

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 36

June 2010

Captain's Log

In the past I have frequently heard the overworked editor of this magazine trying to persuade previous Club Captains to let him have their copy in good time. On Tuesday, 11 May it was my turn to receive a gentle reminder from Terry Clark. Let me start by the topic most loved by the English – the weather. Until the time of writing the weather has been not too bad. Anne and I spent the first week of March in Cornwall and were blessed with sunshine every day. There were one or two frosty mornings, but by the time we surfaced the frost had disappeared. Let us hope that the recent spate of sunny weather was not the summer.

What an excellent Sea Pie Supper this year. I say this not just because of my installation as Club Captain, but because the speeches were not too long. We realise that people do not come to listen to us, but to meet up with old friends and possibly do a little networking. I must mention the speech by Robert Woods, who was installed as a Stowaway member. I cannot recall shouts of “More” for any other principal guests. Well done Robert.

Unfortunately, being in Cornwall, we missed the first Curry Lunch of the year which was held at the Gurkha Kitchen in Southampton. Perhaps, due to still not having recovered from the effects of the Sea Pie Supper, the attendance was lower than normal, but the food was apparently of the usual high standard at that establishment and a pleasant lunch was enjoyed by all.

On Friday, 12 March, Les Morris and I went to a meeting, on board HQS Wellington, with Malcolm Parrott, Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, to discuss the possibility of reciprocal arrangements. The Honourable Company wish to have an outpost on the South Coast similar to other areas of the country. Many different suggestions were made, but the problem of the vast difference in subscriptions was too difficult to overcome. We do not wish to increase our subscriptions, and quite naturally, the Honourable Company had no desire to decrease theirs. The outcome of the discussions was that they would go ahead and set up their outpost organisation, and that if they required any assistance, then we would be happy to co-operate in any way that we could.

On Tuesday, 16 March, David Stocks and I attended a presentation by Business Southampton, entitled Future Southampton, at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel. I understand that there were around two hundred representatives of Southampton's Business Community. A very interesting series of talks on the future of

Southampton, with particular emphasis on the maritime aspect, was very astutely summed up by the keynote speaker Lord Digby Jones, Kt. The UK Business Ambassador.

On Friday, 26 March Anne and I joined thirty-one of the younger and fitter Cachalots for an energetic skittles evening at the Southampton (Old) Green Bowling Club. Rheumatism and arthritis were forgotten as members vied to see who could knock down the most pins. For the third year in succession Anne won the highest scoring ladies' prize. There is talk of giving her a handicap next year, although one or two of her friends said that she already had me!

The following evening we were invited to the annual dinner of the Southampton Royal Naval Officers' Association. The principal guest was Dr. Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East and Shadow Defence Minister dealing with nuclear deterrence and Royal Navy issues. I was tasked with responding to the toast to the guests. I had been told beforehand that I could speak as long as I pleased, and when I suggested that I might speak for about an hour there seemed to be a certain amount of consternation in the room. However, as the clocks were going forward that night I spoke for about ten minutes, reminding those who may have forgotten that at one time the red ensign was senior to the white ensign. Altogether a most enjoyable evening.

On Saturday, 10 April we were invited by the Royal Southern Yacht Club to their Commodore's Cocktail Party, followed by supper. John Beardsley, their Commodore, invited us to return on the Sunday morning to view the “IORANA” a forty foot motor yacht which took part in the Dunkirk evacuation between 26 May and 4 June 1940. Iorana is the Tahitian word for welcome, and I am certain that she must have been a very welcome sight to the troops waiting on the Dunkirk beaches.

Friday 23 April saw us at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club for their Commodore's Cocktail Party. Our Autumn Dinner-Dance is to be held at this Club on Saturday, 9 October. Full details may be found elsewhere in this issue. However, I may say that this is an opportunity for all our members to enjoy the same ambience that Anne and I enjoyed on 23 April.

Finally, on a sad note, we attended the funeral of our most senior Past Captain, Richard Bayley, at Romsey Abbey on Tuesday, 11 May. The Abbey was packed. Richard was involved in so many organisations. We send our sincere condolences to Joyce and his family.

Gerry Cartwright
Captain, The Cachalots

Boatsteerer's Locker

We have had a fairly busy quarter and I am pleased to report that we are making progress on several fronts. Firstly I am pleased to announce that David Stocks has indicated that he would like to get more involved in the running of the Club and, once he has become more familiar with how the Club operates, apply for the position of Boatsteerer, possibly at the next AGM. I am sure that you will wish David well and join me in offering our support to him should he wish to stand for election.

Club activities.

As you will recall, this is a multi-faceted subject so I will report the progress of the different activities as follows:-

1. The Club continues to have a well supported active social calendar and Peter Grant is now well and truly in the driving seat. We have, in addition to our normal fixtures, a visit to Windsor and its magnificent Castle on Tuesday September 7th and an Autumn Dinner Dance at the RAF Yacht Club on Saturday the 9th October (see elsewhere in this edition and on the web site at www.cachalots.org.uk).
2. We continue to be active within the wider community and to support Seafarers studying for second or higher CoC's through our Bursary (see Peter Marriott's article), Business Southampton, The Southampton Shipowners' Association, the Southampton Shipping Golf Society and the HCMM.
 - *Business Southampton* – has now received completed questionnaires from 75 maritime related businesses and we hope to reach the target 100 companies by the end of May when SCMG and Southampton University will then start to construct a supply chain map for the Solent region. The results of this will be the first initiative to establish Solent Maritime, who together with its sponsors and other maritime organisations, will hope to provide a stronger regional and national voice for the maritime industries within the Solent area. David Stocks is helping with this and members are welcome to get involved if they so wish.
 - *Southampton Shipowner's Association* – Plans are developing to produce an annual calendar of ship visits for staff and students from Oakwood Junior School and Hamble Community Sports College to ships that belong to member companies of SSA. This will also include a visit to the Warsash Maritime Academy which Ivor Salter will assist with. Skills Quest is also collaborating with SSA in order to let youngsters obtain work related experience on their ships. This will go a long way to getting the maritime industry in general and ship operations in particular formally recognised as a career option.
 - *Southampton Shipping Golf Society* – Was formed in 1921 and is a very active golf society that meets five times a year on different courses within the Wessex region and has an AGM and Dinner in November. The society has 100 playing members of which me, Reg Kelso and John Millican are members. It has been agreed by the Executive and Finance Committee that the SMMC golf section (now defunct) trophy will be re silvered and engraved as follows:- "The Southampton Master Mariners' Cup" and also: "Presented to the Southampton Shipping Golf Society by G. Cartwright (date)". We will invite the president (David d'Arcy Hughes), the Vice President, Chairman, Competitions Secretary and Treasurer to the Club for a presentation buffet lunch sometime in June. One of the annual competitions will be for the SMMC and in memory of Richard Bayley a Past Captain of this Club (recently gone aloft) and who was also a past President of the SSGS.
 - *The Honourable Company of Master Mariners* – After a second round of discussions with the HCMM it was left that we intend to maintain the Cachalots in its current form and did not wish to merge with them. We have offered assistance to them should they wish to establish an 'Outport' in Southampton

I do not think, given the above level of activity, that anybody could say that The Cachalots was anything other than in rude good health and very active! So, turning to the issue of the future without a Club room I would emphasize that it will not affect any of our activities, only the way in which we communicate and meet up.

