

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 57

September 2015

Captain's Log

To start with, news of my knee: I do not require a second operation which is great but I am now heavily into Physio rehab. I am quite active, but not back to sport yet except a little bit of sailing, however not fully in the manner I would like. Very glad to be rid of the brace, which was so well photographed by Terry in the last issue of the Cachalot !!!

Since the last news letter, we have had the Shipping Festival Service at Winchester which, as usual, was well attended. A little hiccup with the main VIPs arriving simultaneously, but nothing we couldn't deal with. Reading in the Cathedral is always an honour, but I do have to say that at the time I did treat the steps up to the lectern with great respect. The reception in the Deanery gardens was as splendid as ever and grateful thanks to all of you that made this event happen so well.

I unfortunately was unable to attend the recent club supper, but I have been assured that Captain Morris, in my absence, hosted this well received event admirably and I was disappointed to have missed the presentation by Dr Win Harwood.

One of my recent highlights though was attending a reception in Portsmouth aboard the German warship FGS KARLSRUHE. Part of the function of this reception was to present to the German nation a propeller that had been recovered (illegally) from the wreck of the submarine U-8 which sank whilst also trying to visit Portsmouth, but maybe not with such peaceful intentions in 1915 !!

The propeller sat behind my desk for about a year prior to this handover and it was open to anyone to have the propeller provided they could carry it to the front door (my desk is

on the third floor). No one was up to the challenge and in fact many thought it was screwed to the wall as they could not even make it move, let alone lift it.

I don't just deal with dodgy ship owners I also help to preserve the UK's maritime heritage. I hope by the next edition of the Cachalot I will be able to bring some more information about interesting artefacts that we have recovered from thieves.

Jeremy Smart

Captain, Southampton Master Mariners' Club

2015 Bursary Award

The Management Committee is very pleased to announce that two Southampton Sea Cadets have been the recipients of the '**Captain Peter Marriott Bursary Award**'. During August they will both be sailing onboard the new 'TS ROYALIST' during its maiden year in service. The planned voyage will be in the Dartmouth to Plymouth area and for both of them this will be the first experience of offshore training.

Both cadets come highly recommended by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant (SCC) M Lampert RNR, not only for their aptitude and ability in specific areas, one boating the other an active member of the unit band, but the fact they take a keen part in all aspects of unit life and volunteer for outside and public duties.

The bursary award for the cadets has covered approximately 55% of the course fee, a deposit from the parents secured the places onboard and the remainder has been raised by the cadets themselves. The award will be included in their Sea Cadets Life Folder, as an achievement recognised as part of their curriculum vitae.

The Committee unanimously agree that these two cadets fulfil our objective to "encourage and foster the younger generations interest in the maritime world" and that they will be excellent ambassadors for Southampton Sea Cadets and the Cachalots. We look forward to reading the report of their voyage by the cadets in a forthcoming 'Cachalot' article.

Boatsteerer's Locker

Fellow Cachalots

Since our last Newsletter your Management Committee has been active, first preparing for the Shipping Festival Service in Winchester Cathedral which was a great success, thanks to Paul Leece, Ian Thomson and the Sidemen and not forgetting the Club Members and their guests who supported this event. The ladies excelled themselves with the quality and quantity of food they provided for the refreshments afterwards and our thanks for the organisation must go to Carolyn Lee.

Incidentally do we have a wood turner amongst our members as it was noted at the Service that the wooden button (*truck*) on top of one of the shipping company house flag pole is missing.

Looking further ahead we are already planning our next Festival Service in 2016.

Plans are slowly going ahead for our Sea Pie Supper on 5th Feb. 2016 and we are hoping to obtain as our Principal Guest one of the Masters of the 'Queen Mary 2' - tickets go on sale on 12th November.

I'm slowly getting into my role as Boatsteerer and one member taking pity on my wait for the promised bottle of malt whisky presented me with a miniature bottle to keep my spirits up.

I'm still working on the Emergency Fire & Evacuation Plans for your safety and we have successfully had serviced the fire extinguishers, Intruder Alarm system, all electrical sockets and tested the emergency lighting system, smoke detectors and fire alarms.

