

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

**No 40**

**June 2011**

## Captain's Log

The evening of the 25th March was spent at the Southampton Old Bowling Green where the skittles event was held. Not only were the usual faces present but also a group from the cricket team. Immediately, my other half, Grace, went ahead knocking more skittles down than I could muster. The large rubber ball used to knock down the skittles on occasions' came down the aisle like Barnes Wallace's bouncing bomb and if the ball caught the pin right on the end it enabled the pin to take off like an AA missile. We had three teams contesting the event and in the end team No3 won. Grace handed out the prizes to the winning Highest Scoring Lady and Gentleman. They were Judith Cam and Simon Harwood, Simon having collected two wooden spoons in the previous two years. This time, that award went to Mavis Stirling.

Saturday 26th March 2011. We went to Highfield Church Hall for the Southampton's Royal Naval Officers Association dinner. Unfortunately, the Chairman, Gerry Draysey, was not well and was unable to attend. His place was taken by Mike Evans.

The speaker was a Commodore Mark Slawson ADC MBA BSC CEng FIMarEST RN, in charge of HMS Sultan. He spoke about the state of the Royal Navy, the cut backs it was enduring and the importance of keeping a positive outlook in the face of such challenges. A few jokes were skilfully mixed into an informative speech, I noted that the interest we pay on the national debt is 44 billion a year and the spending of the MOD is intended to be 39 billion a year very soon. I sat between the Mayor and the Commodore's wife, the evening was good and the duck was tasty as well. It turned out to be a non speaking part for me and as I was the duty driver the port passed me on many occasions without me partaking.

The 15th April brought cocktails at the RAF yacht club. The Yacht Club Commodore Robin Clarkson talked about clubs and how they take care of their member's needs and also a joke about the different types of bra which I wish I could remember. Grace and I stayed on with Gerry and Ann Cartwright for dinner.

The following Sunday brought the 99th Commemorative Service for the *Titanic*, at St Mary's Church. The Mayor and the Archbishop of Armagh attended. Wreaths were laid after the hymn *Eternal Father Strong to Save*. I would suggest the wreath be made of something other than poppies for next year's service. The service reminded me of the changes to safety at sea that followed the *Titanic* and how much publicity plays its part in making sure the changes get done. The *MV Doña Paz* was on route from Leyte Island to Manilla via Catbalogan City in Samar. On the 29th December 1987 she was in collision with *MT Vector*, a tanker carrying gasoline. The collision ignited the gasoline which also spread to the *Doña Paz* and only 26 people survived the incident. The manifest showed that 1,583 passengers and 58 crew were onboard the vessel. However, extra tickets were usually purchased illegally onboard at a cheaper rate and the Philippine Supreme Court acknowledged in 1999 that the *Doña Paz* carried an estimated 4000 passengers onboard. This occurred

in the same year as the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster which brought many improvements to safety at sea. I hope the *Titanic* will stand as a warning to the designers of such vessels well into the future, that the need or ability to abandon a ship must never be forgotten nor compromised. Strange then that the *Spirit of Britain* ferry is going into service without lifeboats. She will have two rescue boats on each side. She will be running from Dover to Calais and will only have rafts for the passengers to embark upon.

Southampton was also was hosting *HMS Astute* on the 8th of April when a fatal incident took place on board. Our thoughts are with the families of those involved. I had been invited on board that evening but naturally all such social functions were cancelled. The Royal Southern Yacht Club had a cocktail party on the 14th May which Grace and I attended. The last Commodore, J.M.Beardsley, introduced us to the present Commodore, Mr Mark Inkster, who made an engaging speech. We also met David Evans, the Marine Director and Harbour Master of the River Hamble, and his wife.

The outgoing mayor referred to the *Astute* incident in the major making ceremony which I attended at the Guildhall on the 18th May.

Also on this date we had a joint meeting of the SMMC and the NI where we explored the "Pirates Playground" in the company of Annie Clarke. This turned out to be a great evening where there was tension and emotion, which all contributed to a good lecture. The lecture made plain to all the perils of travelling the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and the preparations that now need to be made in order to enhance one's chances of a safe passage.

And a safe passage to us all till next time.

Just one last thing: next week, after this edition goes to the printers, I have another pleasant duty to perform. At the AGM in January it was decided to offer our Administrator, Richard James, Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his services to the Club beyond the call of his normal duties. Richard has always been available and willing to go the extra mile, particularly in periods of intense work when the Officers of the Club may have been absent through sickness or other commitments. At the evening opening on Wednesday 25th May I shall present Richard with his Certificate of Honorary Life Membership.

Ivor Salter.

Following a very enjoyable and convivial Curry Lunch at Kutis in Oxford Street on Saturday 21st May, with no dissenters among the 40 plus members and wives present, an executive decision was made there and then to return there for the next Curry Lunch on Saturday 3rd Sept, 1200 for 1230, price should remain the same at £11.50. (tbc)

The food was good, the service fine and, of course the company excellent.

The table service that we had anticipated did not materialise but the buffet service was well organised, table by table, and in no way detracted from our enjoyment of the meal.



## Boatsteerer's Locker

I reported in the last blog that 2011 was well under way, well it certainly is now and the next big event for the Cachalots is the Shipping Festival at Winchester Cathedral on Thursday the 16th June starting at 1915. Please come along and enjoy the service in the Cathedral followed by a social gathering in the Deans garden after the service, all are welcome.

### The Club Room

Last week we received the signed copy of the lease from our solicitors this gives us hopefully another two years in our present location and more time to establish what the future might hold in terms of a venue for social events and meetings. Significant to this was my plea for new members and although we have had a steady trickle of applications but not sufficient yet to make a difference as the loss of membership for one reason or another is still quite high, thank you to those members who have introduced people.

It is still intended to dispose of the library and a catalogue of the books will be placed on the web site some of which have been valued and will be offered for sale others will be open to donation. The other artefacts are part of the club room and will remain within the club room until such times as we have to vacate the premises.

We trialled a Wednesday evening opening and although thus far only two such openings have occurred it has been well attended and has evolved into a general get together with if pre-ordered a choice of curry supper being available. This is an ideal opportunity to introduce friends and potential new members to our community Wednesday the 25th May being the next evening opening and if this is as well attended I for one will vote to carry on opening again starting the last Wednesday evening in September and see how things go from there.

On the 18th May the club room saw some thirty plus attendees at a very enjoyable evening event when Miss Annie Clarke gave us an incite into modern Piracy which is a very real threat to vessels the seriousness of which was perhaps not appreciated by us all prior to this talk. Thanks to Annie.

Not wishing to swing the lamp but at the same stage as Annie in my seagoing career which isn't that long ago piracy was in it's infancy and we only worried about seagoing affairs like the weather, typhoons and how long we had in Hong Kong, "only four days this time round". Times have changed!!

Winchester cathedral, we have heard that a major fund raising project is to be launched shortly for the upkeep of the Cathedral and as this is part of our history in respect of the Shipping Festival it would be good to play our part in raising money for this cause.

### And Finally

The Royal wedding being over and no immediate plans for another one that we know of the club room should be open as advertised at least until the Christmas holiday period.