3. Barry Peck and I have had another meeting with the Hon Treasurer, Richard Dufty, of the Southampton Seafarers Centre and he has agreed to ascertain what the rent for an office of the same size but situated on the second floor would be and the terms that will apply to any new lease. We are also investigating other opportunities for suitable office space, but these are as yet at an early stage of development and we will be reporting back to the Executive and Finance Committee should any firm proposals be forthcoming. I have circulated a pro-forma table to all Harpooners for them to use if they find or know of suitable facilities. In this way we will be able to compare like with like when it comes to making decisions with respect to identifying future meeting venues.
4. Reg Kelso together with Andrew Tinsley, Hamish Roberts and others has started the long and arduous task of cataloguing our comprehensive library. Once this is complete and we know what we have we have agreed that for those books that have been donated by identifiable members, we will contact you and offer them back to you should you so wish. The remainder of the catalogue will be advertised on the web site with hard copies on file in the Club. Members will have first choice of those books that will not be kept and the rest will be offered to other maritime organisations that may be interested.

Visit to Windsor Castle & Savill Garden

Tuesday 7th September

On this visit the splendour, heritage and history of Windsor castle is perfectly matched by the beauty and serenity of the Savill Garden.

Coach will pick up in Southampton and Chandlers Ford at 1000, returning at 1915.
Approx price £38 - depending on numbers.
Contact Richard at the office if interested.

The next
CURRY LUNCH
At the
Gurkha Kitchen

Will be on
Saturday 4th September

George Angas. Boatsteerer.

THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE



THE BAND OF THE HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Thursday 17 June 2010

7.15 pm for 7.30 pm

Preacher

The Very Reverend James Atwell MA Th M:BD (Oxon)

THE DEAN OF WINCHESTER

Everyone is welcome to attend this historic service

A Club Supper

has been arranged,
in the Club Room, for

Friday 2nd July.

Speaker will be
Captain Lionel Hall
along the lines of
"A Laugh on the Ocean Wave"

Catering will be by John Davies and
the menu:

ROLL & BUTTER
TOMATO, FETA & OLIVE SALAD
CHEDDAR & ONION SOUP
BREAST OF DUCK
IN A CRANBERRY & MADEIRA SAUCE
PEARS POACHED IN RED WINE
WITH VANILLA ICE-CREAM
COFFEE & MINTS

Price will be £25 per head
and numbers limited to 38
on a first come basis.
1900 for 1930

AUTUMN DINNER DANCE

Saturday 9th October

RAF Yacht Club, Hamble

Wild Mushroom Soup
Leg of Lamb with
Apricot, Orange & fresh Rosemary Stuffing
& Red Wine Jus
Cranarshan Raspberry Whiskey Torte
Coffee & Mints

Music by

Twilight

Priced at £35 per person.
Black Tie,
1915 for 2000.

This event re-scheduled from 15th May
Further details from the office and on our website
<http://www.cachalots.org.uk>



A
Club Supper
will be held in the Club Room
On Friday 17 September
The Guest Speaker will be
Mr Trevor Sapey
from the Mary Rose Trust
He will give a presentation on
The History and Sinking of
The Mary Rose

*Further details later but numbers
will be strictly limited to 36 on a
first come basis.*

**Continuing Chapter 14 of "The Unforgiving Minute",
the personal memoirs of Stowaway Member
Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles.**

We in Navy House had another completely separate set of responsibilities in addition to all these very intensive activities by Coastal Forces. The Commandos who had arrived to reinforce the garrison on Vis wished to undertake raids on the other islands which the Germans had begun to occupy.

The person most anxious to start these raids was Colonel Jack Churchill, CO of No. 2 Commando. He was a most extraordinary character. He had served in the Manchester Regiment before the war, and was sent out to India. The idea of India did not appeal to him. When the troopship visited Naples, he handed in his papers to leave the Army, took his gratuity and went off to the Isle of Capri. He gave all his money to the manager of a large hotel and said "I'm going to have a trouble-free holiday. Please let me know when all my money has gone except the price of the ferry back to Naples". After a couple of riotous weeks he was informed "Signor, now you can only afford a ticket". He replied "Never mind, tell me when it has all gone". The next day



MG as S.N.O. VIS 1944

he stowed away in the ferry and landed in Naples. He was soon hungry so he got a job on the water-front, driving a donkey and cart collecting empty bottles from a little restaurant. One evening he said to one of the waiters "Do they have a cabaret here?" "Not much of one" replied the waiter. "Do you think they would like me to play my bagpipes?" "Well, it couldn't be worse than what they've got already".

So he played his bagpipes for a few evenings and was a great success. Drinks all round! Then, as he described it to me, he noticed a very versatile girl in the cabaret, and soon persuaded her to do a sword-dance in a double act, clad in a very abbreviated tartan skirt. This also was a great success.

Jack arrived home just in time to rejoin the Army because war was threatening, and started training with the Commandos. He later married a charming Scottish lady, Miss Rosamund Denny of Dumbarton.

After the fall of France, Jack used to be landed by canoe on the north coast of France, armed only with his huge bow and arrow. He would hide himself away, all alone, until he spotted suitable targets such as a German sentry silhouetted in the moonlight. Frequently he was successful. In due course he would be picked up again by canoe and returned to England.

Jack Churchill came out to the Mediterranean as CO of No. 2 Commando during 1943, and was involved in the landings at Salerno and Anzio. In the first few days of January 1944 he was sent to Vis and we shall hear much more of him later.

The first raid which Jack Churchill and his No. 2 Commando planned was to attack the island of Solta, which is close to the coastline in the approaches to Split. The plan was to make the voyage to the island by night in naval landing craft, escorted by MGBs and MTBs, and to land under cover of darkness. The commandos would then hide in the vineyards surrounding the village of Grohote where the German garrison was dug in. At dawn the Royal Air Force from Italy were to bomb and strafe Grohote to keep the enemy's heads down. Then at a prearranged time the RAF would still dive on the village but drop no more bombs - so the Commandos could spring out from the vineyards and break into the garrison.

In the event, this raid was a complete success. Six Germans were killed and 100 taken prisoner. There had been 107 Germans in the garrison, so only one was unaccounted for. Before mid-day the Commandos were ready to withdraw and signalled for the landing craft to be sent back for them. However, I was adamant that the landing craft would not be sent back until dusk. This was not because of the risk to the landing craft but because the soldiers, once concentrated in the landing craft, would be in much greater danger from enemy air than they would be spread out on the shore of the island.

One amusing footnote to this story is that the raid had been delayed for a few days because of unsuitable weather. Jack Churchill typically said to me "I'm fed up with the bloody RAF, Morgan. If they won't come tomorrow we'll go without them, that's all - and make up our mind what to do on the way to the church"!

This set the pattern for a series of raids on the adjacent islands which took place throughout the summer of 1944. These are too numerous to describe individually. Sometimes they were quite small-scale, sometimes they were carried out by our Commandos alone, sometimes jointly with the Partisans, and sometimes by the Partisans on their own. Some, of course, were more successful than others. Eventually we came to realise that it was better for the British and Partisans to operate independently.

