

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.5

September 2002

## Captain's Log

Once again I am delighted that your Editor has given me the opportunity to acquaint all you Members with the activities in which the Cachalots have been involved over the last few months.

I shall start off with my visit to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch on a very wet afternoon in May. The purpose was not to confess to any grounding of the Shieldhall or even of my canoe. I was received in a most friendly manner by the Chief Inspector, Rear Admiral John Lang, although he had not the faintest idea why I wanted to see him. In fact, my mission was to endeavour to enlist him as our Principal Guest at the 2003 Sea Pie Supper. Some of you may know that he has since gone into retirement (at least from the MAIB!). We believed that it would be ideal to have him reply on behalf of the Guests while his experiences of all that can go wrong at sea were still fresh in his mind. He is known to be an accomplished speaker. We had quite a long and enjoyable chat. One of the less well known sides to his job was the support he gave to the grieving families of the Galloway fishermen lost off the Isle of Man when their vessel foundered a couple of years ago.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>. May we had our Quiz Night and Curry Supper. This appeared to be very well received by all present. We were divided into teams of around 6 people and competition was fierce. In fact I was glad Mavis and I were in the Sea Staff Captain's team as he proved a particularly fierce competitor! Once again the curries varied in strength and constituents and included as usual a vegetarian curry. If you don't like curry don't be put off in future as you can always specify a non-curry option at the time of booking.

We entertained the Watch Ashore to Lunch in the Club Room on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. May. The numbers were not particularly large on either side but nevertheless a convivial time appeared to be had. This event helps to maintain interest and cement relations with the wider maritime community around the Port.

I suppose the Club's Jubilee Dinner at the Royal Air Force Yacht Club must have been our social highlight of the summer so far. The location was right on the banks of the River Hamble on a beautiful early summer's evening, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup>. June, 2002. It coincided with the official start of the Queen's Jubilee but we tried to make the evening as informal as possible consistent with honouring Her Majesty with an appropriate toast. The staff at the Yacht Club looked after the 64 of us really well and we can say we enjoyed a very happy evening.

The following evening was the Southampton Civic Seafarers' Service in St. Mary's Church. I represented the Club at that.

A week later I was once again involved in big eats. This was the Annual Ladies' Banquet of the Warsash Association. Although I was not a member of that organisation my presence was required as an 'enabler'. They held the event at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club so they needed a member of that Club to be their sponsor. The Captain of the Cachalots is always made an Honorary Member of the RSYC for the duration of his year. Last year David Carr did the honours for the same occasion; but then he was also a member of the Warsash Association. To square things off, they decided to make me an Honorary Member of the Warsash Association too! (As an old School of Navigation cadet I was eligible but had never belonged). Anyway, to save any further complications they decided to double me up as

Guest Speaker. I tried to point out that as I was now a member how could I also be a Guest? If you're now confused just think how I felt! Anyway it was a very pleasant evening with good company, friendly service, fine cuisine and an accomplished speaker (no one who reads this was there!).

The evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>. June was the Cocktail Party and 'Beating the Retreat' at HMS DRYAD at Southwick near Fareham. A huge marquee was the venue for the cocktail party. I was lucky to meet up with June & Reg Kelso as it was not particularly easy to break into conversations. However, we noticed that the female naval officers present were also slightly isolated so we plied them with questions about their careers. This helped to break the ice. The Beating of the Retreat consisted of the Royal Marine Band countermarching backwards and forwards on the lawns in front of the flagmast while playing some very fine music. The finale took place after the lowering of the Ensign, when the Band Master presented the Band to the Captain at the salute before marching off into the twilight.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>. June I attended the British & International Seafarers' Service Annual Service at the Avenue United Reformed Church in Southampton (Opposite the Cowherds). This was very well conducted by the Rev. Bill MacRae with contributions from others in the organisation but it was rather thinly attended. We have once again suggested that BISS tries to pick a different date from the next item.

The Winchester Shipping Festival also took place on the 20<sup>th</sup>. June with a rehearsal the previous week. It was a most successful evening in spite of all our doubts about the attendance of the various uniformed parties and worries over the financial viability of the event. The Hampshire Youth Band entertained us beautifully, not only in the Cathedral but also at the refreshments afterwards in the Deanery Garden. Once again we were blessed with a sunny evening. One interesting sideline was the presence inside the Cathedral during the rehearsal of two lads of about seventeen, wearing trainers and backward facing baseball caps. It became obvious that they were busy 'casing the joint'. When the Canon asked them to leave, their replies were really very colourful and it then became obvious that they had been sniffing something that was not only not doing a lot of good to their thinking processes but which would require considerable enterprise to fund!

The next airing was another Retreat being Beaten, this time on the 25<sup>th</sup>. June at Marchwood, where the Boatsteerer and myself and our wives were among those entertained by the Royal Logistics Corps. Their Band was made up from volunteers with other jobs in the army but in spite of being part timers they were very entertaining. It was a delightful way to spend a summer's evening.

