

HMS PRIMROSE

PRIMROSE was commanded by Lieut. Cdr. A Ayre DSO RNR. For officers he had three seaman Sub Lieutenants: myself, First Lieutenant, second-in-command and the eldest at 22; in addition I was gunnery officer, damage control officer and doctor (most of my patients either died or cured themselves from sheer fright of being treated by me): Number Two was "Flossie" Forber, who was also A/S officer, (*Anti-submarine - sonar (ASDIC)*) with radar thrown in for good measure; he held the ship's record for reaching the crow'snest in the shortest time: lastly came Harrison ("the small cunning man") who was pilot -(navigator to you) at sea, the pusser in harbour, and in charge of communications all the time. How the other jobs got done I do not remember, but there was a doctrine that if paperwork was left long enough it was always overtaken by events - or sunk. In addition to our trio and travelling, as he said, "to roust out the dud communicators in the Group" was the Signal Bosun from the Signal School in St. Johns. It was well for us that he was taking passage with us when he did, for his expertise in communications was invaluable.



Corvette HMS Primrose

Picture courtesy of John Firmin, whose father, also John, was an Ordinary Seaman on Primrose, but maybe not on this convoy. He went on become a Lieutenant in command of various landing craft, mainly LCT617

The senior rate in the ship was the Coxswain, a vast and burly Chief. For the upper deck, the Buffer (a petty officer) and three killicks. In the engine room there was another Chief and three killicks, with a similar quartet in the boiler room (the Chief Stoker was only seen when emerging for pay or when announcing no more fresh water). The communications staff consisted of a Leading Signaller and three, and a Leading Telegraphist and three. Then there was another petty officer (Jack Dusty) who fed and clothed us; a Leading Torpedoman who looked after the depth charges and all things electric; another petty officer who looked after the radar (which meant it was usually in pieces) with three able rates to operate it; a sonar team of a killick and three (who never took it to pieces if they could help it because, whilst the radar was new and did not work well, the sonar did, being tried and trusted). The rest, about 40 or so able and ordinary rates, manned the guns, depth charges, engine and boiler rooms, and did all the odd- jobs that constantly need doing in a ship. Most people knew how to work other things not their concern and all knew how to work the armament, both being part of the art of survival.

In all, very thin on the ground to run an escort group and get a convoy across the Atlantic. The ship's best asset was the CO: a calm, brave man and a superb fighting seaman who saved our necks many a time. On occasions I must have been a sore trial to him, for my panacea for any ill was to shoot at it, whereas he preferred the sneaky approach with a well-placed pattern of depth charges.

3rd August 1942

The Escort Force (the Group) under the command of the Commanding Officer of *HMS PRIMROSE* (corvette) consisted of the destroyer *HMCS ASSINIBOINE* and the corvettes *HMS DIANTHUS*, *HMCS ORILLIA*, *HMS NASTURTIUM*, *HMCS CHILLIWACK* and *HMCS BATTLEFORD*, the latter being the new boy to the Group and "canteen boat". (*Vessel commanded by the most junior C/O in the group. Usually first out and last in!*) For that honour she had been sailed earlier to find some ships from the Belle Island Strait which were to join the convoy.

continued over

BATTLEFORD was new to the Group and to the Atlantic scene. The rest of us were well acquainted, were familiar with each other's drinking habits, and knew as part of a team how each ship would react in any given circumstances; we had been together for some time, but this was to be the last time.

The Group was due to rendezvous with the convoy in a position 10 miles south-east of Cape Race. It soon ran into fog. Fog in those parts could last for a week; it could stay put in a gale; the look-out in the eyes of the ship could be invisible from the bridge but the look-out in the crow's nest could be in brilliant sunshine with nine miles' visibility; you could see damn all, but the guy in the next column could see for miles. When it became cold there could be icebergs about. The U-boats liked it and we hated it, but it was handy for hiding a convoy if you did not mind it ending up spread over anything up to 900 or more square miles of ocean when the fog cleared?