To be fair to the Partisans, they had enormous zest and zeal and were splendid fighting people. But they had very limited equipment, practically no radio - and indeed probably not one Partisan in a thousand would have a wristwatch. They were also extremely impetuous and once they had decided to go, they did not want to wait for photo-reconnaissance or any other preliminaries.

If the Partisans wished to do a particular raid we would lend them as much gear as we could spare or they could manage. We also sometimes ferried them to and fro in our landing craft, because their own small craft were slow and unsuitable.

One raid which was different from any other was on the island of Brae during the month of May. Brae is a very large island and was extremely strongly held by a large German garrison. We were ordered to mount the largest possible raid on this island. This seemed an absurdly hazardous undertaking. For I think the only time in the year, I went back to Italy by MTB and dashed across to see Admiral Morgan in Taranto. I explained to him that from all our detailed intelligence, Brae would be very dangerous to attack and impossible to hold. But Admiral Morgan explained the point to me. Tito, fighting in the interior near Drvar, had been betrayed by a traitor and large German forces were closing in on him from all directions, it was therefore necessary for a large-scale attack to be mounted on Brae to divert as many German forces as possible away from Tito. I had to return to Vis and get on with it.

Preparations were made with frantic haste. A combined force from the British garrison and from large numbers of Partisans were to be involved. More landing craft than I had ever had before were sent over and even then they were not enough. One LCI which had broken down I had to send over under tow from an extraordinary old steam-trawler called "Prodigal" - which really belonged to SOE.

In the event all three commandos landed in full force. Col Jack Churchill was in overall charge, because the garrison commander, Brigadier Churchill, was absent from the island on a strategic conference.

The first object was Merezisce which was very strongly held. After a very fierce action this was captured by No. 2 Commando with No. 40 and No. 43 in support. Jack Churchill and Col Manners RM (of 40 Commando) reached the summit just as a strong enemy attack came in. Jack Churchill was knocked out and taken prisoner. "Pops" Manners was mortally wounded standing beside him. The objective was never recovered. (See a P.S. about Jack Churchill as a P.O.W. at the end of this chapter).

The truth is that this whole operation was mounted in such a hurry that the plans were incomplete, and communications between the various units were never effective. Serious disagreements broke out with the Partisans about the part which they were expected to play. After about three days on the island all our forces were eventually withdrawn, having suffered a very large number of casualties - eight officers and six ORs killed, 40 ORs wounded, two officers and 12 ORs prisoners of war, of whom seven were wounded.

After this raid a Commando wrote anonymously:

*"Death passed me by, but I,
Caught his swift glance and knew,
That he had seen me too."*

Thus, tactically, the Brae operation was a disaster. However, strategically, the situation was rather saved by the fact that Tito had managed to escape from the enemy surrounding him and after a series of the most extraordinary adventures, he took off in an aircraft to mainland Italy.

To be continued

From Sail to Sat-Nav

Captains of The Cachalots 1928 –2010

Neither the words of the poem:

*Cruel merchant Captains,
with hearts as hard as stone,
who flog men, and keel-haul them,
and starve them to the bone.*

nor the legend that the Cachalot *Has the thickest skin, blows the hardest and spouts the most*, could be said to fairly describe any of the gentlemen who, since 1928, have had the honour to be elected Captains of The Southampton Master Mariners' Club. Indeed, some recent research into their achievements both afloat and ashore shows them to have been gentle, modest men, although possibly a few might have been short-fused or unwilling to suffer fools at all.

Perhaps one result of their reluctance to spout the most is the loss of much interesting and, to historians, valuable information concerning their careers and general life history that might have been gleaned and preserved, verbally or in writing, from them or from the equally sparse Club records. Also, as Donald MacLean reminds us in *Cachalots and Messmates* (1973): "Unfortunately, owing to the not infrequent changes, and often lack of space in the early Boatsteerer's office, coupled with the absence of secretarial aid during and around the war period – not to mention the fact that in its first quarter century the club was naturally more pragmatic than historically inclined – the record of events for a very considerable period are therefore unavailable."

In fact, to date, about a quarter of all past captains are recorded or remembered only by their photographs taken at the time of their election, otherwise simply as names routinely printed on hymn sheets, Sea-Pie Supper menus and so forth, or by only scant references to their having been, say, an Assistant Superintendent of a particular shipping company.

Happily, photographs of all past Captains hang in the Club room, some in uniform, others in plain clothes, exhibiting the extensive variety of nose and whiskers for which the Cachalots are justly famed.

Although, as seafaring men, they share much in common, by no means could they be said to be like peas in pod.

They range in age from 34 (Bayley) to 82 (Holme). The latter trained in sail and went on to command the RMS "Majestic", at that time the world's largest passenger liner. Several are Southampton born and bred, but there are Geordies, Lancastrians, Yorkshiremen, Londoners, Scots and Welshmen. Four of the most charismatic hailed from the Celtic fringes, Stornaway (MacLean), Tobermory (Robertson), Londonderry (Kelso) and Tipperary (Casey).

One Captain (Cooper) was twice elected, another (Gadd) held the appointment for three early war years, 1940 – 41 – 42.

Service was seen in almost every type of ship, some carrying a handful of men, others with crews numbering several hundred. Four masted barques, transatlantic and other large passenger liners, cable ships, coastal and short-sea traders, ferries, tramp steamers, HM ships of many types, Royal Fleet Auxiliaries and those of the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service.

Decorations for bravery, and distinctions for valuable service to the Merchant navy and the nation, are abundant.

In the Order of the British Empire; two Knight Commanders – Sir Benjamin Chave and Sir Arthur Rostron; one Commander of the Order (Casey), six officers (King, Saunders, Gadd, Thelwell, Bond and Stephenson) and five members (Braithwaite, Macmillan, Pellow, Kirton and Kelso).

Other notable awards include –

Captain W.V.J. Clarke, D.S.C. (1914-18)
Commodore D.A. Casey, C.B.E., D.S.O., D.S.C., R.D.
Captain E.G. Fullick, Lloyd's Medal
Captain A.A. Martin, D.S.O., D.S.C. and two bars, R.D.
Commodore D.M. MacLean, D.S.C., R.D.
Captain R.C. Freaker, D.S.O. and bar, D.S.C. and bar, R.D., Polar Medal (Antarctic Clasp)
Captain P. Moore, Mentioned in Despatches

Several Captains were awarded the reserve Decoration and reached high ranks in the RNR, one (Carr) being awarded two bars, and two had the honour of being ADC's to the Sovereign (Casey and Carr).

Foreign awards include two Chevaliers, Legion D'Honneur (King and Rostron) and the Medal Du Merit Maritime (Holt).

Captains honoured within the Club, Honorary Life Members, include Cooper, Robertson and Kelso.

Extra Masters Certificates, their highest professional qualification, were obtained by many. At least three (Smart, Noble and Morris) made a commendable effort to undertake lengthy periods of study at University and graduate as Bachelors of Science, before 2/1's, Desmonds and suit yourself qualifications became commonplace.

Amongst their numbers there are also a solicitor (Farmiloe) and a barrister (WVJ Clarke).

