

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.4

June 2002

Captain's Log

Welcome to this first effort at recording some of the activities of the Club over the last three months. I will also report on the outside events at which we have been represented, either by your Captain or Staff Captains.

As you all know, the Sea Pie Supper was the usual great success but what may have escaped the attention of many is that the Club Room was specially opened the following morning (Saturday) for the 'Hair of the Dog'. Apparently this was a revival rather than an innovation but anyway it was supported sufficiently well to make it likely that we shall repeat the exercise next year.

You already read in the last Newsletter about the skittles evening in February. This was a most convivial evening accompanied by a 'bangers and chips' type supper. There was intense competition between two teams lead by Reg Kelso and Ian Stirling. Regrettably, Captain Kelso was seen and heard to resort to what can only be described as 'gamesmanship' in a vain attempt to avoid his team's inevitable defeat. One does not think of skittles as a particularly physical sport but fortunately Alan Gravestock seems to have made a complete recovery.

A curry lunch was held in the Club Room on Saturday, 2nd. March. It was well attended with a number of guests as well as members present. The food and fellowship were enjoyed by everyone. As these are always buffet lunches there is always room for more takers. We could probably cope with up to sixty people. There would then of course be less surplus for those who normally have 'seconds and thirds'. Don't forget that on Saturdays the car park barrier is kept raised and there is plenty of room for your cars. Furthermore, when all has been consumed there is still time to browse the city's shopping malls!

The Cricket Section held their AGM in the Club on Monday, 18th. March, at which I presented the cup to the 'Player of the Year'. As reported elsewhere they had a most successful season last year but are concerned to encourage more youthful players (under 50?) to join them - alright - under 65 then!

I represented the Club at a Mess Dinner at HMS SULTAN, a Naval engineering establishment in Gosport, on the 21st. March. This was held to 'dine out' the Commanding Officer, Commodore Peter Kidner. He and his wife were kind enough to invite me to stay at their house overnight in view of the travelling distance and the many toasts anticipated. It was certainly an evening to remember and a fitting send off for Peter on his promotion to Rear Admiral. He has been our guest at the Sea Pie Supper for the last couple of years and we hope to see him again in the future.

The next evening we held a Club Supper at which the guest speaker was Alan Mechen, a retired Divisional Fire Officer from Hampshire Fire Brigade. His talk was most unusual not only for its content but because he elected to give it before the meal rather than after. He described his hobby and business restoring old ships' figureheads. He showed lots of slides depicting the progress of figureheads from utter ruin to complete reconstruction. His talk was not only interesting; he was also a most entertaining speaker. By a strange coincidence I had just seen his latest masterpiece that very morning as I was leaving HMS SULTAN, where it stood proudly in the grounds.

On April the 3rd. I was forced to make a very difficult decision between chairing an Executive and Finance Committee meeting and attendance at the Court Luncheon of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. This was to be held aboard the Head Quarters Ship WELLINGTON moored alongside the Thames Embankment. I felt I could not ask anyone else to endanger

AUTUMN BALL

26th October

On Saturday 26th October we will return to the Hilton Hotel at Chilworth for our Autumn Ball. We were last there in 1999 and that occasion was enjoyed by all.

The chosen menu is:

Cream of Watercress Soup
Herb crusted Rack of Lamb
Tiramisu Bavaois
Cheese board & Coffee

There will be a vegetarian alternative for those who request it on booking.

Music will be by **ODESSA**, a five piece band that is new to us.

We have managed to keep the price down to just **£29** per ticket but this price is based on at least 100 attending. So give us your support and put your name (and those of your guests) on the list in the Club room, or phone the office .

their health through eating a sumptuous lunch merely in order to represent the Club so your Staff Captain, Geoff Lee, chaired the meeting in my stead. The lunch was a marvellous experience with a whole phalanx of Masters of City Livery Companies in attendance, all wearing their ceremonial collars, as I was myself. I sat next to the Master of the Honourable Company of Waxmakers. I was slightly disappointed at his lack of detailed knowledge of wax making. I suppose it was only to be expected really as he had been a judge at the Old Bailey. I also had the opportunity to meet a number of old shipmates and acquaintances.

Our Jubilee visit to Tidworth Garrison Theatre was thoroughly enjoyed by us all. There was a musical review of the Queen's reign which caused a great deal of foot tapping and humming of half remembered tunes. The Director of Music and the Band Master were up to their usual standard of good humour and repartee. We enjoyed the usual buffet

reserved for us in the side bar. Contrary to rumour Budden's Coaches were still operating to their usual high standard. We didn't have to back up any lanes even once.

The next evening was a very different one with a very much more serious purpose. A seminar was held in the Club Room on the subject of the vulnerability of bulk carriers to damage in heavy weather. This danger has led to the deaths of hundreds of seamen over the last few years. It was organised by Walter Weyndling and Reg Kelso and the latter chaired the Meeting.