However, on this occasion, with the aid of radar (which happened to be working) the convoy was found and taken over from the local escort by R/T - all very chummy and we could hear each other well. So could the Germans in a hole somewhere under Berlin! The convoy was nicely spread out in lumps and heaps extending for 30 miles or more, so *ASSINIBOINE*, having the most knots, was sent chasing off to round up the stragglers and to find *BATTLEFORD* with her batch of merchant vessels.

Taking over in the fog was always a hairy business. The rules were simple. The merchant ships maintained course and speed and the escorts kept out of their way whilst taking up their allotted positions on the screen. Communication was by going close alongside and shouting with a loud-hailer or flashing by signal lamp, and the convoy Commodore made his wishes known by sound signal. All one knew was that, hopefully, all were steaming in the same direction, but over how many square miles of sea could be anyone's guess. All we could see was fog, so we just had to keep the eyes at work, hoping the radar was doing equally as well, whilst listening to the monotonous 'ping' of the sonar and the thrash of some ship's propeller close by.

At 1800 course was altered by sound signal which *NASTURTIUM* and *ORILLIA* on the port beam of the convoy, together with five ships in the port column, failed to hear; they did not rejoin until dusk on 5th August. For the rest it was a night in the fog steaming along in close company hearing, but not able to see, those around, with only the clang of a shovel or other shipboard noise to break the silence and add to the tension.

4th August 1942

Presumably the sun rose at its appointed time, but we did not see it. Somewhere a dog barked - that sound carried a long way. Occasionally there was a hoot of rage from some siren when the owner of another got too close. Speed was slow and a steady course was made all day; unplanned alterations were never made in fog except in an emergency, because every alteration meant more ships losing the convoy. During daylight the tension eased, but as it began to grow dark, it gradually increased to another night of anxiety and strain. No W/T signals were made; there was no chat on the W/T; shouting and loud talk were forbidden; the object was to get as far as possible unseen and unheard while the fog lasted. When it cleared there would be a lot of sheepdog work for the escorts.

Before sailing, intelligence had reported a suspected U-boat in the area. Unknown to us he had joined the convoy somewhere and was no doubt calling his chums to join the party, as was intimated by Admiralty in a signal received just before, midnight. For the benefit of the uninitiated, Admiralty could always fix the approximate positions of U-boats by monitoring their W/T signals and then passed the information to HM ships in the area of those positions; all warships kept a constant listening watch whilst at sea for all Admiralty signals.

5th August 1942

The day started just like the preceding one. It was again greeted by the noisy dog, whose joyous clamour of greeting to the early morn suddenly ended with a yelp. As the sun came up, the fog cleared slightly and we began to get glimpses of other ships whose masts could be seen clearly from the crow's nest, which we could also see from the bridge for the first time since we entered the fog. The game started at 1718, when *ORILLIA* reported by R/T that one of her ships had been torpedoed by a U-boat on the surface, which had made off in the fog before a counter-attack could take place. After a fruitless search *ORILLIA* returned and managed to pick up a few survivors. Since radio silence had been broken and the enemy was in contact, the SO signalled by W/T to tell everyone where he thought we were and reported the convoy's estimated position to Admiralty; even if we did not know precisely where that was, the Germans knew where we were and continued to do so for the next seven days until eventually driven off by air cover from Iceland and the UK. In the meantime, we were in the gap where there was none and the Germans also knew that.

By magic, the fog cleared at about 1800, convoy speed was reduced to four knots, and the Group set about collecting the convoy into its proper shape, while the SO passed the time of day with the convoy Commodore and told him to strike one ship off his list. *BATTLEFORD* and her party joined up, to be followed at dusk by *NASTURTIUM* and company. As soon as everyone was where they ought to be, speed was increased to seven knots and we settled down to enjoy the last warm rays of the setting sun, whilst waiting for it to get dark enough to make the usual evasive alteration of course to shake off our shadowing U-boat.

To be continued



Image courtesy of Tony Jones, www.rhiw.com

Every November, prior to Armistice Day, the Club places a wreath in the MN memorial cabinet in Winchester Cathedral. The cabinet contains the Roll of Honour which records the names of more than 33,000 merchant seamen and fishermen who lost their lives while serving in British merchant ships or in fishing vessels or in foreign ships chartered by the Government of the United Kingdom in the world war of 1939-1945.