My next duty was on a sadder note as I attended the funeral of Peter Richardson at Portchester Castle on the 9<sup>th</sup>. July. There were several of us there from the Club who had known and admired Peter in our different ways. I last saw him at the Winchester Shipping Festival when he invited Mavis and me to his annual Cowes Week Lunch at his Island home. Alas, it was not to be.

The Boatsteerer and myself were invited, along with our wives, to one of the Queen's Jubilee Garden parties at Buckingham Palace on 30<sup>th</sup>. July. This was, of course, a big hat job. Not only did I have to pay for a big hat, we needed somewhere to put it on. This meant a night at the Merchant Navy Hotel during its last gasp before it closes in October. Our claim to fame is that Mavis had been talking with a man who then got to speak to the Queen!

We did very well with the cucumber sandwiches and fancy cakes, along with the cups of tea. Mind you, it's all self-service, even at the Palace. The Gardens were very beautiful and the organisation superb. The only thing that rankled with Lionel was that by the time we realised that we could have had ice creams we were too late.

It has now become a tradition for the s.s. Shieldhall to take a party to Cowes Roads for the Firework Display on the final night of Cowes Week. The ship's passenger certificate has now been upgraded to carry 150. This year the Cachalots provided 60 members and guests for the trip so we had the largest single party on board. Supper was included in the tickets and a jazz band played on deck during the daylight. Unfortunately, we did experience some rain but the band was able to play under the shelter of the boat deck and it was dry throughout the magnificent fireworks. We had a wonderful view and the Cowes Harbour Master provided us with our best anchorage ever. We were close enough to feel the detonations booming through the hull. I'm afraid I was unable to come down on deck to mingle because there was a very strong spring tide running throughout so the engines were on instant notice as well as having extra anchor cable out. As usual we had vessels secured to us. Some of you may have wondered why we had to be so late returning to Southampton. I should explain that for operational reason the ship always needs to lie starboard side to the berth - head upstream. High Water was not until 0018 hours on Saturday morning so we had to dawdle to let the flood tide diminish sufficiently to let us come alongside in a reasonably gentlemanly fashion. Anyway, I understand that most of you were impressed with the evening so hopefully we can repeat it next year.

I also ought to mention that two recently recruited members of the Club are Mike King who is the Business Manager of the Shieldhall and Barrie Eagles who is Chairman of the Solent Steam Packet Company Ltd. In addition, your Editor, who has just retired from the Southampton Pilot Service, has obtained a Pilotage Exemption Certificate for the vessel. This means that he has been able to join the team of people who are qualified to act as Master. He has recently completed his first passage in command of Shieldhall, bringing the ship back from Shoreham.

Understandably, things are much quieter just now but I shall be involved in a warship visit early in September. The Autumn social calendar starts again on the 21<sup>st</sup> September with one of our Curry Lunches. Why not ring up, book yourselves in and follow up after it with a visit to either The Saints or St. Michael of West Quay. Oh, and don't forget the Club bar is open for lunch and drinks, Tuesday to Friday. Friday can be a bit crowded but the other days are more relaxed. We look forward to seeing you there.

To end on a note of optimism, I wish the Cricket Section the best of luck in their final match of the season against Winchester College at the beginning of September.  
Ian Stirling, 2002 Club Captain

### **The Role of the Master Mariner Two Centuries Ago.**

Presented by Prof. Sarah Palmer

A joint meeting of the SMMC and the Royal Institute of Navigation to be held in the Club-room at 1900 on Tuesday 29th October. Members, Associates and their guests are welcome. Prior registration is not required and there is no charge. Drinks available from 1830.

### **Normandy Weekend**

The list has now closed for this event and 31 members will be visiting the Bayeux Tapestry and/or the invasion beaches and a Calvados distillery. Further details will be promulgated to those involved shortly.

### **Mariners of Wight**

On Wednesday 9th October the Club will be hosting twelve or so members of The Mariners of Wight to lunch. They will be received initially at the Club-room but we may move elsewhere for lunch itself. Members will be responsible for their own mess bills which are expected to be in the region of £12. Further details will be posted on the notice board.

We are, in return, invited to join them for lunch on Friday 29th November on the Isle of Wight at a hotel overlooking the Solent at Egypt point. A similar number of our members are expected to attend this event which for the past two years has been enjoyed by those intrepid enough to brave Southampton Water.

### **Last Night of the Proms**

Early application is advised for this popular event at Tidworth as the tickets, priced £15.50 are going fast.

### **AUTUMN BALL** 26th October

Tickets, priced £29, are now available for our Autumn Ball at the Hilton Hotel at Chilworth on Saturday 26th October.

The menu is:

*Cream of Watercress Soup*  
*Herb crusted Rack of Lamb*  
*Tiramisu Bavarois*  
*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.

Accommodation is available at a reduced rate for any of you wishing to stay over. Bed and breakfast at £70 for a double and £50 single.

We have extended an invitation to the members of the Southampton Royal Naval Officers' Association to join us on this occasion.



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