I did the introductory welcome to all the organisations represented. The presentations were excellent. The lead speaker was Principal Surveyor from the Marine & Coastguard Agency - a Naval Architect by profession. He was clear, well supported by audio visual aids, and succeeded in not talking over the heads of the audience. He was followed by Captain Dennis Barber who had been master in bulk carriers but now does consultancy work on the risks associated with such ships. He is currently engaged by the MCA to research this topic on their behalf. He also gave a very clear though pessimistic view of the situation. The last speaker was a Past Captain of the Club, John Noble, who now heads up the Salvage Association. He corroborated the picture painted by his predecessors - a trade at the bottom of the value added pyramid - cost cutting - hustle by terminals - pressure on the masters from their anonymous operators - remote, disengaged owners - public indifference to third world crew losses. This was not a cheerful evening. Nevertheless, it may have gone some way to indicate to the marine authorities that there are people who are concerned about unacceptable risks being heaped on to vulnerable seafarers in the pursuit of profit maximisation - remember Samuel Plimsoll!

We geared ourselves up for a visit to the Club by the Captain and three officers from HMS CHATHAM. However, we received a message that the ship would be late arriving so the Club visit must be cancelled. In fact I understand that it never did call at Southampton at all. The last (paper) encounter I had with that vessel was when it was used in the interdiction of a yacht involved in a drug smuggling case. Let us hope that its failure to appear on this occasion was caused by a similar useful exercise rather than mechanical failure.

A buffet lunch was held to accompany a wine tasting on Saturday, 27th. April. Unfortunately, I was involved in

extracting the SHIELDHALL from the drydock so the Staff Captain once again presided. I understand though that it was a very successful event. Even though the bar was not manned there was no shortage of wine available to go with the meal after all the earlier different tastings left numerous part bottles to aid the palates.

On Saturday 11th. May I represented the Club at the Commodore's Cocktail Party at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club at Hamble-le-Rice. (The place is now too posh merely to be called Hamble). This was a most hospitable and friendly occasion. The Cachalots were even further represented as Jerry Cartwright and Peter Powell are also members of the RAFYC and were consequently hosts. Our Boatsteerer was also in attendance as of course were all our wives. Lionel even managed to secure a cautious acceptance from Sir Edward Heath for his impromptu invitation to attend next year's Sea Pie Supper. Apart from the enjoyable company and conversation the venue was splendid. Wide glass doors opened on to a large patio overlooking the river with all its boating activity. It certainly bodes well for our forthcoming Jubilee Banquet in the same room on Saturday, 1st. June. Although it will be a black tie job speeches will be limited to the minimum consistent with toasting the Queen and Grace.

The Merchant Navy Association held a wreath laying ceremony in the roofless Holy Rood Church in the Southampton High Street at noon on Sunday, 12th May. It was held to mark the grant of the Freedom of the City by the Mayor. The date was chosen so that Mrs. Christine Kelly could take the march past at the Bargate as one of her final duties before being superceded. The Freedom Holders' have the Honour of marching through, rather than round, the Bargate. The Club was represented in the Church by Reg Kelso, Robbie, the Sea Staff Captain and myself. Alan Mc.Dowall represented us in the March Past and very dignified he looked too. Afterwards there was a tea and snack refreshment in the Mission to Seafarers which I confess I failed to attend due to other commitments.

On Wednesday 15th. May I wore my Club collar at the Mayor Making Ceremony in the Southampton Guildhall. Robbie, our Staff Captain and Jerry Cartwright witnessed a most entertaining event. As a ceremonial montage it was very well presented by the Council officials. There was a wind quintet on stage to provide fanfares and incidental music and St. Anne's Junior Girls' School Choir provided some very sweet and accomplished singing during an interval. Normally the Ceremony should flow from the fact that the Sheriff is expected

to be the only nominee for Mayor. However, on this occasion there was an opposing candidate and he won the day. He then adopted a new Sheriff for the incoming year. Open warfare was avoided but sour grapes were definitely on display between the factions. For those of us who were unaware of the tensions within the City Council it was quite fun but I realise that wounds were inflicted which will affect local politics in the immediate future. I'm glad I live in Test Valley!

That brings me up to date with the more public events in which the Captain of the Club is meant to participate. There are of course also committee meetings and one to one meetings with people who might be of assistance to us. Then there are the letters to be written - acceptance and thanks etc. It's busy but it's fun.