Members are reminded that the Club is proud to own a copy of this three volume Roll of Honour, and it is available, in the Club-room, for inspection by members, or by other interested parties by appointment.



The wreath, alongside the Roll of Honour, in the MN memorial cabinet at Winchester Cathedral

It is good to see that, 64 years after the end of the Second World War, it is not just the older generations that are involved with Remembrance Services. The pictures and text below are taken from UPDATE, the in-house magazine of Bearwood College, and are reproduced here with their kind permission.

The publication was forwarded to me by Cachalot, Captain Paul Townsend, whose grandson, Luke Arai, is a foundation scholar at the college and appears in three of the photographs, (centre, bottom right).



THE MERCHANT NAVY REMEMBRANCE SERVICE



Bearwood College, as the Royal Merchant Navy School, attended the Merchant Navy Remembrance Service on Tower Hill on Remembrance Sunday. This is an impressive event, organised by the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. It takes place in the historic Sunken Garden on Tower Hill, just outside the Tower of London, in front of Trinity House. In the Sunken Garden are recorded all the names of merchant seamen who lost their lives in the war in the service of their country.

Robbie Darnton, Luke Arai and Verdane Kwao provided a colour party, parading the College Colour in the Service. This was particularly notable, in that we were the only school to be represented.

Mrs Langley, Chairman of Governors, laid a wreath on behalf of the College in special memory of all the Old Royals over the years who gave their lives on our behalf.



Southampton Master Mariners Cricket Captain's Log - 2009 season



Back Row left to right

Mike Atkelsky, Ken Warren, Jon Bennett, Nick Salter, Edmund Hughes, Prasad Panicker, Tushar Naik

Front Row left to right

Peter Hunter, Ted Banks, David Turner (Capt), Dan Walker

2009 squad (not at this match)

Emeka Ahuchogu, Ian Bagshaw, John Clark, Mike Evans, Tom Evans, James Foster, Tony Gill, Josh Hawken, Abdul Khalique, Ian Lawrence, Will Nicholls, Simon Oakley, Raza, Chris Walford

Umpires

Ian Bagshaw, George Gifford, Peter Starkey

Tea

Mrs Bagshaw assisted by Mrs Turner

2009 Team Performance

Format	Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	Abandoned
20/20	11	9	2	0	1
40/40	1	0	1	0	0

Match reports and 2009 statistics

Full match reports for the 2009 season can be found on the Southampton Master Mariners' website:

<http://www.cachalots.org.uk/Content.aspx>

Injuries & helmets

With the popularity of professional 20/20 cricket, the competitiveness is extending to club cricket and we are seeing all sorts of improvised shots being played as well as the traditional cross bat pulling and sweep shots. It was with this in mind that I proposed at the 2008 AGM that the club provide helmets in the club bag. As the players know, I hate wearing a helmet but was "encouraged" to buy and wear one in the 2005 season to reduce the risk of me walking up the aisle sporting a facial injury!

The irony being that, 4 years down the line and with a helmet of my own (but in my bag), I went to hit a slow full toss down the leg side and gave it everything I had. The resulting miscued shot resulted in the ball rocketing off the top edge and the seam digging in to my eyebrow, tearing the skin into a deep V cut requiring several stitches and resulting in two black eyes. Had the ball hit me slightly lower the doctors felt I might have lost my left eye.

"Why weren't you wearing a helmet?" was the question and the best I could think of was, "I didn't think it would happen to me".

The only other injury that I know of happened at HMS Sultan where a well hit drive hit the rough outfield and kicked up in front of our player fielding at mid-on, hitting him in the mouth. The injury was nasty and the game was abandoned due to failing light (and I am sure we would have beaten them!) and getting him to a doctor – all the Navy ones were in Afghanistan.