The church was served by an ADC to the Lord High Commissioner to the General assembly of the Church of Scotland, who, in that role represents the Queen (MacLean); a Papal Knight of the Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory and founder of Yeovil night shelter for the homeless (Love); and the Pastor, Church of the Cross, Hammond's Green, Southampton (Macmillan), who was also President of the British Israel World Foundation, a scientific body devoted to the belief that most of the prophecies and

unusual events mentioned in the Bible have been proved to be scientifically accurate in their fulfilment. The proof of this belief is derived from the linear measurement of certain secret chambers in the Great Pyramid of Egypt. Incidentally, he also played the bagpipes.

The first Chief Inspector of the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch is a past Captain (Marriott).

A son of one captain (Bond) has been knighted and became head of the Hong Kong Shanghai banking empire, whilst a daughter of another (Corner) is presently British High Commissioner to Tanzania.

A Master Mariners' club without a captain seems like a ship without a rudder. But what does a captain do? (*No ribald remarks, please*).

Essentially, he is the "Chairperson" of the Club and, ex-officio, a member of all committees. Having been installed at the Sea-Pie Super he presides over social and civic functions, Remembrance Day for example, and represents the Club on many now traditional exchanges with yacht clubs, Royal Naval Establishments and other events mainly with a maritime flavour. No doubt there are on occasions matters arising "behind the scene" which might not require the wisdom of Solomon (who seems to have had more sense than to go to sea), but certainly cases for sound judgement based on wide experience.

In recent years the pleasing custom has evolved of presenting Captains with a handsome commemorative "medal", attached to a royal blue ribbon, at the end of their year of office.

The writer is attempting to compile short biographical notes which will record all Club Captains since 1928. Two examples will illustrate the inconsistency which typifies the records available and in many cases fails to provide much detail.



Captain Arthur Hughes Raymer. Commander RNR.
Born Kilkenny, Ireland, 1876.
Indentured 1894 to Thos. Roberts of Llanelli. Joined iron-hulled, full rigged ship "Sam Mendal", 1057 tons, Chile saltpetre trade.
1899 Joined Bucknell Bros "Johannesburg"
1907 Sub-Lieutenant RNR
1913 Board of Trade Surveyor at North Shields.
1914 Royal Navy.
1923 Board of Trade Senior Surveyor at Southampton.
1926 – 28 Founder Member, Honourable Company of Master Mariners and Southampton Master Mariners' Club. Freeman, City of London.
1940 Retired to Eastbourne.
1953 Died at Seamen's Dreadnought Hospital, Greenwich.

Captain Raymer was Club Captain for 1931. During that year 45 Cachalots were employed by Union Castle Line, 27 by Canadian Pacific, 26 by Cunard (of whom 23 were ex- White Star), 63 by Royal Mail Line, and 10 by United States Lines.



Captain S. Braithwaite, M.B.E.
Marine Superintendent, Royal Mail Line.
Club Captain 1929. *No further information.*

This dismal record hardly does justice to what must clearly have been a successful and colourful career. Regrettably, it is not unique.

Now, however, we have a new "Chair", whose election has become one of the most memorable events in the Club's 82 year history, a departure from an unbroken tradition at one time unimaginable, an officer who is not a qualified Master Mariner – Gerald Frank Cartwright, about whom no doubt more will be written elsewhere in *The Cachalot*. A wag might say, how can a non-navigator know where he is going? Don't panic – Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), a pilot on the huge, stern wheel passenger ships on the Mississippi River, was once asked by a passenger, "Say, Mr Pilot, is you the guy who knows where all the rocks is?", "No, Sir", was the reply, "I'se the guy who knows where they aint".

We can be sure that Gerry knows where they aint and will, albeit perhaps with minor deviations, maintain the course that has brought The Cachalots to the position of being better than any other Master Mariners' Club, and no nonsense about other things being equal.

Hamish Roberts

In addition to Captain Braithwaite, above, Hamish is also seeking any information that you may have on the following Past Captains:

30 Saunders, J.G	34 Bowyer, G.	37 Wolfe, J.W.	43 Waterhouse, K.A.D.	45 Fisher, C.W.	47 Smith, J.H.A.
48 Bulford, H.J.	50 Akerman, L.	53 Hodson, M.S	54 Pellow, H.J.	57 Cumming, J.	58 Pearce, R.N.S.
60 Smith, P.S.	61 Fitzgerald, W.T.	62 Fullick, E.G.	67 Gilbert, R.S.	79 O'Connell, F.	80 Cooke, J.S.
81 Hunt, A.D.	87 Renshaw, F.E.G.				



8th August 1942

Dawn brought the welcome news by signal that HM Ships BROKE and CASTLETON and the Polish destroyer BLYSKAWICA (soon to be christened "Blister Me Whiskers") had been sailed from Londonderry in support. I never did find out why they turned up when they did and I do not remember whether CASTLETON ever did, not that any of that matters so far as the tale is concerned. I suppose we were about half-way across. That day was the most perfect summer day I ever remember in the Atlantic, with a warm breeze and a beautiful, blue sea sparkling in the sunlight. That glorious morning, which betokened a day of perfect bliss at sea, turned into bloody disaster and, incidentally, was the day in which I did the most bloody stupid thing I have ever done in my life - but that came later.

Despite radar, we still went in for masthead look-outs and at 1115 the look-out hailed torpedoes approaching the convoy from the port bow. Quick as lightning the Signal Bosun, whose efforts ever since we set out had been prodigious, hoisted an emergency flag signal for an alteration of course 45 degrees to port and sounded two warning blasts on the siren. Like one ship the convoy turned to comb the approaching torpedoes, which rattled and growled in our A/S loudspeaker as they came and passed on their way without hitting anything. No contact with the firer was made and the convoy's course was altered 90 degrees to starboard, out of the frying pan into the fire!

Shortly after the convoy had settled down on its new course, PRIMROSE and CHILLIWACK sighted a U-boat apiece ahead of the convoy at 6 miles. Both were promptly engaged by gunfire and both, not being much put out by the accuracy but disliking the quantity, dived. No attempt was made to hunt them because we knew we were surrounded; there was nothing to do but to charge through and hope for the best. The escorts closed in, zig-zagging between 2,000 and 4,000 yards from their allotted positions. As usual, the cook put the galley fire out and turned his attentions to his personal weapons - one for either door.

For a short hour all was peace. Then, at 1327, a submarine broke surface to periscope depth at 1,200 yards directly ahead of PRIMROSE. That must have been when he lost his trim immediately after firing a salvo of torpedoes. We counter-attacked immediately with perfect A/S contact. When the periscope was about 15 yards away, fire on the starboard bow, as the A/S recorder trace showed fire and the navigator's voice came up the voice-pipe, "Over by plot", the firing buzzers were pressed. They failed to ring! The traps jammed! A yell from the bridge got the throwers off - late! The submarine dived deep, untouched!

The subsequent enquiry absolved the ship. The buzzer cables had burnt out and an unauthorised modification to the traps made by some clever warrior in Newfoundland who had never been to sea, on the grounds that the depth charges rattled about too much in rough weather, was all to blame. We were also to blame. We should have known: we should have tested the buzzers more often. That submarine was a "sitter" and it should have been blown sky high. It was a bitter blow, the more so since the Germans who did all the damage escaped without the retribution we were in the most perfect position to mete out; as it was, there must have been more than one submarine to have inflicted the damage that was done.