The traditional holiday months are approaching and I hope the Summer holds and everyone enjoys some sunshine wherever their holiday destination might be.

David Stocks

## SMMC Bursary Awarded

The Club has awarded its third 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. As Easter fell late this year everything was running a little bit later than in the past to allow students who did not commence their studies until after the Easter break to be eligible to apply. The closing date for receiving applications from students was late April and on this occasion there were ten applicants. After a sift this number was reduced to six who were called for interview on 11th May 2011. The reason for selecting this number is because the Sailors' Society also offers a £1,000 bursary and it is felt this number was appropriate with two bursaries under consideration. As it was, in the end only five students were interviewed as one of those selected failed to enrol at WMA to commence his studies.

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 five applicants interviewed presented varying cases. It was felt that three stood out as being contenders for the SMMC £1,000 but at the end of the day, taking account of the above objective, the panel agreed that the student who was most likely to help achieve this objective was **Denzil Savio D'Silva** who is studying for his Chief Mates Certificate.

Denzil is aged 32 and grew up in a tiny coastal village in the state of Goa, India. His grandfather had been a chef on passenger ships. Living close to the sea he was fascinated by it and always dreamt of a career at sea but on leaving school no opening was available to him and instead he commenced studying electronics. However, later on he was given the opportunity to start employment with Fal Shipping and, with the support and encouragement of his family, he commenced his seafaring career. After a varied cadetship he was successful in obtaining his Officer of the Watch Certificate in September 2006, after studying at WMA. Denzil has for the last few years been serving on Teekay Shipping vessels and on completion of his current studies, in July 2011, and the obtaining of his Chief Mates Certificate it is his intention to remain with Teekay Shipping.

Denzil is married and his wife is a teacher in Goa.

It is the intention that fairly soon Denzil will be invited to come to the Club to be awarded a Bursary Certificate. Hopefully we will see him again before he completes his studies and takes his examinations. However, once he returns to sea and the fact that he lives in Goa there is very little chance of him being able to come to the Club regularly. Nevertheless when he is back at sea we look forward to receiving the occasional article for the Cachalot upon life at sea or any technical seafaring subject relevant to his sea service.

Peter Marriott

## Ten Years On

This 40th edition of *The Cachalot* marks ten years since Ian Stirling produced, at the suggestion of the Entertainments Committee, the first, four page edition, dated 21st June 2001. The intention was to keep members abreast of club functions and activities and informed as to what the Captain was getting up to in their name. I took on the role of editor from edition 2, dated November but published at the beginning of December, and 1½ pages of that one were devoted to the cricket section. We then decided to make it a quarterly publication. Ian became Captain of the Club for 2002 and we introduced the first "Captain's Log" in edition 4. It took up 3 of the 4 pages. Issue 5 included the first external offering, a report from a young lady whom we had sponsored for a trip on the *Lord Nelson*. Issue 6 had to be stretched to 8 pages to accommodate a report, from Ian, on our first Normandy trip and the start of a series on the WW1 diaries of a relative of mine. By this time contributions and articles of interest from members were coming in and we kept it (down) to 8 pages until issue 18 when Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles gave me permission to reprint excerpts from his private memoirs.

From the start I wanted to keep content to news, views and reviews by and about Cachalots, rather than reprint nautical stuff which can be found elsewhere. By and large I have managed to keep to that policy although I am not adverse to including something that takes my fancy and I think might take yours. Some longer contributions can be stretched out over a few issues but I feel that if someone makes the effort to get something to me then I should publish it a.s.a.p. rather than store it in the spares locker. Hence, by issue 25 we were up to 16 pages and haven't looked back. The only pieces I have in reserve now are Sir Morgan's memoirs and Tambo's Tales, plus a few more from Eddie Hunter.

The most regular contributors have been Reg Kelso, Hamish Roberts and Ian Stirling; notable series have been Ian Thomson's sailing ancestors, David Aris's history of the liberty ships and the saga of the Battle of SC94. The most satisfying to edit was Richard Olden's story of the *Bonsella*, which I got reprinted for him as a 4 page booklet, in colour.

Because most of us are, let's face it, of a certain age, our memories tend to dwell in a certain, golden age of the merchant navy and I sometimes wonder if anything at all has happened in the past few years. Now, like the long-awaited bus, three bang up-to-date pieces have come along at once. Over the page we have a report from a certain well known and popular Royalist on her preparations for THAT recent event. On page 8 a report from Cachalot Chris Clarke on his daughter's recent presentation at the club on events that are still happening and escalating even now, and on page 9 a brief report (I couldn't find room for more) on a very recent seminar held in Southampton on *Portable Pilot Units & ECDIS*.

Another forthcoming development I should advise you of is the advent of an up-to-date website. The existing one, launched in Sept. 2006, is looking a bit tired now and I never found it easy to edit. Clive Robinson, Of C Data Services, who kindly supply our web facilities has offered us a new, easier to manage one. It will have a members only section, accessed via another of those horrible passwords I'm afraid and, no doubt, Barry and I will have to go on a course on how to work it. That's all in the pipeline at the moment and we will advise you of any progress in the next edition.

Who would ever have thought, ten years ago, that our little newsletter, or the Club, or even ourselves, would be so dependant on computers and the internet.

Let's see what changes the next 40 editions will be witness to.  
*Terry Clark, Editor*

## Club Suppers

Two suppers have been arranged, to be held in the Club Room. Catering will be by John Davies. The first will be on

**Friday 8th July.**

Speaker will be

**Cdr Dom Young RN**

"The Adventures of a Nuclear Submarine"

The menu:

WARM MUSHROOM & GRUYERE TART

ROAST LOIN OF PORK WITH PEPPER SAUCE

LEMON MERINGUE PIE

The second, on

**Friday 9th September**

Speaker yet to be confirmed

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP

LEG OF LAMB WITH CUMBERLAND SAUCE

PEARS POACHED IN RED WINE WITH VANILLA ICE CREAM

Each menu includes rolls & butter, a selection of vegetables, potatoes, coffee & mints.

Price will be £26 per head  
and numbers limited to 36  
on a first come basis.  
1900 for 1930



**AUTUMN DINNER DANCE**  
**Saturday 8th October**  
**RAF Yacht Club, Hamble**

**Music by**

**Twilight**

**Black Tie,  
1915 for 2000.**

Due to a change of caterers at the Yacht Club around this time we are as yet unable to bring you the menu or set the price.  
More details in the next issue.



*In keeping with its cutting edge reputation, this publication is proud to bring you a report on something that has actually happened within the past month! Who knows - we could be on Twitter next.*

*During the recent Royal celebrations we had our own Royal Correspondent, Margaret Tinsley, wife of Past Captain Andrew, on station at a prime spot on The Mall. Here is her exclusive report.*

## **Hampshire Royalists at the Royal Wedding**

In 1981 Shirley Messinger and I slept one night on The Mall with our daughters, then aged 6 and 7 years, for the wedding of Prince Charles. We did the same again in 1986 for the marriage of Prince Andrew spending two nights, this time with four adults and six children and torrential rain on the first night. All good character building stuff.