2009 Batting statistics

Batting	Innings	Not Outs	Runs	Batting Average
Emeka	9	6	227	75.67
Turner	12	7	212	42.40
Raza	6	3	125	41.67
Foster	3	1	63	31.5
Salter	8	4	106	26.50
Warren	12	4	180	22.50
Clark	1	1	22	(22)
Panicker	6	3	55	18.33
Oakley	3	2	18	18
Atkelsky	6	1	73	14.60
Banks	6	1	55	11
Naik	5	1	32	8
Bagshaw	2	0	14	7
Lawrence	5	0	34	6.80
Bennett	5	1	26	6.50
Hunter	4	1	18	6
Walford	1	0	6	6
Evans. M	4	1	17	5.67
Nicholls	1	0	5	5
Hughes	6	2	12	3
Walker	1	0	3	3
Gill	6	1	14	2.80
Hawken	1	0	1	1
Khalique	1	0	1	1
Evans. T	1	0	0	0

Hardmoor

As we are fourth in the “pecking order” for booking, it is becoming more and more difficult for us to use the Southampton Solent University ground at Hardmoor and so we have been on the lookout for an alternative. The Treasurer has made some preliminary enquiries into the Otterbourne ground at the Southern Water site, and the team agreed that they liked the venue and the nearby watering hole at the top of the hill.

The Treasurer reports that he has had positive verbal feedback but awaits written confirmation.

In summary

The teams have excelled themselves this year with figures which speak volumes and an outstanding performance from everyone involved. In true Cachalot manner, we have become a force to be reckoned with and I am both privileged and proud to have been part of your 2009 season.

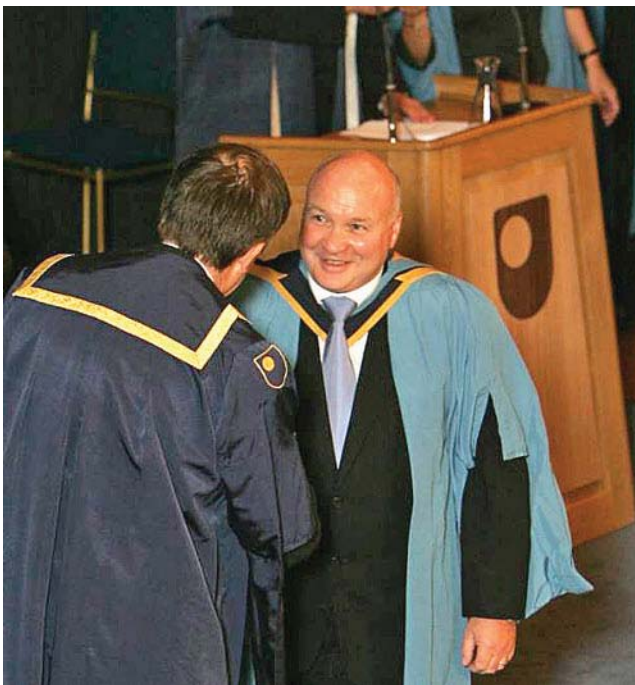
David Turner (SMMCC Captain 2009)

2009 Bowling statistics

Bowling	Overs	Maidens	Runs	Wickets	Econ rate	5 wickets
Lawrence	4	1	12	1	3	
Raza	26	1	91	4	3.50	
Panicker	27		98	5	3.63	
Foster	7		27	2	3.86	
Salter	38		153	13	4.03	1 Shirley (A)
Turner	19		84	7	4.42	
Bagshaw	4 5/6		22		4.55	
Atkelsky	26		127	11	4.88	
Oakley	9		51	4	5.67	
Emeka	19 1/3	1	110	5	5.69	
Clark	2		12	1	6	
Bennet	13		84	6	6.46	
Hunter	1		7	1	7	
Walker	2		15		7.5	
Nicholls	4		34		8.50	
Gill	4 2/3		40	5	8.57	
Naik	10	1	88	7	8.8	
Khalique	2		19		9.50	



Captain, Captain and Master



Captain David Turner MBA(Open), MNI was awarded his Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) at a ceremony held at the Palais de Congress, Versailles on Saturday 13th September 2008.

Captain Turner has been a Cachalot since moving to Hampshire over 5 years ago and is captain of the Master Mariner's cricket team.