The next moment all was a shambles - a picture snapped by the eye like a still photograph and thus it remains in the mind for ever. When we looked, we should have cried, but we had forgotten how. As the torpedoes struck home our depth charges went off ahead of the port column adding to the confusion and chaos, since those in the lead had no idea what had caused the explosion.

The Commodore's ship, a vessel on its maiden voyage, was steaming itself under, its masts and funnel still going through the water, leaving a wash; as it went down some heroic soul on the bridge was still signalling with an aldis lamp which was suddenly extinguished. There were no survivors.

Close by, three more ships were sinking and two more were drifting down the line out of control. Suddenly, somewhere in that convoy, one of the sinking ships carrying ammunition blew up! Few escaped unscathed as the thunderous, crashing roar deafened and disorientated all in the vicinity; the smoke obscured the daylight and the air was full of flying debris; we were stunned by the blast. Through it all plunged the surviving ships, belching smoke from their funnels, weaving and swerving to avoid sinking ships, wreckage and drowning seamen. Dante might have painted that inferno had he lived then.



The Hain's ss Trehata was the Commodore's ship

In the mêlée, PRIMROSE went down the port side of the convoy, not without the danger of collision, hoping to make contact with the missed U-boat, leaving the other escorts and the convoy to thrash their way out of it, every ship going much faster than ever the designers dreamed. Who picked up lots of the survivors I do not know - certainly some merchant ships stopped to do so as did some of the escorts; I seem to recollect we had 98 who lived, comprised of 12 different nationalities.

At the start, we simply did not know where to begin, because there was so much wreckage, oil and so many surviving seamen in the water waving their arms. Amid it all about six small landing craft bobbed up and down, empty; they must have been the

upper deck cargo from one of the sunken ships. I remember my CO decided since we were there we should get on with it and first we passed four men standing on a raft, yelling for help. My CO said, since they seemed so full of life, they could wait while we attended to those in the water. He ordered me not to send any boats away, so that meant scrambling nets and heaving lines. On these occasions it was never necessary to tell the ship's company what to do, but none liked the order "no boats". We came to a stop in a group of survivors, with dead or unconscious men floating among them.

At this time our youngest signalman took it upon himself to go and darn a hole in the Ensign before the hole could result in it being torn to tatters, probably because he had nothing else to do at the time, but also because we never changed our Ensign at sea if it could be avoided; it was reckoned to be bad "joss" to do so. I was down aft watching oil-covered men being helped up the scrambling nets; some of our sailors were in the water with one hand on a net and the other stretched out to grab whoever managed to struggle close enough. Lying on his back supported by his life-jacket, about 15 yards from the ship, was an injured man, quietly moaning. By him were others, dead or unconscious. You cannot rescue that kind with scrambling nets or heaving lines. I remember that and wondering what to do. Because I did not have the courage to leave him there I stripped off, went in over the side in my birthday suit, and as I went, I was aware of ten or a dozen sailors following the idiotic example I had set.

By the time I reached the injured man I realised the sea was very cold and it felt so very deep; the ship looked a long way off - and I got cramp in the legs. A well flung heaving line saved my bacon and the bloke I was hanging on to, although he died later. Also, all the crew in the water returned safely to the ship with more of the injured. The next thing I remember is standing shivering, once more in what passed for my uniform, in the shambles aft, quite incapable of making any further contribution. The Buffer gave me a strange look and took over my job.

Slowly the ship got under way and as it did I was piped to the bridge. There my CO said to me, "I see you have been bathing. Never leave the ship again without my permission! Now, go and get ready to receive those two boats pulling towards us over on the port bow - and sink the boats when you have got the men out; I'm going to take the ship over for those four still yelling for help on the raft." He never mentioned the subject again.



Lt Cdr A. Ayre DSO, the CO



Coxswain O'Connor

Just to finish the incident, very much later that night the Coxswain asked to see me in my cabin. When he came in he said, "Some of the crew think you are a bloody hero. I think you are the biggest bloody fool I have ever met. You left the Captain without a First Lieutenant and ten of his seamen. You know he might have had to steam away and leave you all, and you kept us all hanging about, stopped like a sitting duck, until we had got you all back. Sir!" He put on his cap and left. When I next saw the Buffer he simply said, "I hear you have had a word with the Coxswain, Sir. You won't let us down again, will you!" No question, just a statement. That was how the regular senior rate taught junior officers their jobs. Neither ever mentioned it again, nor did their loyalty to me ever lessen or waiver. I made damn sure I never ever let them down again. I might add one or two other senior rates made a point of letting me know they also agreed with the Coxswain.

We all had to learn that sometimes men had to be left to die.

The last man to be hauled up over the side was a huge 19-stone man, covered in oil, and it took four hands to get him inboard, by which time two of his ribs had been broken. I felt somewhat ashamed when he told me this was his third go at getting back to the UK from America, but now he was in an HM Ship he knew he would make it this time!

The two boatloads represented the entire crew, less one man, of a Greek ship, which they only abandoned when they were certain she was done for without a tug to tow her to harbour. Never have I seen such a villainous lot, each armed with a knife, butcher's cleaver or axe, and the master and mates with a pistol apiece. After a certain amount of gesticulation the whole lot were disarmed. The First Mate's revolver had one round fired - which might have accounted for the missing man and the excellent discipline he exercised. They turned out to be a splendid bunch; it was really quite extraordinary how they fitted themselves into the ship's routine and lent a hand, taking over the galley completely where, for the first time since the ship was commissioned (whilst the flour lasted), very edible white bread, was made. Our own cooks never managed to produce anything better than substitutes for bricks, both being electricians in civilian life! The last we saw of that desolate place was the Greek ship stationary and abandoned, floating in company with the screaming and feasting seagulls.



Thanks to John Firmin for the photos on this page

To be continued

M.V. BONSELLA

General cargo, Cattle, Container & Hijacked Vessel
DWT 480 tonnes, L.O.A. 43.5 metres
Port of registry Nassau

*M.V. Bonsella,
then Bonanza,
at Port Said
on her way to
Tanganyika*



In 1983, as a holiday job, I flew to East Africa and relieved the master/owner of M.V. Bonsella while he took leave in Europe. I had recently worked in Tanzania, on occasions visited Bonsella and got to know Captain Arie Van de Gevel (Arie). My previous seafaring had all been with liner companies. Being personally responsible for a vessel, arranging her cargoes, doing all the ship-handling and piloting, working with a solely-African crew, and provisioning her from local markets, in a part of the world I was familiar with, was an appealing challenge. Bonsella was a tenth of the size of the smallest of my previous commands, and I was fascinated by her versatility and how Arie had adapted her to new commercial opportunities. Not many vessels can change readily from carrying cattle to containers to general cargo.

Arie, a Dutchman, had served his time with Royal InterOcean Lines and, like myself, had obtained his master's foreign-going certificate in the 1950s. He then transferred to Dutch coasters. In 1960, with family support, a bank loan and a 10% personal investment, M.V. Bonanza (later renamed Bonsella) was built in Holland. She had a single hold, her design included many of his specifications, and she was launched by his wife.