I've been thinking of trying to encourage more of our members to come to the Club on a Thursday Lunch time and I will investigate my Locker for ideas (not exotic pole or lap dancers) to put before your committee.

The Entertainment Committee under Peter Grant has been busy making preparations for our Club Supper and organising a day trip to Portsmouth Dockyard followed by Dinner at the 'Royal Naval Club and Royal Albert Yacht Club' and also preparing for our Trafalgar Night celebrations.

The Annual Merchant Navy Memorial Service is at Noon on Sunday 30th August at Holy Rood Church, Southampton and although not mandatory your presence would be most appreciated.

Finally somehow in one of my more lucid moments I reluctantly agreed to give a talk on life in France at our next Club Supper in September which caused Margaret my long suffering wife to exclaim 'Oh! God' as she reached for the sherry bottle.

Ken Dagnall

Portsmouth Dockyard visit

&

Dinner at the Royal Naval Club & Royal Albert YC

Thursday 24th September

We currently have the required minimum numbers for the group ticket for the six attractions in the Dock Yard and the exclusive guided tour of the *Warrior*.

We also have over thirty signed up for the dinner.

You can opt for either or both but

We really need more of your support .

The intended programme is that we muster at the ticket office at Victory Gate at 1100 and proceed to *HMS Warrior* for a 60-90 minute exclusive guided tour (min 20 people). Members will then be free to visit whichever of the other six attractions they wish (self guided). The six are:

Mary Rose Museum, HMS Victory, HMS Warrior, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Actionstations (Historic Boathouse No.6), HMS Monitor M.33.

If you are unable to make the rendezvous at that time you can pick up your ticket at the office on arrival, but you will miss the tour of the *Warrior*.

Alternatively you can buy similar individual tickets online which gives access to the dock yard for a year. We are unable to pre-purchase such tickets as a group. Group tickets are valid for that day only.

For the evening function we can muster at the RNC & RAYC from 1800 for a 1830'ish silver service dinner. The chosen menu is:

*Mushroom & Stilton Ramekin
Char-Grilled Pork Loin Steak, Black
Pudding, Apple Sauce & Onion Gravy
Blackberry & Apple Fruit Crumble
Coffee & Mints*

(A vegetarian option will be available)

The RNC&RAYC dress code for gentlemen is Jacket and tie. There is no such code for ladies as we consider our Ladies smart enough anyway.

The Dockyard visit will be **£28** per head and the Club Supper **£30**.

There is no restriction on numbers and guests are welcome.



Buffet Supper

A Club Buffet Supper has been arranged on
Friday 11th September
in the Club room.

To complement a excellent buffet from John Davis,
our Boatsteerer has undertaken to give a talk:

"Out - LBW in France"

There is just one way to find out what that could
possibly be about - sign on!

The cost of the buffet will be
£18 per head
and numbers limited to **40**

Ladies that Lunch

With the increasing popularity of the lunch, it's back to the
private upstairs bar at the



on the corner of Oxford and Latimer Streets.

1200 for 1230
on

Friday 23rd October

The proffered menu may be slightly different to last time and
will be circulated to those expressing an interest before the
event.

The price, to include a soft drink and a tip,
remains the same, at:

£11.50

Guests are welcome and names and payment should be
directed to Lesley Odd at the time of booking:

lesley.odd@btinternet.com

Mob: 07730 586073

Sea Pie Supper 2016

Friday 5th February
St. Mary's Stadium

The last Sea Pie Supper, held for the first time at
St. Mary's Stadium in February, was deemed to
be a great success. The new venue ticked all our
boxes with one exception: the capacity.

It was a sell out last time and we anticipate
that it will be again.

Tickets, to members only, go on sale on

12th November

on a first come basis (that also means first paid)

Prices held as before:

Members £52, guests £60

Trafalgar Dinner

A Club Supper is to be held
in the Club Room

On

Friday 16th October

With a theme to commemorate Trafalgar Day.

Admiral Sir Alan Massey K.C.B., C.B.E.

will give the toast to the

'Immortal Memory of Lord Nelson'

French Onion Soup

Roast Beef

Tropical Fruit Mousse

with fresh Pineapple & Grenadine

Catering by John Davis

Black Tie

£27 per head

numbers limited to **38** on a first come basis.