He left the sea in 2002 after 24 and a half years and started his MBA studies when he joined the Maritime & Coastguard Agency in 2003 where he is currently a policy manager in the Directorate of Maritime Standards.

David began his sea days as a Deck cadet with P&O S.N Co serving on general cargo, reefer, container, passenger, tanker/ore carrier & educational cruise ships.

After his cadetship he joined P&O cruises and served on Canberra, Uganda, Island Princess & Royal Princess, including two tours of duty to the Falklands on the troopship Uganda.

He left P&O to work on high speed passenger catamarans in the early 1990s and then to British Channel Island Ferries working from Poole and several other routes around the UK.

In 1997 he moved to P&O Ferrymasters where he served on the Teesport to Gothenburg/Helsingborg route until retiring from the sea as Master of the Ro-Ro ferry mv Elk (later Tor Baltica).

He lives near Portsmouth with his wife (and Ducati 916), and his daughter Kate is staying at Welbeck defence sixth form college sponsored by the RAF.

He began his Open University Business School studies with a Professional Certificate in Management in 1997 before being awarded a Professional Diploma in Management in 2000 & MBA in 2008.

“I would thoroughly recommend the Open University Business School route of study to any seafarer considering further education and wish to thank all those who have supported me along the way, especially my lovely wife Nicki!”

Click on this

If you are still all at sea with computers, e-mails, the internet and the world wide web, and if the very thought of social networking sites such as Facebook and others sends you all a- Twitter, then you are probably not alone amongst the ranks of the Cachalots. However, you could be missing out on one of the greatest technological aids to communication, information and research yet to have come our way. Call up the great “search engines” of Google, Yahoo!, Ask Jeeves and many others and with a couple of clicks you have at your fingertips a host of websites on any conceivable subject. There is, of course, a lot of dross out there but you quickly learn how to sort the good from the bad. And quite often something totally unexpected pops up. Let me give you a “for instance”.



I frequently search the internet for pictures with which to illustrate the articles that appear here and was recently doing so with regard to our new story of convoy SC 94 . Having discovered that the Commodore of the convoy was on a Hains ship (my old company) I “googled” *Trehana* and was directed to a site called Ships Nostalgia. I had discovered this site earlier in the year on a previous search and had quickly registered there but had not delved into or visited it since. I clicked on one of the indicated “threads”, a Hain Nourse one, and was amazed to find myself looking at a picture of **me**, in the company of a couple of shipmates, that was taken when I was third mate on the bulk carrier *Atherstone* back in 1966!

Well, that set me exploring the rest of the site and what a revelation it was. If you thought that the golden age of the merchant navy of the 50's, 60's 70's (and even later) was long dead then let me tell you that it is alive and well and living at www.shipsnostalgia.com . They are all there, all the crew, re-living their seafaring days from the relative comfort of their arm-chairs or, rather, their computer keyboards. All 42,530 of them; at least that's how many have registered as members so far and the number is growing daily. Many adopt thinly disguised aliases and nom-de-plumes and also display “avatars”, small graphics that act as a visual signature. Because the interaction is a two dimensional affair and one can't see a twinkle in an eye or a curled lip, or hear the tone of voice, some use “emoticons” or smiley faces to indicate whether they are joking or have a bit of a cob on. There is a list of these rather naff smileys and what they are supposed to mean but some of them are still beyond me.

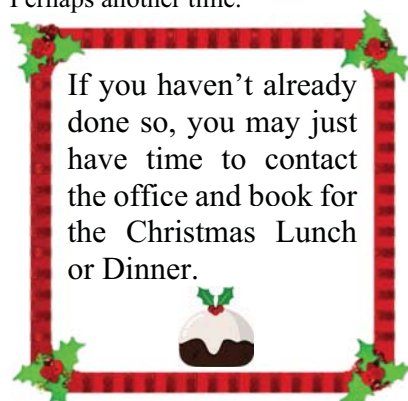
If I tell you that, at the last count before going to press, there were 41 forums, with 26,982 threads (topics for discussion/debate) and 361,988 individual posts, not to mention the 361,642 photos under 29 categories, you will perhaps get some idea of the scope and popularity of this site. Every shipping company that you can remember, and all those that you have forgotten, are represented here. The whole shebang is overseen by a group of Moderators, Super Moderators and even a Modulating Moderator, whatever that is, who do a grand job of trying to keep discipline. To get the best from the site you need to register with it, yet another user name and password to remember, but this costs nothing unless you get really hooked and sign up as a supporter. This will bring you the advantages of access to a “Captain's Cabin Forum” and the removal of most adverts, which only appear at the tops of the pages anyway. Be warned though, I have found this site very addictive and a great time waster, in both senses of the word “great”.