In 1962, he won a contract to ship railway lines and sleepers from the small port of Mtwara to Dar es Salaam, in Tanganyika. The railway lines had been laid as part of the ill-fated British government's groundnuts scheme in Tanganyika after WW2, which was abandoned in 1951. The job was suited to a single-hold coaster, and few of such coasters had a master with a foreign-going certificate.



Bonsella, clearing old Nyali Bridge,



Going under old Nyali Bridge,

Following that contract, which lasted about 18 months, Arie kept Bonsella in East Africa and carried general cargoes. He based her in Mombasa, Kenya and re-registered her in the Bahamas, which had necessitated the name-change. His Dutch crew had been replaced with Kenya Africans.

Later, Bonsella had a sudden change of employment. Arie, in relating the story to me, said: "One day I was walking up the road in Mombasa and I met my agent who told me that the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) wanted a quotation for shipping cattle from Kenya north coast to their slaughterhouse in Mombasa. I said to my agent: How long is a cow? How wide is a cow? How high is a cow? On the back of my cigarette packet I worked out a quotation. As my agent walked away up the road, I called after him and told him to double the quotation. KMC accepted that quotation and for the next 15 years Bonsella carried cattle."



Prime cattle shifted from drought region, discharged down the gangway and ready to swim ashore at Kilifi River.

beside Kilifi River. At Kilifi, the cattle descended a shipside gangway, dropped into the water and swam ashore.

By 1980, the number of KMC cattle cargoes was diminishing. A container terminal was being built in Kilindini Harbour at Mombasa. Typically, Arie, with the help of his original naval architect, had *Bonsella's* hatchway widened to carry 22 x 20ft fully-loaded containers, in two tiers, athwartships. At the same time, he made her tween deck and cattle pens portable. He then offered a container feeder service between small ports and Mombasa Container Terminal. Between such voyages he was still able to carry cattle cargoes, sufficient to satisfy the reduced requirements of KMC.

Shortly before I joined *Bonsella*, Arie had two consignments of cattle from Tanzania mainland to Zanzibar town quay. He had arranged with shippers to deliver each cargo at an agreed time early in the morning. He arrived on time with the first cargo and, in the absence of receivers, started to discharge the cattle. When receivers arrived, much to their annoyance, some cattle had wandered off into Zanzibar town. Unsurprisingly, with the second cargo, his terms of agreement were adhered to and receivers were there to meet the vessel promptly.



Bonsella, container vessel

When I joined *Bonsella* she was in Mombasa at her regular berth alongside KMC slaughterhouse jetty. For readers not familiar with that part of the world, Mombasa is an island set into Kenya mainland, with deep-water Kilindini Harbour on the south side and Mombasa Old Port to the north. Slaughterhouse jetty can only be reached by limited-draft vessels, passing through Old Port, under Nyali Bridge and round to the back of the island.



and container feeder

During my takeover period, Arie and I made a couple of trips together in *Bonsella*. The first was to Tanga and back loaded each way with containers. Once at sea, Arie exchanged his in-port smart safari suit for a loincloth and flip-flops. A good reason for such attire was soon to become apparent. At Tanga, we discharged and loaded the containers alongside the lighter wharf.

My second trip with Arie was to Tana River, lightship outwards, returning with a cargo of cattle. Beforehand, in Mombasa, the crew loaded and re-fitted the portable tween deck and cattle pens, which had been left on shore for the trip with containers. At the old jetty in Tana River we loaded 300 head of cattle, which in view of sea conditions Arie had decided was the safest maximum. On clearing Tana River, the vessel started to roll, and I noted how quickly cattle on deck faced athwartships and coped with the rolling. Whilst I stayed on the Bridge Arie went below to inspect the cargo. When he reappeared he was covered in cow muck. I then appreciated his preference for a loincloth and flip-flops!



As a ro-ro ferry

Bonsella being old had sparse accommodation, but thankfully had good showers!! The cattle were neither watered nor fed during the 36-hour voyage to Mombasa. After discharge, the vessel was thoroughly washed down. Water in the hold was removed using a submersible portable electric pump. Having been brought up in a farming environment, I felt perfectly at home working with cattle.

Before he left, Arie introduced me to various people I would have dealings with in his absence, most importantly his bank manager. At Mombasa shipping office, my name was added to Bonsella's certificate of registry, and I took command. Then, as master, at Kenya Ports Authority office, I met the harbourmaster, explained my experiences in East Africa, and (thankfully) he agreed to issue me with a Pilotage Exemption Certificate for Mombasa. Additionally, I was given full use of Arie's furnished apartment in Mombasa, serviced by a house girl and garden boy, and the use of his motor vehicles. Whilst master of Bonsella, I was also given membership of The Mombasa Club, a lovely old colonial-style club, where I could socialise and eat between voyages.

I had no formal agreement with Arie. His shipping agent was responsible for collecting freight and settling port dues, etc., and was available to advise and assist me. I was free to book cargoes as I liked. In the event, all cargoes I booked were similar to those experienced during handover. By liaising with shippers between voyages, I kept Bonsella more or less fully employed. As sea passages weren't long, I was the only bridge watch-keeping officer, with the head crewman or engineer officer providing an occasional relief. Bonsella kept closer to the mainland than larger vessels and rarely met any others. There were some ex Bonsella deck and engineer officers in Mombasa who could be called upon, if required, to supplement officer manning.

Manning of Bonsella comprised of one engineer officer, a cook and a dozen seamen - all Kenyan-born. The majority of seamen were also experienced cattlemen. The head crewman, Saidi, originated from Lamu and had served in dhows from boyhood. He had worked for Arie for about twenty years, was wholly reliable and totally dedicated to Bonsella. In Mombasa, when we needed extra labour to fit or remove cattle pens and the tween deck, Saidi made the arrangements. At 0800 hours each morning, the required men, maybe 10 or 20, were lined up on the quay, ready for me to record their names. At midday we provided them with a good lunch. At 1700 hours, they would again line up on the quay, and I paid them each a day's wages, in cash. Arie had a reputation for treating his employees well, so extra men were always available, many of them seeking to join Bonsella's regular crew.



Captain Arie Van de Gevel and Saidi

Saidi, couldn't read or write, but knew every inch of the coast and could be trusted to watch-keep alone for short periods on a straight bit of coast. If the bridge radar was pre-set with distance ring(s) on, he could, without touching the radar, adjust course and maintain a given distance off the shore. Usually, Saidi would relieve me for a couple of hours once or twice during each sea passage. The master's night cabin had an excellent (the only) air-conditioning unit, enabling me to rest well, but had one disadvantage. With cattle on board, the air-conditioning intake was very close to the nearest cow!



East African dry dock.