So, of course, as soon as the engagement of Prince William and Catherine Middleton was announced, our preparations began. Despite their early training our children declined the invitation to join us, citing their own small children as an excuse. There was a lot to think about, not least the loos, the lack of which had caused difficulties in the past. Even my correspondence with The Duke of Norfolk, the Lord Chamberlain and the Bailiff of The Royal Parks in 1986 had failed to provide mobile loos or even to have the permanent loos open all night. So the first thing to do was write to The Bailiff of the Royal Parks. That letter was returned after a month, "moved address", so off went a copy to The Lord Chamberlain and shortly afterwards a reply was received from the Manager of St. James's Park and The Green Park. He kindly advised that there would indeed be mobile loos and they and the permanent facilities would be available on the 28th and earlier by demand. I wrote by return mail to advise that since we were ladies of a certain age, there would indeed be a demand. We were pleased to receive his assurance that our request would be granted, as indeed it was. The permanent facilities were warm and clean at all times and there were mobiles by the dozen. We would like to take some credit for this!

While we were watching BBC South Today one evening, Sally Taylor asked for viewers to let her know if they were planning celebrations on the big day. So off went an email telling her of our past escapades and plans for this Wedding. Some weeks later the BBC made contact to discuss how they could follow our story. One thing led to another and all of a sudden it was for us "last chance celebrities". By now our group had grown to four with friends Jill from Australia and Astrid from Colombia who gained full British Citizenship on 27 April, agreeing to be part of this celebration.

The excitement really began on Wednesday 27 April at 0715 when Radio Solent arrived to do a live interview on the Julian Clegg Show, followed by the arrival of BBC reporter Ben Moore at 0815. Ben was a great guy and his enthusiasm and encouragement really put us at ease when doing the interviews. He travelled with us, and it was great to meet Chris Coneybeer and Peter Henley who were also on the train. We had a large amount of baggage including comfortable loungers, sleeping bags, wet weather gear, polythene sheeting, gas jet for cooking and all the food we would need for 3 days. Somehow, with the co-operation of the taxi driver and Ben folding his 6' 5" to slide into the last available space, we all managed to fit into the one cab for the trip from Waterloo to The Mall.



**Travelling light**



**Here we are again**

Not to our surprise, we were the first on The Mall, and because of this the world Press descended like bees around a honey pot. You name it, we did it - interviews with countries such as Australia, Colombia, China, Malta, Norway, Switzerland, Hungary. In fact we gave up counting after 14 countries. It was almost 3 hours before we could complete setting up our little camp then Ben left us to spend Thursday at Bucklebury, keeping in touch by phone and text. We ate and drank well and so settled down for the night. By now there were two other groups on The Mall so we were no longer alone.

Wednesday night was cold, I managed one hours sleep and by 5 am was wondering if I was getting a bit long in the tooth for this sort of jaunt. But after tea, porridge, coffee and soup I was at last warm again and realised that was a ridiculous notion and of course I will be young enough for The Coronation camp-out



whenever that may be. The day passed so quickly. It is quite amazing that folk who are normally reserved, aloof, disinterested and/or unfriendly suddenly change and just want to stand and chat. All great fun, of course, even the questions such as "Are you here for the Royal Wedding?" and "Are you staying here all night". The urge to respond with equally silly remarks was suppressed. And then, among all these visitors came, to our great glee, the VIPs. First Nick Marriott (son of Past Captain Peter) with a bottle of bubbly and then none other than our esteemed Storekeeper, Barry.

By settle down time The Mall was closed and the traffic and sirens of the previous night were replaced by the noise of the crowd which was really building up, with some folk intent on partying all night. Among those to join us were Helen and her daughter Emma (12) from Swanmore, who had seen us on TV on Wednesday evening and decided that if we could do it, so could they. A warmer night and, for me, around 3 hours sleep before a wash and brush up at 0430 then packing up camp ready for my son-in-law and Astrid's husband to collect our baggage. At 0530 after great difficulty, with most roads closed, they found a way through.



**Welcome visitors on the Thursday**



**Ladies in waiting**

By 9 am the crowds were fourteen rows deep, all in party mood, cheering everyone who came down The Mall - horses, police, road sweepers, dustcarts, soldiers and guests walking to the Abbey. As always the police were remarkable, joining in the fun and with great diplomacy dealing with the one or two (not us) who had indulged in a few too many. Of course the excitement, the cheers and the flag waving built up as cars and minibuses conveyed the wedding guests to the Abbey. Then came The Princes William and Harry, The Queen and finally the beautiful bride and her proud father. The service was relayed over loudspeakers and as programmes were available for us to purchase we were able to follow the service, join in the singing and then, when they had exchanged vows, toast the happy couple with Nick's champagne.

And then came that wonderful procession back to Buckingham Palace and we can report, hand on heart, that William and Catherine looked directly at us and read our banner pro-

claiming "Hampshire Royalists Here again and again". In 1986, as soon as the procession had passed us, Shirley and I ran along the pavement, scaled a wall, crossed a garden and dropped down to get as near as possible to the Palace. That was not an option this time for three reasons - now too old to scale a wall, the police would have shot us and the TV studios were in the way. But by unhooking the barrier we were able to jump the queue to join the orderly procession along The Mall and get close enough to see the Royal Family on the balcony. To be part of that crowd was a never-to-be-forgotten experience and I felt just so proud to be British-Australian.

A picnic lunch followed by a short rest in St. James's Park and off we set to rendezvous with Ben at the Canada Gate for our live TV interview. That was quite an experience when, having produced our passes and passports, we entered the amazing compound where all the world's media were gathered. And then we went in the recording room, cheered by the crowds outside Buckingham Palace, and once in position had a (long) wait of five minutes before we were on air. Neither Shirley or I were really nervous - possibly because of Ben's reassurance or maybe just too tired.

A taxi to Wandsworth, champagne, supper, shower and bed ended a most wonderful few days. And now the preparations for the Diamond Jubilee have begun. All are welcome to join us for the River Pageant on 3 June 2012 - bring your own chairs, food and wine!



**At last, the Wedding feast**

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

Another character I particularly remember was "Petar", who was a Political Commisar at Partisan Navy's HQ. He was a huge, magnificent man from Montenegro. He was always grinning, cheerful and welcoming, but neither of us ever understood a word the other one said! He accompanied the Partisans on a raid on the Island of Hvar where the Partisans had a great success and killed and captured many Germans; and they had to borrow some of my Landing Craft in order to bring their prisoners and booty back to Vis.

While they were in Hvar celebrating their success, Petar met up with a girlfriend who was the daughter of a strange old retired aristocrat of some sort - Austrian I think - who somehow found himself living in Hvar. Two days after Petar had returned to Vis he shot himself. I said to Cerni "We were very sorry to hear about Petar". He replied "Oh yes - he had some troubles you know!" It was only much later that we learned what had happened. Some elderly woman working with Tito had heard about the celebrations after the battle. She had perhaps had a hankering after Petar herself: But she had gone to him and said "I hate to have to do this, but I am going to have to report you for unpartisan-like behaviour": And this is why he had shot himself.