If you are tempted to give it a try and you are reading this online (we now have 50 of you that do so) just click on the linked address in blue, above, and you should go straight there. To get an idea of the passions and rancour that can be aroused take a look at “Jessica's Solo Voyage” (*Forums>Members Area>MessDeck>Jessica's Solo Voyage*):15 pages, so far, on the controversy over Jessica Watson, aged just 15, who has set out from Queensland on an attempted solo circumnavigation voyage.

Or find “MV Bembridge - 1938” (*Forums>Lost Contact & Research>Ship Research>MV Bembridge*) for the saga of a mad Pole (sorry Rafal!) who bought the decaying ex Trinity House Pilot cutter, towed it to Poland in the winter time and is now busy restoring her to her former glory, complete with tenders, TH uniforms, even the paper-work! His enthusiasm is quite inspiring and he has coaxed all sorts of help and memories out of the woodwork. He sent a long “round robin” email to interested parties which is too long to reproduce here so I have posted it on our own web site.

Finally, have a look at “Sparky's Quiz” (*Forums>Misc/Other forum Issues>The Quiz Forum*>) to see the level of knowledge, and not just of the nautical kind, that some of the members display. Or perhaps they are just very adept at Googling. Whatever, all very entertaining.

I had intended to cover some of the many other nautical sites that are out there but I seem to have run out of space. Perhaps another time. Ed.



Members are reminded that all articles and contributions are gratefully received, large or small, original copy preferred. I have another one from David Aris that I have had to hold over this time, and will continue with the Rear Admiral's memoirs and the story of SC 94. Your piece could appear alongside them.
Deadline for issue 35 is

Friday 12th February



Rope Ends

Walk To Cure Diabetes.

The "invitation" to participate came from Business Southampton and so on 27th September I found myself joining hundreds of others at Paultons Park near Romsey taking part in the sponsored "Walk to Cure Diabetes" The event was organised by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation with the aim of raising funds for research into type 1 diabetes. This is a condition which affects some 350000 people in the UK, 25000 of them children. It is a life sentence and the only treatment is to give daily injections of insulin at least twice a day and sometimes as many as six times a day. The walk itself covered a distance of 5km through the woods and fields surrounding Paultons Park. Luckily the weather was glorious and to my amazement I covered the distance in forty five minutes! The hardest part actually came prior to the walk when JDRF's own Mr Motivator got us to leap around doing various warm up exercises which thankfully nobody captured on film!

The grand total raised by the walk came to £50000, of which my contribution was £311. A big thank you to all those Club members who sponsored me. Sadly it will take a lot more fundraising to find a cure for this wretched condition but one day it will be beaten.

Richard James
Club Administrator



250 Club

Capt Douglas Gates, OIC draw numbers, 250 Club, likes to conduct the draw at the end of each month. To meet the deadline for this edition I prevailed on him to do the Nov. one a couple of weeks early. He begrudgingly produced the bag of numbers with strict instructions for me not to draw my own. Lo! I managed to defy him and am now £40 better off. He was really pleased! I think I shall loiter around the office when it comes time for the December draw and see if I can't bag £100 next time. Ed

September M.J. Sebbage
R. Wilton

October R.C. Plumley
R.M. Porter

November T.E. Clark
P.J. Morgan



BURNS' NIGHT SUPPER



SATURDAY, 23 JANUARY

Will be the time to

**"TAK (yet another) CUP O' KINDNESS YET,
FOR AULD LANG SYNE"**

at this popular Club event

Price is £28 per head

The menu is yet to be advised but I suspect that it might be much the same as last year and have something to do with cock-a-leekie, haggis, bashed neaps and champit tatties. As well as the roastit beef, Topsy Lady and kebbuck and oatcakes, of course.