Saidi, front left, and other crew employed on maintenance work

In Mombasa, the crew all went home at night and, if there wasn't an early morning start, I slept ashore in Arie's apartment. Mombasa had an excellent 'mtatu' (small van) service, crisscrossing the town, which enabled crew members to be on board at any given time. Bonsella, at her slaughterhouse berth, had KMC security. The vessel's engineer repeatedly warned me against sleeping on board alone. As Arie slept on board alone prior to early sailings, I did the same. Not long after I left Bonsella, KMC was raided at night and Arie was tied up and left on the quay till morning. Staying on board at night did have one benefit. Bonsella had no Bond, so wasn't troubled by officials seeking cigarettes or whisky. Amusingly, when I slept on board, the Customs launch occasionally visited at night, offering me whisky at reasonable prices. In the past I had often wondered what Customs officers did with all the whisky they got so-called given!

The only problem I encountered was in loading cattle in Tana River. Saidi was always helmsman entering port, and in the river kept me informed of unmarked shallow patches to avoid. Half an hour before arriving at the jetty we blew the whistle to alert shippers' herdsman on shore. There were no buildings in sight on that side of the river, and the cattle were kept waiting for the ship in scrubland nearby. By the time we berthed, cattle had already started to appear at the jetty, with herdsman jostling each other, each hoping to get their consignment on board first. A crewman, using a hand-held counter, counted the cattle as they boarded, stopping at the number I had previously agreed with KMC. Often some cattle were left behind. The herdsman of such remaining cattle - all tall dignified-looking men - tried to argue their case, for me to load more.

Once the cattle were on board, Arie had a system of putting their wellbeing first. If no port official appeared by boat from Lamu, he sailed without clearance papers. On arrival at Mombasa with cattle, Bonsella anchored in Old Port, and I was rowed ashore to report our arrival at Customs House. Sometimes I arrived from Tana River without clearance papers, facing a potentially serious offence, with the head of Customs. The problem was mainly a matter of African and European sense of time being so different. Fortunately, we soon saw eye to eye and came to a suitable arrangement.

At the slaughterhouse, occasionally a cow was too weak to walk off the vessel. Using the vessel's crane, we lifted it ashore, with a sling round its horns, from which it didn't appear to suffer. Such cows were usually then transported straight into the slaughterhouse for dispatch, ahead of other cattle. I experienced no deaths of cattle at sea. In view of my job, I had a conducted tour of the slaughterhouse, but that was definitely not my scene.



Liberty boat for an American aircraft carrier at anchor off Mombasa.

While watch-keeping at sea, I typed regular reports. Knowing Arie was constantly on the move in Europe, these had to be addressed c/o his bank in Holland. My expected six weeks stint soon passed, without word from him. It was another few weeks before he returned, and I left Bonsella. For me, managing Bonsella had been an interesting and well worthwhile holiday experience.



Troop carrier, or still a cattle boat?

In April 1991, Arie sold Bonsella. She continued to trade on the East African coast, but apparently capsized twice, each time being raised and got back into service.

Reportedly, in September 1994, Bonsella was hijacked by 26 Somali pirates off the north-eastern tip of Somalia. The pirates attacked her from a dhow, which the master afterwards said he had allowed to come too close. After firing two mortar rounds, eleven heavily-armed men leapt aboard and identified themselves as Somali Coast Guards. They took charge of the vessel and held the crew for a terrifying five days, as they hunted other ships in the area. They failed to board other ships because Bonsella was too slow, so her cargo of first aid medicine was taken along with everything else that could be stripped. Subsequently, in a statement, the master reported that as the pirates were leaving, they said, "Give us \$2000 before we go", to which the master replied, "I don't have any money." The General of the Somali Coastguard cocked his pistol and pointed it at his head. "Captain," he said, "no ship travels without money. Do you really want to lose your life just as I am about to set your ship free?" They went down to the cabin, rummaged through all the drawers, and took whatever money and things they could find. Then they left.

In 2009, Bonsella was thought to be still trading in East Africa, but under a different name.

SMMC Bursary Awarded

The Club has awarded its second Bursary to a Warsash Maritime Academy (WMA) student studying for a higher Certificate of Competence. The Bursary is for £1,000 and is made as a payment towards the costs of the student's course fees. The closing date for receiving applications from students was the end of March and a selection panel interviewed six students at the end of April.

The opening statement of the Terms and Conditions of the Bursary is:

"It is the objective of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club to maintain and foster social and professional comradeship amongst Master Mariners and other persons having an interest in ships and the sea. The Cachalots hope that this Bursary will make a contribution to achieving this objective."

The standard of all the applicants was high and after careful deliberations the panel considered that the student who was most likely to help achieve this objective was Michael Craig Smith who is studying for his Chief Mates Certificate.

Michael, who is happy to be called Mike, is aged 38 and first went to sea in 1989 as a deck boy on tankers. He remained on tankers, including North Sea shuttle tankers, until 1997 by which time he was Assistant Bosun. He then made the change to passenger vessels by joining P & O/Princess Cruises and in 1998 was promoted to Chief Petty Officer (Coxswain) and served on a number of P & O vessels until 2006 when he decided to study independently for his Officer of the Watch Certificate. On achieving this certificate in 2007 he joined Carnival UK and served as Third Officer on a number of Princess Cruise vessels until he started studying for his Chief Mates Certificate at WMA in January 2010. He hopes to qualify by the end of the year.

Mike, who originally comes from Peterhead in Scotland, now lives in Chichester, West Sussex, with his fiancée Allison who is in the airline industry and they plan to marry next year.

We were pleased to welcome Mike to the Club rooms on Friday 7th May for a social visit and for the opportunity for him to meet some of the members of the SMMC. It is the intention that fairly soon Mike will be invited to come to the Club to be awarded a Bursary Certificate in a more formal event to mark this special occasion.

In the meantime we wish Mike all the very best with his studies and examinations and look forward to seeing him again at the Club and when back at sea receiving the occasional article for the Cachalot upon life at sea or any technical seafaring subject relevant to his sea service.

Peter Marriott



*Mike Smith meets Club Captains, past and present.
Hall, Morris, Kelso, Cartwright and Marriott.*

And More News from Last Year's Awardee

Having recently become a father for the first time I have gained a new appreciation for the wonder of modern communications technology, and an even greater respect for Merchant Seaman of the past.

At this moment in time I am sailing onboard P&O's Aurora. Built in 2000 she has already had to have changes made to her communications equipment to keep up to date with the pace of technological developments. Satellite telephone calls can be made from all passenger, officer and crew cabins onboard. Crew can purchase a card which gives them a reasonable return of about an hour for each £5 card, and calls can be made in the comfort and privacy of one's own cabin. This service is extremely reliable regardless of the ship's geographical position, and once users at both ends get used to the slight satellite delay they can have a very clear and satisfactory conversation. Computers are also provided for the crew to buy Internet cards, and for £10 can 'surf' the internet for 2 ½ hours. The recent growth of social network websites like Facebook has made these internet cards very popular with crew members.

While onboard Ocean Village Two in October last year, as my wife was approaching her due date, I realised the benefits of another breakthrough. Most ships in the Carnival UK fleet now have their own mobile phone network, which means one's own mobile phone can connect to the ship's network to make and receive calls wherever the ship may be, even in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean! When close to land the network is turned off to allow mobile phones to connect to land-based networks which are cheaper (and generally clearer), but at sea the ship's satellite communications can be utilised. This meant that my wife could contact me 24 hours a day on my mobile phone, no matter where the ship was. While this was great for me, the possibility of 24/7 contact with wives at home was the source of much frustration for some of my colleagues!