To understand this, one must understand the incredibly rigid ideological outlook of the Partisans. The Army included men and women serving together. The whole Partisan movement throughout Yugoslavia depended upon mobility. Prisoners were encumbrances, so they shot them. Their own wounded were their biggest difficulty and they asked us more for help in dealing with these than anything else. Their third worry would have been pregnant women, so they had an absolute edict that there was to be no "rolling in the hay" whatsoever. In fact, if any couples broke this rule, they were both immediately shot. I know this to be true. Once a Royal Marine Commando had met a Partisan girl a couple of times and they had made eyes at one another, but they had never even spoken. Somebody reported the couple, and she disappeared. The Royal Marine came to his Commanding Officer to "State a Complaint" about this but, of course, nothing could be done.

These Parti sankas were the most formidable women - but not particularly feminine or attractive. They were allegedly very good at throwing hand grenades and many of them had a couple of hand grenades hanging from each side of their belt! When a raiding party returned to the island, the Partisankas would produce bundled up ground sheets, straighten them out and reveal soap, towels and tooth brushes. The soldiers would line up and use all these items in rotation, which were then thrown back in the ground sheets and put back in the store!

-----oooOOOooo-----

Looking back on the events over all these months, I suppose these savage, crude and cruel ways of waging warfare were just another example of what has happened all through Balkan history. Up to date, we have seen the same awful sort of manifestations in Bosnia and more recently, at the time of writing, in Kosovo.

P.S. After Jack Churchill was captured on the island of Brae, as described earlier in this chapter, he had an extraordinary series of adventures.

The first is explained by this note from him to his captors:

Nº PI 633 Mercedes  
Brac  
6 - VI - 44

Dear Captain,

Just a short note  
to thank you & your men, down  
here, for our correct treatment  
during our stay with you.

The food was rather short, &  
less than we are used to but  
that could not be helped under  
the circumstances.

I hope that after the war we  
shall meet again, & in any case  
should you at any time find  
yourself in England, <sup>or Scotland</sup> do ring up  
HELENSBURGH 222 or GERRARDS CROSS  
2120, where you will find me, & I hope will  
dine with my wife & I.

Farewell.

Jack Churchill

The above is Jack's bread-and-butter letter, written in pencil three days after his capture and just before he was despatched to Berlin.

The German officer to whom Jack had given the note was a Hauptman Hans Thorner. Later the note saved Thorner's life when the Yugoslavs wanted to have him shot as a war criminal after the war.

Jack was subsequently imprisoned in Sechsenhausen Concentration Camp, where he was chained to the floor for the first month.

Later he escaped by tunnelling, was recaptured, but escaped again and reached Allied lines.

In 1979 Jack was made Honorary Colonel of the German 118th Jager Division, in recognition of his successful intervention at the Nuremburg trial of Hauptmann Hans Thorner.

I am particularly attracted by this story. However dreadful war is, it should be conducted chivalrously whenever possible.

There is a somewhat similar tale from a Naval engagement in the Channel. A British Motor Torpedo Boat and a German E-Boat met unexpectedly one night and fought furiously. The German boat was sunk. The MTB turned back to find any survivors. The few who were rescued included the German Commanding Officer. Lying wounded on the deck of the MTB he was horrified to see a huge burly British Able Seaman with a knife in his hand. This man approached him, knelt down beside him and held the knife to his throat: Then he cut the German Officer's necktie, and said "There. Perhaps that will help you with your breathing, Sir".

*to be continued*



## **Pirates' Playground**

**A Joint meeting with Southampton Master Mariners' Club and The Nautical Institute Solent Branch  
held at the Clubroom on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011.**

The subject of the joint meeting was a presentation entitled "Pirates' Playground" given by Ms Annabel Clarke AMNI Bsc, recounting her experience of pirate attack in the Indian Ocean and describing the developing anti-pirate precautions as utilised on the vessels in which she served. Her first transit of the area in question was as a deck cadet on MV Mahinabank, a multipurpose general cargo vessel operated by Andrew Weir Shipping for Swires on a round the world service and carrying twelve passengers. On this occasion in November 2008, precautions consisted mainly of extra lookouts in order to provide a 360 degree lookout with additional crew members from all departments supporting the deck department and fire hoses were rigged so that they could be operated from the bridge. By later standards this seems rather minimal but there was a heightened feeling of alertness and tension throughout the vessel. On this and subsequent occasions the normal work of the vessel was suspended as the anti piracy measures assumed priority. Although the transit was uneventful, one vessel was captured nearby, highlighting the sense of risk felt by those on board.



***Annie explains the deployment of the timber baulks***

Her next voyage was on a sistership, MV Boularibank which she joined, initially for a short period returning to Europe from Singapore. Again there was the same sense of tension, particularly as they approached the Arabian Sea. While still well to the east of the usual area where pirate attacks have taken place, they were approached by two skiffs which attempted to board the vessel after firing RPGs and small arms, probably in an attempt to persuade the vessel to slow down, the speed being in the region of 18 knots. That morning the crew had been employed rigging slings of heavy timber baulks (normally used for cargo operations) suspended out-board of the ship's side which could be quickly released by a slip in order to fall into the water and foil any attack. Fortunately the work had just been completed prior to the attack, so on the order of the Master the slings were released at the critical point when the pirates were alongside and just about to board so had no option but to haul clear and abort

their attack or risk sinking their skiff although the deck party was under fire. The pirates then dropped back before attempting a second attack which received the same treatment. Fortunately the pirates withdrew after that. Annabel was full of praise for the Master who displayed great leadership skills, keeping his crew together and motivated at this time of great stress. The vessel entered the Gulf of Aden next day and joined a convoy for the transit.

Having obtained her OOW certificate, she then joined MV BBC Asia, a heavy lift tramp operated by Leda Shipping of Germany for a voyage from the Gulf to the Far East and thence Europe, again transiting the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. She described the increased anti-piracy measure becoming more prevalent with the increase in attacks. A large amount of equipment was supplied by the Company in Singapore and so the crew were able to establish a secure citadel and make the decks and accommodation as inaccessible as possible for any pirates managing to get on board. Razor wire was deployed along the ship's side, over the deck cargo and at any possible access points where pirates could climb to the bridge. Many openings had bars welded across them and doors fitted with strong-backs and additional securing devices. The citadel was organised and equipped so that the vessel could be coned from within for a limited period of time, hopefully until military help arrived. In the event of an attack all crew members were to go to the citadel with the exception of the Master and senior deck officers who were to remain on the bridge but evacuating to the citadel in the event of a successful boarding. Realistic drills were held so that all procedures were practiced and well understood. However the measures posed considerable restrictions and difficulties in moving around the vessel and it was not easy to reconcile priorities of normal access with security. The vessel joined a convoy escorted by Chinese warships and had an uneventful passage although there were attacks in the area. After Annabel was relieved in Port Said, the ship was to return to the Far East and being fully loaded had minimal freeboard. On this occasion they were to embark armed guards and she remarked that as no ships had been attacked once the presence of armed guard was evident, she would have felt much more confident. On all the transits described, the vessel reported to the UKMTO so that progress could be monitored.