Curry Lunch



Another Curry Lunch has been booked at Kuti's in
Oxford Street, such is our satisfaction with the food
and service there. Last one for this year.

Join us if you can.

Saturday 14th November, 1200 for 1230.

Price held at **£12.50** per head.

Christmas Events

The Christmas Luncheon

will be held

In the Seafarers' Centre

On

Saturday 5th December

1200 for 1230

£24 per head tbc

The Christmas Dinner

will be held at

King's Court Masonic Centre

On

Saturday 12th December

1900 for 1930

£30 per head tbc

Black Tie

Traditional Christmas Fare



Outside Winchester Cathedral at the Shipping Festival Service, Club Captain Jeremy Smart, Staff Captain Leslie Morris and Commodore Robert Dorey, R.F.A.



Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq. inspects the Colour and Flag Parties. Capt. Smart and CPO Ken Turley, Marshal of Parade, in attendance.

At a buffet lunch held in the Club room on the 25th June, the Club Captain presented a cheque for £3882 to Steve Hulbert of the Southampton Seafarers' Centre. This was the money raised by the raffle held at the Sea Pie Supper in February.

Ashley Jenkins and Nick Jeffery, members of the Southampton Shipowners Association, who had generously donated the prize on that evening, were in attendance.

Post Captain Ian Odd presented a cheque for £640 to Anne Downs from Cancer Research UK, that being the sum raised for his Captain's Charity during his year in office.

Visiting members of our shipmates, the Merchant Mariners of Wight, were also entertained



Lest we forget

Lloyd's List Viewpoint 27 July 15 with permission of LL and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey

There was a brief exchange of correspondence in the London *Daily Telegraph* the other day sparked by a reproofing letter from one Peter Calkin, who deplored the lack of any mention of the Merchant Navy in “the welter of commemorations” for various battles and wars in which these civilian seafarers had been involved.

Perhaps he had been reading the words of the Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, Captain Jim Conybeare, who noted the “grave error” of the BBC for their commentators’ inability to make any mention of the Merchant Navy in their broadcast of the ANZAC Day commemoration from the Cenotaph, on the centenary of the Gallipoli landings.

My old friend Captain Brian McManus, who was an apprentice aboard a ship which was involved in the D Day landings and who regularly attends the inter-service commemorations where these elderly participants meet, also sometimes complains about the lack of recognition for the role of the MN in many such events. It is if the role of this “fourth arm of defence” had been airbrushed from history, even though their ships and their crews were exposed to grave danger every day that the hostilities in both wars endured.

The year 1982 and the Falklands war should not be beyond the comprehension and memory of many, but here too, with the exception of the role of P&O’s *Canberra* and Cunard’s *QE2*, the merchant ships and their complements “taken up from trade” tend to be forgotten. We commemorated the Battle of Waterloo this month, but nobody mentioned how the British army got to that field in Belgium, before the Shuttle under the Channel had been thought of.

Maybe we shouldn’t be surprised, in an era when history is poorly taught and very selective, that such gaps in public consciousness arise. I was reading a report in a newspaper last week about a poll which discovered quite amazing ignorance among teenagers about the Battle of Britain. Even regular appearances by the surviving Spitfires and Hurricanes at air shows around the country gave those questioned few clues about even the century in which the conflict took place. Perhaps nobody was allowed to look it up on Google.

Indiana is an American state, with no coastline and a very long way from the sea. But just this month, when we were grumbling about the way our merchant navy was forgotten, its Republican Congresswoman Susan W Brooks was in Washington, introducing legislation that would award the Congressional Gold Medal to “Merchant Mariners serving during World War II”. She is also a co-sponsor of a bill that would provide the surviving WWII merchant mariners, who have not hitherto enjoyed “veteran’s benefits” with a one-off \$25,000 benefit, which may have been a very long time coming, but will doubtless be very welcome to these elderly folk. So perhaps there is a lesson from America that ought to resonate nearer to home.