Aurora also has a wireless internet network which means passengers and officers can use their own laptop computers to access the internet in their cabins. This service is available for crew in the crew recreation room. This leads me to a recent innovation which I am yet to try, but many people onboard use very successfully. Software for video calling is available to download free from the internet, and using the ship's wireless network and a webcam now means that loved ones can keep in touch with a live video conversation. As I have just begun what will be two months away from the UK with a son who is only two months old, this technology will enable me to see him grow, and hopefully ensure he remembers who I am!

So what does all this mean? Well I consider myself to be somewhat spoilt with the means available to me of keeping in touch with my wife and son, and I wonder how seafarers coped spending months (and even years) away from their family when they couldn't simply pick up the phone and speak to them. My Father-in-law (who is still working at sea as a Chief Engineer) remembers fondly writing and receiving letters to family at home, as the primary means of keeping in contact. But with a young family I am very grateful to be at sea at a time where technological advances make being away so much easier.

Matt Nicholls

Rope Ends

Internet Banking

With the decreasing use of cheques generally, the frequent unreliability of the post, and the increasing use by members of internet banking, the office has been receiving requests to make payments by internet banking or BACS transfers. Richard and I have found that the big problem for us is that we then have to wait for up to two weeks before we see a bank statement with the entry on it to confirm that the payment has been made, which with Sea Pie Supper and functions payments or requests to post out whales etc can be a problem.

Because I feel that in this modern age we should be offering the service of electronic payments to members, and with the added advantage of fewer cheques to process and take to the bank, I have therefore set up internet banking facilities with NatWest, which will not only allow swift identification of incoming payments but will also allow us to pay bills on line, saving postage and the risk of lost cheques.

Any members who wish to use this facility are welcome to do so. However, please remember that we are not clairvoyant, many payments will be identical, and we will not be able to guess the origin of payments that are not clearly identified. Please therefore put in your payment reference line your name, including all initials, and if possible, with the reason for the payment (eg Sea Pie Supper, subs, 250 club, etc) and if that is not possible then send an e-mail to the office (office@cachalots.org.uk) explaining that you have sent the payment and why.

Payment details are:

Sort Code: 56-00-68
Account Number: 00037869
Account full name: Southampton Master
Mariners' Club (The Cachalots)
(NB This appears on the screen as "Soton Master Marin" so is probably the best title to enter.)

Please help us to make this advance into the 21st century work successfully.

Barry Peck
Storekeeper

Club Library

THE CLUB IS REDUCING ITS VAST LIBRARY OF MARITIME BOOKS, NAUTICAL PUBLICATIONS, ETC.

CLUB MEMBERS WILL HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE THESE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE:

1. Any member who has donated books to the Club may, if they wish, reclaim them. Members seeking the return of books are asked to reclaim them as soon as possible.

2. Any member desirous of acquiring any of the remaining books may do so by making a donation to Club funds. The amount of that donation will be left to the generosity of the member.

Thereafter, books will be donated to suitable recipients - Warsash Maritime Academy, Southampton Maritime Museum, local shipping interests etc..

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COME INTO THE CLUB (DURING OPENING HOURS) AND BROWSE BUT PLEASE RETURN BOOKS TO THEIR ORIGINAL POSITION.

THE RANGE INCLUDES COMPANY AND SHIP HISTORIES, BOOKS ON SEAMANSHIP, METEOROLOGY, BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND MANY OTHER TOPICS.

S.S. Shieldhall

It has been reported to us that there are rumours going around the club that Shieldhall will not be sailing this year. We don't know how or where these unfounded rumours started but are happy to put the record straight in that she has a full programme for the season with the first public sailing on 6th June.

Details can be found on their website at

www.ss-shieldhall.co.uk



Gone Aloft



Richard E.A. Bayley

12.1.1929 - 23.4.2010

Captain R.E.A. Bayley, the Club's Senior Past Captain died on April 23rd. 2010.

Richard commenced his pre-sea training at the School of Navigation, Swaythling (subsequently Warsash Nautical College) in January 1945 and went to sea with Shell Tankers as a Cadet. Thereafter he joined Blue Star Line and returned to the college for his various Certificates of Competency. On obtaining his Masters Certificate he joined the Southampton Master Mariners' Club in 1957 and was appointed Club Captain in 1963 at the age of 34 - the youngest Captain in our history. Shortly after qualifying as Master, Richard came ashore and became a Director of J.Kirkaldy & Son, a supplier of marine paints in Southampton and he was always a welcome visitor in the offices of the numerous Marine Superintendents throughout the port city.

A keen golfer he was a long standing member, and onetime President (1994), of the Southampton Shipping Golf Society and a member of several other clubs in Hampshire.

Richard played an active part in the life of his local community and this was reflected in the huge turnout at his funeral in Romsey Abbey on May 11th. 2010.

Richard's first wife, Barbara, died suddenly in 2005 and Richard subsequently married Joyce. To her, his daughter Wendy and other family members we send our sincere condolences.

New Members

Keith Austin went to sea as an engineer cadet with Union Castle in 1967 and sailed deep sea with them and associated companies for ten years before working for Sealink, Torbay Seaways and P&O Ferries. He came ashore proper in '94 as Supt Eng for Red Funnel and then Sealion Shipping. He moved into training in 2005 as an instructor and then training manager with Flagship and is now Business Development Manager with Mabway Ltd.

Edward Hunter is an Electrical Eng who, following an apprenticeship with Harland & Wolfe, went to sea with Royal Mail, Atlantic Steam and Canadian Pacific. After a period ashore working with various companies he was, in 1970, recruited by Sealink as Electrical Supt and held that position until retiring in '90.

R J Strange is a solicitor specialising in maritime law and is a partner with Thomas Cooper in London. His leisure interest is sailing.

J Leslie Williams, Lt. RN, Ret., is qualified to command coastal vessels RN and is a yachtmaster, offshore. He served in the Fleet Air Arm for 22 years and is a pioneer of long distance ocean racing, organising the first exams and certification for yacht skippers. He was four years as skipper on a North Sea survey vessel, surveying he says, "every pipeline from Bacton to Sullom Voe" as well as the Pentland Firth and harbour entrances in Orkney and Shetland. He is currently self employed in yachting promotions and working on a marina development in Libya.

Robin Huntley is a re-joiner.

250 Club	
March	I.B. Thomson K.T.V. Edwards
April	B.E. Peck Marjorie Smart
May	R.C. Firth B.M. O'Connor

Cut-off date for the next edition: 13th August

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

Thu June 17	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cathedral
Fri July 2	Club Supper, Club room
Sat Sept 4	Curry Lunch Tba
Sun Sept 5	MNA Memorial Service Holyrood
Tue Sept 7	Coach trip to Windsor Castle & Savill Garden
Fri Sept 17	Club Supper, Mary Rose Club room
Sat Oct 9	Autumn Dinner Dance RAF Yacht Club, Hamble
Sat Oct 16	Curry Lunch Tba
Fri Nov 5	Harpooners' Dinner Club room
Wed Nov 10	Sea Pie tickets on Sale
Sat Dec 4	Christmas Lunch King's Court
Sat Dec 11	Christmas Dinner, King's Court