Ian Stirling
Club Captain

NORMANDY WEEKEND **4-7 OCTOBER**

A 30 seater coach, with tea and coffee facilities, reclining seats with seat belts, and with a lavatory, has been booked for the above weekend. Pick-up points will be as usual in Chandlers Ford and Southampton for travel to Portsmouth to join the *Pride of Bilbao* for the 2000 sailing to Cherbourg on the Friday evening. Four berth cabins, for the exclusive use of two people only, will be at your disposal. En suite bedrooms, with digital satellite television, have been booked at the Quality Hotel near the Caen Memorial Museum. Other facilities there include a heated indoor pool, whirlpool, sauna and Turkish bath, the use of which is free to residents.

The return journey, on Sunday night, will be the 2300 sailing from Le Havre with similar accommodation as the outward journey.

On Saturday and Sunday we may visit Bayeux, and/or the Normandy beaches, or perhaps a calvados distillery.

The cost is just **£89** per person, to include all coach travel, the ferry in both directions and bed and full buffet breakfast at the Quality Hotel in Caen.

Valid passports will be necessary for this excursion and a deposit of £20 per person is required on booking. If numbers warrant it may be possible to reserve a larger coach but places are obviously limited and will be allocated on a strictly first-come, first-served basis.

SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS CRICKET SECTION



Players Please



Club members, are you aware that the Club has a cricket team? Well it does and a good one too. Are you cricketer or have you played at some stage in your past? Why not dust off those old pads and gloves and join us for an evening summer series of forty over matches. We would be pleased to welcome players of any age and skill level to join our ranks. Whilst the objective is to beat the opposing sides we play our matches also provide pleasant social meetings. Our home games are played at the excellent facilities provided by the Southampton Institute sports ground near the M27 at Eastleigh. If I have whetted your appetite call me on 01489 577944 or email me at mike.weston@solent.ac.uk.

Come and have a go.

AN UPDATE ABOUT THE AGM AND THE CAPTAINCY

At this years AGM the following members were selected as the club's officials for the 2002 season:

<i>Chairman:</i>	John Smart	<i>Treasurer:</i>	Ian Bagshaw
<i>Secretary:</i>	Mike Weston	<i>Captain:</i>	Ken Warren
<i>Vice Captain:</i>	Ted Banks	<i>Baggage Master:</i>	Mike Atkelsky

Both the Captain and Vice Captain's posts were subject to confirmation of acceptance by the individuals concerned who were nominated in their absence. Unfortunately Ken Warren has had to decline owing to work and domestic commitments.

It is undoubtedly a symptom of modern times that an increasingly long working hours culture and typical two working parent families make it very difficult for individuals to commit to the onerous demands of the position of Club Captain. I have been working with other club officials to try to resolve the current difficulty. George Gifford very kindly agreed to be caretaker captain for the first one or two games and other members likewise expressed a willingness to help out on a sort of rota basis. Finally though, it is with gratitude and relief that I can confirm that Mike Atkelsky has accepted the captain's mantle for a third successive year. The position of Baggage Master is now of course vacant. Any volunteers?

Mike Weston
Hon Secretary
Cricket Section

Kabin Notes

(Some vital info from the nerve centre)

BOW JOLIES NOUVEAUX EST ARRIVEE.

The new Club bow ties are now available at £10 each.

OVERDUE SUBS.

The Storekeeper regrets to report that although we are now halfway through the year there are still a few subscriptions due and he has asked that we insert a gentle reminder.

Don't forget; your Club is routinely open four days a week at lunch time. It serves sandwiches, snacks, salads or cooked meals. There is a cooked special each day and the price has recently only been £2.75. Don't forget that, when dining, a bottle of house wine can be bought for only £5 - a far cry from the usual hotel or restaurant prices. If you are in town at lunch time, Tuesday to Friday, Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink and take your food orders.

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

The Club's address is:

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club,
The Southampton Seafarers' Centre,
2/3 Orchard Place,
SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3BR
Tel/Fax: 023 8022 6155

E.mail: cachalots@smmclub.fsnet.co.uk

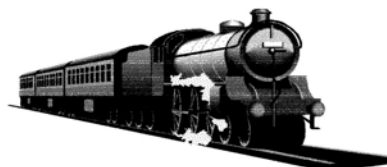
Dates for your Diary

Thu JUN 20	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cathedral
Wed JUL 3	Watercress Line outing (Note the change of date)
Fri AUG 9	Cowes Fireworks cruise, "Shieldhall" (Fully booked)
Sat SEP 21	Curry Lunch
Sat OCT 26	Autumn Ball.
Tue NOV 5	Tidworth Last Night of the Proms
Sat NOV 23	Curry Lunch
Wed DEC 4	Christmas Lunch
Fri DEC 13	Christmas Dinner

TRIP on the WATERCRESS LINE

3rd July

All aboard for a nostalgic trip on a steam train between Alresford and Alton along the famous Watercress Line!



The price will be around £13 - £14 to include the rail fare and a two course hot lunch plus tea or coffee. Members should muster at Alresford Station by 1220 on the day. Names please on the list in the Club room or to the office.