Why does the vital role of the merchant marine always get shoved aside and ignored as past victories (and defeats) are given due honour? I suppose one answer is that while in the UK there is still an army, navy and air force, which enjoys considerable public esteem and can make a noise about its history, the merchant navy effectively disappeared in the 1980s, paying off its British manpower as it closed down, or sidled off to convenient flags and cheap foreign crews. With this generation of seafarers, forced to seek a living as mercenary mariners under different flags, the continuity and shared sense of history was diluted, if not lost. I know there has been what we like to describe as a “renaissance” of the Red Ensign under the tonnage tax regime, but most British ships these days seem to be run by people from the “labour supplying countries”, with Brits about as rare as hens’ teeth. So when there is some egregious failure to afford recognition to what the MN did in the past, it will tend to go uncorrected, unless it is picked up by somebody willing to fire off a verbal reproof.

Maybe the Heritage Lottery Fund might make a difference? This is not me being cynical again, but a reference to an HLF bid by The Wellington Trust which looks after the Hon. Company of Master Mariners’ headquarters ship, moored on the London Embankment at Temple. One of the objectives of the Trust is to educate the nation about the history of the Merchant Navy and it is hoped to develop part of the ship into a permanent public exhibition which will inform people about what the MN did (and does) for the United Kingdom, in peace and war. The grant, if successful, will facilitate this development. There is already a regular schools programme and a number of smaller exhibitions, the latest being on the role of hospital ships in war, have demonstrated the feasibility of the scheme.

The ship itself may well be soon on the move, a voyage of 50m downstream, to a new mooring, to make way for the Garden Bridge which awaits planning permission and which will link North and South banks of the Thames. It is anticipated that the ship will then be ideally situated to capitalise on the “footfall” which will flock to this new horticultural attraction. So in the future, when there is a commemoration of some famous event, there will be less excuse for ignorance about the role of commercial shipping and how merchant mariners made it all possible.

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Fifty Years on Salt Water

Episode 12: After the War Crime Trial in Leipzig, Charlie Chapman resumes his career with Union Castle. In East Africa he tries his hand at hunting and shooting but there seemed to be more action back on board where wild animals destined for zoos were commonly carried as deck cargo.

After two months on staff duty, relieving officers so they could go on leave, I joined the *Garth Castle* for the second time, this time not as a hospital ship, but on a voyage to Durban in South Africa and back by way of the Suez Canal.

Nothing unusual occurred on this voyage, except in the Gulf of Aden, we came across an Arab Dhow with about fifteen people on board. They were in a bad way, as they had run out of water and food and were nearly starving. We gave them quite a lot of both and they soon made short work of some of it, even before it had all been put aboard. We told them their position and course to Aden, where they were bound. A passenger acted as interpreter.

At the end of this voyage I again went on relief work, for three months, before joining the *Comrie Castle* for a trip to Mauritius and back to London. This was also an uneventful voyage and on our return to London the cargo was discharged and, like several other ships at that time, she was layed up. We went down to a small place called Tollesbury, on the River Blackwater in Essex, where two more Castle ships were moored. By this time several officers had returned from War Service in the Royal Navy and, owing to the number of ships sunk by enemy action, there was quite a surplus of officers as several ships captured from the Germans were dispensed with at the same time. I was one of the fortunate ones, I was actually on shore duties for 13 months before going on a deep sea voyage again; I think that was a record.

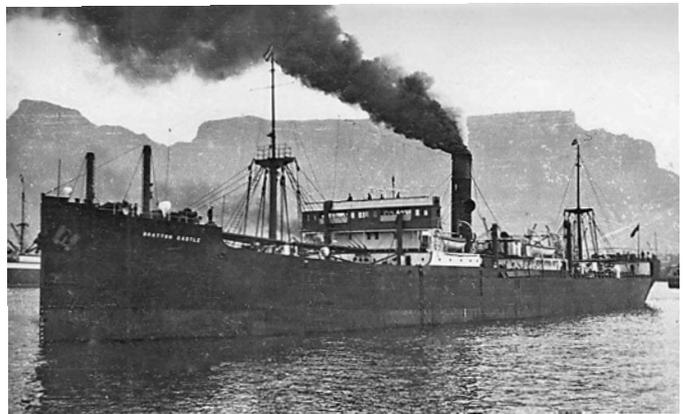
But, as I have stated before, all good things come to an end. I was appointed Chief Officer of the *Bampton Castle*, loading a general cargo for South Africa, via the Suez Canal, calling at nineteen ports, loading and discharging at each one, picking up cargo for other ports as we went along. This was no easy problem to organise, as it was difficult not to cover up other cargo.