A slight change in format is anticipated, to include one of the images below.

1900 at the King's Court Masonic Centre,
Chandlers Ford.
Black Tie & Miniatures



Captain E.C. Plowman



Eric Plowman, Past Captain of the Club, went aloft on 7th November, aged 83, after a long battle with illness.

He joined B.I. as a cadet in 1942 and spent most of his seagoing career in their troopships. His first command was the *Dunera* and he also had the sad task of driving her up onto the beach at Bilbao when she was scrapped in 1967. He also commanded the *Sir Lancelot* in the mid '60s before those vessels were taken up by the RFA in '71. His most rewarding command was that of the *SS Uganda* when she was converted to educational cruising in 1968.

On Trafalgar Day, 1969, Eric had taken the ship inside the shallows off Cape Trafalgar to give the historians onboard a chance to capture the authentic feel of naval battles when it all became a bit too real. Shells from a Spanish shore battery began to fall around them so he increased speed and cleared the area as soon as it was safe to do so. It turned out that it was a "legitimate" firing practice although no such information was held on *Uganda* or at the UK Hydrographic office. The Spanish government did apologise. The Daily Mail's headline was "Captain Turns Nelsonic Eye to Spanish Barrage". B.I.'s Chairman was not amused but the Deputy Chairman had happened to be on board at the time so Eric was "spared a hundred lashes".

Eric's last command was also the last ship to be ordered by B.I., a side loading container ship, the *Zira*, in 1972. She was transferred to P&O in the big re-organisation in '73 and Eric left B.I. and took a job as Marine Super for Arya Shipping in Tehran. When the Shah was deposed Eric and his wife Val had to leave in a hurry, Val said "with almost nothing".

They moved to a house on the Thames in Chiswick and Eric worked for the port

division of Gray Mackenzie (Inchcape) in London, retiring at 60. He got bored with that and acted as Marine Consultant, then Marketing Manager for Poole Harbour Commissioners, before retiring finally 7 years later in '93.

They moved to Ocean Village in Southampton and in '96 Eric joined the Cachalots, being elected Captain of the Club in 1999.

Our condolences to wife Val and daughters Rosalind, Christina and Diane.

David Mansell Pope



David Mansell Pope, who went aloft on 21st October, went to sea as a deck-boy with Moss Hutchinson Line and was then taken on as a cadet in 1959. On gaining his 2nd Mates in '63 he moved to Esso Petroleum and with Mates to Clan Line in '66. He was offered a move to the Union Castle Mail ships but declined until he obtained his Masters ticket in '68. He then entered the passenger ship world, serving on *Reina del Mar*, *Edinburgh Castle* and other mail ships. On the demise of that service and with a taste for passenger ships he joined Cunard and worked his way up from Junior First Officer in various Cunard ships including long spells in QE2 and the smaller passenger ships. He was Navigator with Captain Peter Jackson on the QE2 on her Falkland Islands task in '82. (He is pictured above alongside the sunken Argentinean submarine Santa Fe in South Georgia) David was also a Lt.Cdr RNR. He retired as Staff Captain, QE2, in 1998, but after a couple of months at home he got bored and took command of a beautiful old 160 passenger ship *Bali Sea Dancer*, cruising around the Indonesian Islands. Riots in Indonesia caused the demise of this service and David then spent a couple of years captaining 60 metre luxury motor yachts before finally swallowing the anchor in 2002.

He was a Cachalot from 1997 and was the impetus behind the *Cachalots & The QE2* special that was published last year. Our condolences to his wife Anne, son David and daughters Gillian and Judith.

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 5 Christmas Lunch,
King's Court

Sat Dec 12 Christmas Dinner,
King's Court

*The provisional programme for
next year is included with this
edition.*

Gone Aloft

D. Dawkins

F. Gurney

E. Plowman

D.M. Pope

B. Roberts