***This slide shows the pirates close alongside***

The floor was then opened for questions and discussions and Annabel stated that in general, seafarers felt that the situation and the risks were not generally understood by the public. Many interesting points were raised by the audience including the fact that whilst the official "risk" zone has been extended, the enhanced payment to ship's crews is only applicable in the IRTC, the corridor in the Gulf of Aden, ironically where the crews now feel most secure as naval presence has virtually eliminated successful attacks. The meeting concluded with a general consensus that there is too little press coverage so that the public remain largely unaware of the serious level of piracy and its effects and that politicians should be urged to push for more effective action against piracy worldwide..



## New Members

### **Robin Baker**

Robin is a Master Mariner and at the time of his joining us he was Head of Fleet Operations at Red Funnel. He is also an RNLI All Weather Lifeboat Coxswain, based at Calshot, near his home.

### **Michael John Hallé**

Michael, a Master Mariner, rejoins us in his retirement. He was previously a member when based in Southampton as Marine Superintendent at Fawley Marine Terminal, which appointment followed six years as master with Esso. He then moved to the IMT at Leatherhead where his positions included Safety Manager and Nautical Advisor. His last, four year assignment, prior to retirement, was as Marine Superintendent on the Sakhalin 1 Project in the far north east of Russia.

### **Keith Harper**

Keith is both a Master Mariner and a practising Solicitor. Having served a cadetship with P&O and then eight years with China Nav and Swires, he studied at Cardiff University with postgraduate legal studies at the College of Law, Guildford. Thereafter he was in private practice with shipping lawyers Watson Farley, then Thomas Cooper in London. For the past ten years he has worked as in-house lawyer with Svitizers Salvage & Towage, in the UK, Denmark and presently as their Director of Corporate Affairs, based in the Netherlands.

### **Stephen Keenan**

Stephen is a Marine Engineer who, following a three year accelerated Engineer Officer cadetship with the RFA, spent eight years at sea from 3/O(E) to Chief Engineer Officer with RFA, Esso, London & Overseas Freighters and Cable & Wireless Marine/Global Marine Systems. He moved ashore in 2000 as a Superintendent with Global Marine and worked similarly for MOL Tankship Management and Sealion Shipping. He joined Clipper Marine Services in 2007 and was then their Technical Manager until the closure of the Southampton office in 2008. Employed as Technical & Compliance Officer in the Inspections & Surveys section of the Bahamas Maritime Authority from January 2009 he is now their Assistant Director.

*We owe an apology to Stephen, who actually joined last September but whose details have just come before me. We plead the usual overwork, sickness, tiredness and the fact that I couldn't have squeezed him into the last edition anyhow - Ed.*

### **Anthony J. Townshend**

Tony started his career as a Navigating officer with Mobil Shipping before moving into their Human Resources Dept as Training Officer in 1981. There he gained qualifications in accountancy, personnel management, ship management and then a Master of Arts Degree in Human Resource Management from Thames Valley University in 1993. He spent the next six years firstly as Fleet Personnel manager for Vela Int. Marine and then as Director of Marix Services, a subsidiary of World Wide Shipping established to provide manning and facilities for their fleets. Tony was then a Consultant for The London Shipping Consultancy and Senior Consultant for Spinnaker Consulting. He was then appointed Crewing Manager for Mideast Ship Management and Owner's Representative having overall responsibility for all HR matters for JoTankers in the Far East. Since 2006 he has been Director of Gracegyre Ltd, an independent consultancy providing HR services to small and medium sized companies. He is now also Director of ISM Global Services Ltd, a company formed to provide riding squads and repair teams to the international shipping industry.

### **PORTABLE PILOT UNITS AND ECDIS – What does the user *really* need?**

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011: Southampton Solent University Conference Centre.**

#### ***Post Seminar report***

Over 100 delegates gathered in the Port of Southampton to take part in this 'landmark' event.

The Solent Branch of the Nautical Institute, in conjunction with The Hydrographic Society UK (Southern Region), and the United Kingdom Maritime Pilots Association, played host to an International gathering of Maritime Pilots, Hydrographers, Marine consultants, Regulators, Harbour Masters, Manufacturers and Trainers, and many from other sectors of the Shipping, Port, and wider marine industries.

Portable Pilot Units (PPU's) are now used in a number of ports to bring electronic charts and precise positioning together in a convenient and portable package for marine pilots, more recently the addition of a broadband link has facilitated 'real time information' being available on the Pilot's laptop to assist in onboard decision making. This *flagship* event allowed the exhibitors (manufacturers and trainers) to interact with the end users and other interested parties, in conference, in workshop sessions, and informally, for the first time on such a grand scale.

The Nautical Institute Solent Branch Chairman, Matt Winter FNI, welcomed the delegates, thanked them all for supporting the event, and explained the origins of the seminar. He gave special mention to those who had travelled from overseas to participate; Alaska, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, The Netherlands, and Western Australia were all represented. He thanked the numerous sponsors for supporting the event and he hoped the seminar would make a positive contribution to safe piloting in ports worldwide.

Half of the delegates attending were Pilots from ports throughout the United Kingdom, including Bridgewater, Bristol, Clyde, Harwich Haven, Humber, Liverpool, Medway, Milford Haven, The Port of London, Southampton and Tees in addition to those throughout Europe and further afield.

Three 'Workshop events' comprising classroom sessions and a practical session were provided by some of the exhibitors prior to the seminar.

The seminar was split into three 'moderated' sessions, each with two speakers.

The first session - **Portable Pilot Units** – featured two presentations, the first by (Medway) Pilot Chris Griffiths, and the second by retired (Dutch) Pilot Maarten Betlem who is currently their R & D Advisor. (Southampton) Pilot Nigel Allen FNI moderated the consequent interactive session in which plenty of informed debate took place.

*Note. The Presentations are available for download - <http://www.ths.org.uk/content.asp?management=true&page=44>*

*My thanks to Matt Winter for this report and apologies for not being able to print it in full. No doubt it will appear in "SEAWAYS".*

## **Dredgings from the fast-failing Memory of an Electrical Superintendent. By Eddie Hunter**

### **An Early Faux Pas**

I mentioned earlier that I drifted into idyllic employment as an Electrical Superintendent

I filled a port vacancy created by the promotion of the incumbent, a quietly spoken, courteous Scotsman, Andrew Robertson, who stayed with me for the first four weeks of my appointment, ostensibly to hand over the reins but, in reality, I suspect, to ensure that I was up to the job. And, for the first time in my technological life I experienced self-doubt; the man I had been employed to replace was the cleverest Electrical Engineer I had ever met, and that includes present company. Andrew's was a very tough act to follow! But I must have been judged worthy because I was left in charge while he moved on to deservedly higher realms in Company Headquarters.