We spent a fortnight in Port Sudan in August, discharging railway carriage bogies and rails. The heat was terrific, so bad the crew could not work around the decks in the daytime; any odd jobs had to be done in the early morning or late evening. It definitely was the hottest time of the year in the Red Sea.

Having called at Aden, Mombasa and Zanzibar, we eventually arrived at Beira, where we were to stay at least one week. During our stay a shooting expedition was arranged to go up the Pangwe River, the party consisting of the Captain, third officer, wireless operator and myself. A motor launch was supplied, with two natives to look after us and take us to a hunting place. We travelled by day and tied up alongside the river bank when it came in dark.

Having seen several hippos and crocodiles on our way up, we didn't feel too happy, sleeping in this small launch. During the night we could hear splashes close to us, also loud noises from the hippos. A dense fog set in before morning, and we felt cold and chilly, with no means to get warm. Things improved when the sun got up, and after the fog cleared we landed with our rifles and started to look for any game that could be in the neighbourhood. We saw very little, a few buck and antelope jumping around, but we could not get near them. Presently we saw a buck, with a fine pair of horns, with its head showing above the grass, it was evidently lying down. We followed the African boatman to stalk upwind, and decided the Captain should have the first shot. When in range, the Captain took his shot, the head shook and the buck did not run away so we all went to see what he had shot. We never reached it, the buck was dead and must have been for days, the stench was something awful and we could not get near it.

We walked quite a few miles without seeing anything. I foolishly went into the long grass to see if anything was hiding there. I suddenly came across something lying in the grass, only about twenty feet away. I was scared stiff and, before I could come to, it got up and was lost in the long grass. Fortunately it was a large buck, but it could easily have been a lion, as we were in lion country, and I realised how foolish I was, walking in the tall grass, and decided to get out. On the way out I saw two objects bobbing up and down a little way off and aimed my rifle at one of them, when I suddenly realised it was the captain's head, with the boatman, walking outside the long grass. I did not mention it to him. As we had to get back before dark we left mid afternoon, our total bag, nothing. We had several shots at crocodiles on the way back, as they were basking on the river banks, but doubt very much if we hit any. We were glad to get back to the old *Bampton* and have a good meal and a decent night's sleep. This little expedition did not put us off hunting.



A picture of the *Bampton Castle* could not be found, but here is her sister ship, the *Bratton Castle*, in familiar surroundings. Built in 1920, they were 412 ft loa and 6698 tons

At the weekend we decided to go up the other river, the Busie, this time taking a ships lifeboat, and organising the trip ourselves. Six of us went, supplied with food and blankets as we intended staying out all night, and hunting again the second day. We stayed out alright, but not where we intended. We got stuck on a sandbank, on a falling tide, and dared not get out to lighten the boat up, as there were several crocodiles not far off. We tried with the oars, to push her off, but no luck. In the early hours of the morning, the boat floated, and we drifted around with the tide, as we had not got an anchor. The ebb tide was fairly strong, and we could not pull against it, and found ourselves being carried down to the sea. Fortunately, a small steamer took us in tow and took us back to our ship. None the worse for our adventure, not having fired a shot, our bag was again, nothing. On our previous excursion I was armed with an old Martini rifle, which only held one cartridge, and the empty case stuck each time the rifle was fired. The only thing I had to pull the case out with was the front flap of my gold hunter watch. When I look back on this, I just wonder how foolish a man can get, especially if we had wounded an animal. I still wonder why we went out looking for animals, as we had an assortment of about sixty animals on our decks as cargo, including lions, gnus, monkeys, baboons Colobus monkeys, several types of antelope and a python.