The Engineering setup in the Port was interesting and exciting. Not to mention the Seagoing Engineering Personnel and the Radio Officers, there were some 180 assorted Tradesmen, managed by Mr Len Tate and led by an exceptionally able Superintendent Marine Engineer, Peter Frost, a very competent Senior Assistant, John Carley, in charge of Passenger Ships, a similarly competent but somewhat shy South African Junior Assistant called Henry Perry, in charge of Cargo Vessels, and me. Nominally we worked from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays, but, as our 13 ships operated round-the-clock, we also operated an on-call system. The two Assistants and I took it in turns to be on-call (24/7, as the Americans say) week about, to deal with any Engineering emergencies, the Superintendent Marine Engineer was always on second call and I was permanently (24/7/12) on-call for all Electrical matters to do with all the Ships and the Port Installations and the huge Container Cranes.

Traditionally, the Duty Engineer also wandered into the office and about nine o'clock on Saturday morning to vet incoming messages from the Ships in case of emergencies.

I should explain that the clearing-house for incoming messages on Saturday mornings was the Senior Assistant's office which was linked by a permanently open door to the Superintendent Marine Engineer's office.

9:15 a.m. on my very first morning as Duty Engineer and I was sitting in the Senior Assistant's office reading through the overnight crop of "works orders" and trying to make sense of some new words such as "facing iron" and "belting." The outer door opened and a distinguished man of advancing years entered. I had seen him only once, when he was chairman of the interviewing panel which appointed me several months earlier. I remembered that he was my ultimate boss, Mr T\*\*\*\*\*, the Shipping and Port Manager, so I stood up at once, as befitted my lowly and humble station.

"Ah, I was looking for an Engineer," he said.

Lowly and humble or not, I thought, "I'm not having this - I mean, I can multiply two by two on a slide rule and get approximately four with the best of them" - so I said, firmly but politely, "Well, sir, you have found one."

He looked at me, vacant, puzzled.

"I am an Engineer," I told him. He still looked perplexed. G\*d, but these Senior Commercial Administrative Types can be slow on the uptake at times.

When comprehension dawned upon him, his problem was simple, a mere blocked toilet in his personal office suite, and a swift telephone call to the Port Workshop was all that was needed to galvanize a Plumber into action.

He thanked me but seemed reluctant to leave. "Settling in all right, are you?"

I assured him that I was and several minutes of getting-to-know-you small talk ensued, during which the Great Man was clearly assessing this newcomer before him while simultaneously taking the opportunity to impress with his own exalted importance. (Accountants and Architects tend to do that, too; have you ever noticed that?) Well, anyhow, I must have passed his preliminary scrutiny for he said, "Look, I don't want you to tell Frost this . . ."

"Er, excuse me, sir," I interrupted instantly, "but I work directly for Mr Frost, and it would not be right for me to have any secrets from him, so, with respect, if there is anything that you feel that he should not know, then you should not tell me . . ."

The Great Man snorted, went rather more red in the face than usual, and left abruptly without another word. "Oh dear," I thought, (or words to that effect) "what a b\*ood\* marvellous start a new career."

However, to the Great Man's credit and eternal memory, for he has since passed on, nothing untoward happened to me as a result and it was many years before I heard anything further about the incident. It happened while I was attending a retirement dinner party given for Mr Frost. The Senior Assistant, John Carley, who had himself moved on to higher things, mentioned my first encounter with the Great Man during pre-dinner drinks.

"How in \*ell did you know about that?" I asked. Both he and Peter Frost grinned.

"The open door between the two offices," Mr Frost prompted.

But I still looked blank, so he continued. "I had gone into the office that morning just in case you needed some help on your first day as Duty Engineer, so I heard every word, and I was as mad as \*ell and you at the time, because I wanted to hear what it was that old T\*\*\*\*\* was so anxious for me not to know."

Perhaps that's why I was so readily accepted in my new post as a member of the Engineering inner circle. And I didn't tell them about Ohm's Law either. Maybe I was being a bit selfish, but I wasn't eager to connive at my own redundancy.

## The Captain's Floating Skateboard

One of our "Hoek Boat" Captains decided that he needed some fresh air and exercise to compensate for his enforced incarceration in a ship with enclosed bridge wings, so he bought one of those floating skateboards - you know the things, a sort of fibreglass plank with a small keel, a mast and a triangular sail in a metal frame. People, usually young men in rubber wet suits, launch these things in shallow water, jump on, haul the sails out of the water by means of brute strength and a handle fixed across the sail frame at about four feet up the mast, lean back against the pressure of an offshore breeze and away they go at a great rate of knots.

Well, our Captain Courageous, a man old enough to know better, donned his rubber suit and drove his car, with his upside-down floating skateboard like an anorexic shark on the roof rack, down to the seafront at Dovercourt Bay. Having previously read the assembly instructions, he made short work of putting the mast and sail on the base and launched the contraption in the shallow water. So far, no problem.

He pushed the skateboard out a bit, clambered aboard and heaved the sail up out of the water. There was a transparent panel in the sail through which the intrepid skateboarder could see where he was going. Our Captain Courageous could manage the craft with ease. The sail filled with the stiff offshore blow, and off he went. And went. And went! He had encountered his first (major) problem - he couldn't find reverse. He must have left either the instructions or his reading glasses on the beach. Before he was aware, our valiant Captain and his skateboard blended into a single colourful dot diminishing in size by the second.

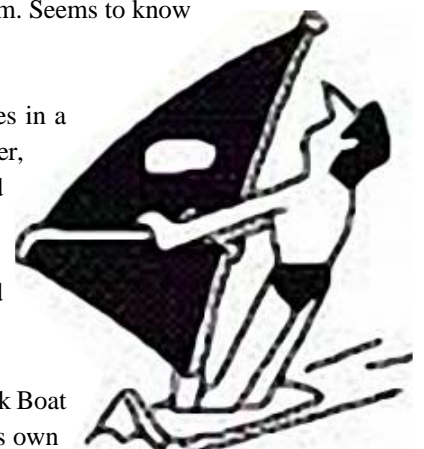
"What the hell's that?" One Coastguard Lookout asked another.

"Just some damned fool windsurfer," the Second Man answered. "I've been watching him. Seems to know what he's doing."

"Not through my binoculars, he doesn't. He's far too far out. He'll be in the shipping lanes in a minute!" Then, into the telephone to the RNLI, "Naze Coastguard here. We've got a windsurfer, about half a mile out and still going. Looks to be in trouble. He's about in line with the old leading lights."

And so our intrepid Captain's one and only wind-powered voyage ended in the indignity and embarrassment of a high speed rescue by the Harwich Inshore Lifeboat.

When the story reached the ears of the Sealink community, one other highly-amused Hoek Boat Captain was heard to remark. "Should have left the silly bugger to it, after all, he knew his own way to Holland!"





# Tambo's Tales

*More reminiscences of Peter's time as a junior officer with Elders & Fyffes, extracted from his memoirs.*

## **Life with Elders & Fyffes Ltd.**

My career with E&F was a most interesting and active part of my foreign going career.

All ports on the eastern coast of the USA were visited, as they were bases of the United Fruit Co. who actually owned E&F.

Many of the UK E&F vessels were time chartered to operate the general cargo and fruit services between Columbian, Honduran, Guatemalan, Panamanian, Costa Rican and Ecuadorian banana ports and to the United States and Europe.