After a week we thought the python ought to be fed, so we took him out of his box, where he was peacefully sleeping, half a dozen men holding about two foot each of his body for safety. Then put some beef into its mouth, and broke some raw eggs on to it, to make it easier for swallowing. It still would not go down, so we pushed it down with a broomstick. It survived the voyage, evidently we did not do it any harm, at the same time possibly we did not do it any good.

One day a baboon got adrift, and went into the galley. The black cook was heating some griddle cakes by cooking them on top of a hot stove. The baboon pounced on to the stove to get them and found it very hot. Thinking the cook had hurt him, he immediately pounced on him and started biting. There was pandemonium let loose for a while, pots and pans flying all over the place. He took charge of the galley for some time, till a cargo net was thrown over him.

Another time one of the lions got out of his cage and sat up on the rail on top of the bulwark. He was partly tame, and had a chain on him, one slip and he would have been overboard, but a joint of meat persuaded him to go back into his cage. We had an old wrinkled and sun tanned Rhodesian to look after the animals. He had a thin and scraggy beard, and I liked the Captain's remark, on our arrival in London, when newspaper reporters came down and asked to see the wild animals. He pointed to the old man and said, there is the wildest of the lot.

We finished loading by the time we got to Cape Town and were all ready to sail for London when the Chief Engineer reported that the lower coal bunker was on fire. As this bunker contained about 100 tons of coal, the Chief thought it possible to use it up, in about two days, before putting more coal in from the main bunker. It was then decided that the ship should sail.

The next day, when we were about 200 miles out from Cape Town, it was discovered that the hold adjoining the bunker was on fire. The burning coal had heated the steel bulkhead between the two and set fire to the cargo. Dense smoke started coming up the ventilators which were immediately unshipped and canvas covers put on the sockets. This stopped all air from getting into the hold. As we had several thousand miles ahead of us, with no ports available, a conference was held and it was decided to put back to Cape Town. It was not prudent to uncover the hatch and tackle the fire, as the cargo in the hold was inflammable and the risk too great. We had a very worrying night but fortunately arrived safely back in port, where the fire was extinguished with the help of shore fire engines.

The fire extinguished and the cargo reloaded, we proceeded on our way back to London. Another small fire did break out in the tween deck bunker, on our way home, but this was dealt with by the crew and soon put out. These fires were possibly caused by spontaneous combustion, a thing that has happened many times on the old sailing ships carrying a coal cargo. No doubt the cause of many a ship not being heard of again. Sailing ships had no means of fighting a fire, only a hand pump for washing down decks and this was usually bolted down to the deck, with a piece of hose, about five feet long, leading into a tub. One bucket was used for washing down. It was filled and handed from man to man till it reached the bosun, who threw the water, and the bucket was passed back to be filled again. This apparatus would never be capable of handling a fire. In fact, although we were often carrying oil, I have never seen a fire hose on any sailing ship I was in except the *Hainaut*. She was fitted with steam pumps but even then she had no power at sea. Most ships that I have been in carry a dozen wooden fire buckets, with brass hoops around them which are looked on as a nuisance, as the brass has to be cleaned.

I was reminded when in Cape Town that, before the war, the *Cutty Sark* had been lying at the next quay. Her name then was "*Ferriera*", under the Portuguese flag, and the first mate had apparently been seeing too much of a certain girl, who was a taxi-mans girl friend. The taxi-man drove his car over the quay, and drowned all three.

I completed two more round voyages in the *Bampton Castle*, again carrying several wild animals on our last trip, this time in care of a retired naval officer and a retired army officer, this being a good way to get a cheap passage home from Kenya.

We loaded another cargo for Cape Town and coast ports up to Beira but I did not complete this voyage. On our arrival in Cape Town I received a cable, to say that I had been called for a "Trinity House Pilot", in the Isle of Wight