In Puerto Barrios the local political gentry thought that during rebel air raids, they would be safer when battened down in the hold of a British vessel! Local revolutions seemed to be a regular occurrence in those days

It was a docking nightmare to make sense of tidal predictions, as no local Pilots were available.

Passage through the Panama Canal was a common venture, especially when trading up the West Coast from Golfito or Armeulles to Los Angeles (San Pedro). Passengers were always carried and the stowaway situation had to be continually monitored. Some of these uninvited persons carried an assortment of knives, some sharp enough to cut paper when resting on an edge.

All vessels were fitted with anti stowaway focal trimming searchlights, as boarding often accompanied the departure of the Pilot in his rowing boat. This lamp was useful when passing my parent's house at Portishead during the hours of darkness. The illuminations from that searchlight brought daylight into many bedrooms even through the curtains. My parents never told me just how they handled neighbour's complaints!

Our parent Company, which was the United Fruit Company of Boston Mass, were outsourcing their fleet to other flags. Three sister ships were transferred to the management of Elders & Fyffes and I served on two of them "Sulaco" and "Sinaloa" as second officer. They had been known as the "Great White Fleet", trading out of New York with passengers. Having suffered in looks following the removal of most of the passenger accommodation, they appeared elderly in design, but were steam turbo-electric powered vessels of 7600 grt with twin screws and a handy speed 17kts.



**"Sulaco" anchored Port Antonio.**

The final loading was always at Port Antonio where photography was banned due to the stems being carried by women from the road transport. On my first voyage back to Avonmouth, the laxative reaction from having consumed a whole stem of bananas in the ten day passage had dire effects!

We used to launch a lifeboat for a swimming party on Errol Flynn's island, where a large number of Conch shells could be collected. These made colourful decorations to my new gate posts until stolen along with a name board made from Jamaican Mahoa timber. (This is similar in colour to Lignum Vitae).

## **Noon celebrations in the village**

Another Old Pangbournian lived in the village though much older than myself. He had been Marine Superintendent of a London ship-owner (London & Rochester Trading Co.) in the coasting trade. When on leave, we used to meet up in the High Street quite often to adjourn to his house for a "Noon Pink-Gin". In would go the Angustora Bitters, to be swirled around the glass prior to being relieved of any surplus liquid, as he directed it into his fireplace.

He had spent a large sum of money building a new stone masterpiece as a fire surround. However, his efforts were ruined by large blue blobs of colour on the stone facing due to his poor targeting control.

In order to silence his "Inside Adviser's" complaints concerning the ever increasing discolouring of the Purbeck Stone, he asked the Ship Repair firm of Jefferies at Avonmouth to make and install a stainless front around this lounge fireplace. Once fitted, a "Miss" was always indicated by a small "Ping" as the Bitters struck the steel frontage. The Inside Adviser would call out--- "Missed again David".

His daughter was in the WRNS serving in the Drafting Section at Portsmouth. The radio calls between father and daughter were reported to be hilarious, as she always identified herself as being in the "Movement's Section" The response to that was "Sexual or otherwise?"

Father's exploits at purchasing lady's underwear for his Christmas presents almost caused riots amongst sales girls, who had to demonstrate the fitting of the articles in question!

## **The Marine grocery Trade.**

A daily check had to be made by one of the officers as to the condition of the fruit. Regular samples of CO<sub>2</sub> gas in the hatches had to be collected, as any ripening soon increased the levels of this gas. Cargoes were loaded green and stowed upright on stems

in timber bins. Pith temperatures were sampled every day using a large thermometer, and one had to watch for Tarantula spiders as they threw themselves at the light from an electric torch held in one's hand. Any ripe or turning fruit had to be removed, but most cargoes could be transported in safety provided the air delivery temperature was rigidly controlled. A voyage from Jamaica to the Baltic might extend over a period of three weeks. The homeward voyages to European ports took ten days

Have you ever steamed through the Pentland Firth against a flood tide at eighteen knots? This could be a frightening experience following instructions from the Pilot Book believe me! Currents forced the vessel from one side of the Firth over to its opposite side. However this was the shortest route on a great circle passage from the Caribbean.

Discharging bananas in a frozen Helsinki would change the colour of a green banana into a shade of pink!

A cargo for Gothenburg always allowed time ashore to visit the four masted barque "Viking". She was the last Grain Race barque to discharge at Sharpness, and I have many photographs.



***"Reventazon" loading at Tiko. Br. Cameroons 1956.***

### **Dock Strike in Avonmouth.**

There had been a prolonged Dock strike in Avonmouth, and eventually the stoppage was called off at a meeting held on the Grove. Shop Stewards announced that our cargo had been condemned, after which a noisy shout of cheers arose into the still Bristol morning's air at the end of the meeting.

"Changuinola" was forced to jettison 147,000 stems over the side. The rotted fruit had to be frozen to solidify the banana skins, which contained the thick yellow puree within.

When stopped in mid Atlantic to discharge the cargo, it was the only time at sea when Foreign-Going, that my salary was boosted with an overtime payment for driving a winch! The whole jettisoning took three days and the holds were left in a dreadful mess for our crew to clean and clear ready for our arrival back in Jamaica.

Labour difficulties persisted in the port for ages, and at times the gangs of stevedores were supplemented taking Jamaican labour from the Unemployment Exchange in Bristol.

Once the Jamaicans had settled down, the fruit was discharged amidst similar singing and at a pace to that when loaded. The local stevedores could not tolerate a rapid discharge and, "Too fast" was the cry. When loading in a banana port, there was nearly always some form of song coming from the depths of a hold.

### **Cuba**

I was serving on "Sulaco" at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion, being the last British ship to dock in Havana, where I managed to get ashore with the camera.

Having found locals passing food to prisoners through grills in the windows at the Central Prison, which was close to the main town centre, this was recorded on my camera film. I was challenged in every possible language, but escaped to wander along the seafront, where I found President Castro's magnificent Palace together with its fantastic floral frontage overlooking the sea.

On leaving Havana we received a message instructing us to fly our ensign at all times, and to be prepared to identify ourselves. True to form, an American fighter found a white-hulled steamer running along the Cuban coast. Ha! He must have thought this must be a Comecon vessel with a red flag hanging down vertically in the following wind. The Pilot was determined to sight the port of registry on our old fashioned counter stern, being forced to fly almost at water level under the counter to achieve his objective before reaching for the sun.

Later we steamed into Santiago Harbour on the Cuban South Coast.

There is a narrow gap in the cliffs with deep water, and this opens up into a very large bay with the jetty adjacent the town. Our time there was not enjoyable as all the seamen were continually being searched for cigarettes. One was even observed diving into the dock to escape bullets after some argument on the quay. Everywhere visited indicated poverty and the antique selection of cars or taxis had to be seen to be believed. Great caution was exercised as this visit was during the Bay of Pigs invasion at the Western end of the island.



***President Fidel Castro's Palace***

## **Daddy's Coming Home**

The British & Commonwealth Shipping Company Limited was formed, in 1956, by the merger of two great shipping companies – Clan Line Steamers Ltd. and The Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company. The fleet of conventional passenger vessels, dry cargo ships, tankers, bulk carriers, refrigerated carriers and newsprint carriers -109 ships in all - traded world-wide but, by the mid 70's it was obvious that the Union-Castle passenger vessels could no longer compete with the jumbo jet and, in October 1977 the Southampton arrival of the mailship "Southampton Castle" marked the end of the South African passenger and mail service. The introduction of containerisation saw the decline of the conventional cargo carrier and, by 1983, the "Castles" and the "Clans" had disappeared.

Since then, throughout the United Kingdom, reunions of the employees of "B&C" are convened annually in Liverpool, Glasgow, Southampton and, more recently, Eastbourne, and they invariably attract a wide cross-section of those who were employed ashore or afloat, in whatever capacity.

Some years ago, the Southampton reunion was attended by a young man whose name did not appear on the list of previous attendees and- after being made welcome – he confided that he was "here to find out about my Father – I really never knew him". His father had been Master of a cargo vessel and had died aboard his ship in a foreign port when the man was a teenager and he was hoping to meet someone who had served with his father and who could tell him" what sort of a man he was". Fortunately, there were several present who had sailed with his father and they were able to assure him that he had been a well respected and popular shipmaster. Later, the young man told me that, as a child, his memories of his father centred around an injunction, to him and his younger brother, from his mother to the effect that " Now – Daddy will be home tomorrow and he will not have had much sleep so you must be very quiet and allow him to get some rest". Understandably, this put a bit of a "damper" on Daddy's home-coming and their relationship was never as warm as it might have been. At the reunion he was overjoyed to learn that his father had been well liked and respected and, he and his brother have attended every reunion since to enjoy the opportunity to talk about the man of whom they knew so little.

More recently, another man appeared and he too was seeking news of his father who was a well-known Master in Union-Castle. He told us that his attendance at boarding school meant that he seldom saw his father during his short leaves and that these leaves seldom coincided with his school holidays. Again, he was overjoyed to learn that his father had enjoyed the affection and respect of those who served with him but it was sad to hear that, on retirement, his father "sat in a chair and seldom spoke of his life at sea"

Undoubtedly, the periods of long separation created by seafaring, impose strains on the relationship between the seafarer and his close family and instances like those above are by no means uncommon. Long voyages dictate that wives are forced to make their "own" lives and many build up a social life (often with the wives of other seafarers) based on the realisation that they are almost a "single parent." Understandably, when their husband comes home they resent having to depart from their social routine and fall-in with his every suggestion. Equally understandably, the husband is unwilling to join in his wife's social round – unless he has the good fortune to meet another seafarer with whom he can exchange reminiscences!

Children too may find it difficult to bond with the infrequent visitor who walks through the door, disrupts their routine, monopolises the television – and sits on "pussy's chair"!

Frequently, on retirement, the long service seafarer may find that he has very few friends and is entirely dependent on the comradeship afforded by seafarers clubs and associations.

Life at sea – particularly on ships undertaking long voyages –"makes seafarers reliant on their own skills and resources when faced with problems" and they are often reluctant to seek help from others –other than in extreme circumstances of danger to their ship and those who serve in it. Few people ashore can appreciate or understand the demands and sacrifices created by today's trading patterns in the often hostile environment of the oceans of the world and the seafarer finds it difficult to talk to those who have never experienced them.

Today, few ships stay in port long enough to allow crew members to enjoy a run ashore – provided that the harsh dictates of the International Ship and Port Security Regulations do not preclude them from setting a foot ashore – and periods of shipboard engagement for those serving afloat tend to get longer and longer. Smaller crews (giving rise to fatigue), a wide range of nationalities and cultures, commercial pressure and uncertainty of employment are but a few of the other factors detracting from the quality of a seafarers life and the current trend to make ships "dry" means that the onboard social life created by the lounge is being replaced by the closed cabin door and a DVD player. The feeling of isolation and loneliness can be greatly overcome when crew members have access to satellite communication systems enabling them to speak to family members on a regular basis and to keep up-to-date with their news- and to receive photographs of family events. Recently, on a cruise ship a young man proudly displayed photographs of his seven months old daughter: He had never actually seen her but he regularly received photographs showing her development –and she had "spoken" to him twice on the telephone! Unfortunately, not every ship is fitted with the communication equipment but it IS becoming more and more available and many Seafarers' Centres throughout the UK and elsewhere, are fitting up-to-date computers incorporating video cameras.





## THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE



THE BAND OF THE HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Thursday 16 June 2011

7.15 pm for 7.30 pm

Preacher

The Reverend David Potterton

Principal Chaplain of the Sailors' Society

Everyone is welcome to attend this  
historic service

### **Gone Aloft**

#### **Philip Le Voguer**

Philip, a long term member of the Club and Past Chairman of the Membership Committee, went aloft on 7 March 2011, aged 91.

#### **Michael M J Plumridge 1939 - 2011**

Fellow Cachalots were saddened to learn of the death of Mike Plumridge, who went aloft on 10 April 2011, following a long illness.

A submariner, who later specialised in anti-submarine warfare, Mike became the inaugural secretary of the newly formed Solent Branch of the Nautical Institute in 1974 and made it his mission to bring together Royal Navy and Merchant Navy personnel in the area. He performed this task with typical enthusiasm and efficiency, organising meetings alternately at RN and MN establishments, thus setting the precedent in the formative years of the branch.

Having achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander, Mike's last naval appointment before retiring in 1984 was in naval intelligence in London. He then transferred his considerable professional talents full time to the Nautical Institute, becoming firstly Assistant, then shortly afterwards Deputy Secretary at Head Office. His responsibilities included the branch network, membership, fellowship and technical matters. He established branches in Cyprus, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Canada, New Zealand, Tasmania and Ukraine (the latter presenting the newly retired naval officer with unique problems, Ukraine at the time being a recently emerged Soviet Bloc country!).

Although he retired as Deputy Secretary in 1998, Mike continued work on behalf of the Institute and three years later completed "A Nautical Odyssey: The History of the Nautical Institute". This meticulously researched book traces the origins of the Institute over its first thirty years and continues to be in demand as a work of reference.

He will be sorely missed by the international community of mariners, not only for his untiring efforts on their behalf, but for his sociability and fellowship.

Our sincere condolences go to his wife Elisabeth and their family.

Leslie Morris

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The Club room is currently open **two** days a week, 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.

### **Dates for your Diary**

Thu June 16	Shipping Festival, Winchester Cathedral
Fri July 8	Club Supper, Club room
Sat Sept 3	Curry Lunch, Kuti's
Sun Sept 4	MNA Memorial Service Holyrood
Fri Sept 9	Club Supper, Club room
Sat Oct 8	Autumn Dinner Dance RAF Yacht Club, Hamble
Sat Oct 15	Curry Lunch Tba
Fri Nov 4	Harpooners' Dinner Club room
Wed Nov 9	Sea Pie tickets on Sale
Sat Dec 3	Christmas Lunch King's Court
Sat Dec 10	Christmas Dinner, King's Court

**Cut-off date for the next edition:  
19th August 2011**