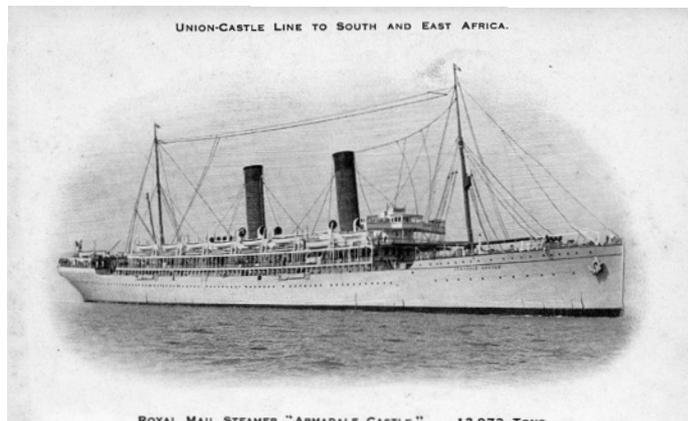
district, and that I was to change places with an officer on the homeward bound mailboat. I really waited twelve years for this appointment, and thought it would never come along.

I had been called once before, in 1918, the trip before the *Llandoverly Castle* was sunk, the Authorities were informed that my whereabouts were not known, and the letter was returned. To think if I had received it, I should have missed the terrible experience I suffered when the *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed. But now I felt as if I was walking on air. This meant that I would not have to go away from home for any more long voyages. Only a seafarer can realise what this meant, spending months away from home, and only a week or two in port, and not seeing the family grow up. I had completed twenty years of this kind of life, so really it wasn't hard to understand how I felt.

I came home in the *Armadale Castle*, and was more than pleased to find that the Captain was none other than the Captain of the *Garth Castle*, when she was a hospital ship in Scapa Flow. The first officer was the officer in charge of the *Alnwick Castle's* lifeboat, which was adrift for a week in stormy weather and landed in Spain, having a woman and tiny baby on board, which were both saved. This incident was mentioned earlier in my story.

Princess Beatrice travelled out in the *Armadale Castle*, and at a farewell dinner given on board for the Captain and Officers, the Captain on introducing me to the Princess, said I was travelling home to be a Pilot in the Isle of Wight district, she remarked I am Governor of the Isle of Wight and I would like you to call on me at Carisbrooke Castle.

Later I visited the Castle, but the Princess was not in residence. *to be continued*



My First Trip

Leslie R Morris

As summer fades towards autumn, the press of this country go into overdrive and publish seemingly acres of script on young adults, having taken their A-level examinations, preparing to leave home and travel afar to University or even farther in order to lift their souls or enrich their minds by taking a "gap" year. If we are to believe everything that is published it seems that these young people often have individually, and/or collectively, a not-so-small army of helpers to ensure that they achieve their aims to the maximum extent. Parents – or a parent – are often heavily involved during these emotional days and can be seen in various stores, purchasing new equipment and clothes for their offspring, who in turn assure their loving parents that no respectable student could do without items.

It is surely a life-changing event.

Good for them – and their parents! But I cannot help but recall the same period in my life and in the lives of my seafaring friends and colleagues of similar age. Our life changing event, as future deck officers anyway, was likely to be our first voyage to sea. In most cases it was as a cadet (or apprentice), but others first went to sea as ordinary seamen and took their examinations later when they had accrued sufficient sea-time.

Most cadets attended a pre-sea training course. These varied from a few weeks to a couple of years. I had none of this. I applied to the British and Commonwealth Shipping Company whilst at grammar school and was invited to an interview at the Royal Liver Building in Liverpool. Another "hopeful" was interviewed at the same time as me and both of us were provisionally accepted, subject to our O-level results being satisfactory. They were satisfactory in both our cases I understand, although I never met the other cadet again.



Clan MacLean

By kind permission of the artist, Lukman Sinclair,
<http://www.sinclairfineart.co.uk/>

A few weeks later I received a letter confirming my appointment as a cadet, and instructing me to join the MV "CLAN MACLEAN" in Liverpool about mid-September 1961, the date to be confirmed later. A list of clothing, uniforms and books was attached to the letter of appointment. There was time for a short holiday with my parents before departing – In Liverpool of all places - and I well remember the name of the steam locomotive hauling one of our trains: "CLAN FRASER". Railway enthusiasts will remember that she was a "Merchant Navy" class locomotive, and was one

of the last steam locomotives in British Rail. An omen of sorts?

My father drove me from our home in Llanberis to Bangor station on the morning of 20th September 1961. My mother decided to stay home. The goodbyes were of course emotional, but not prolonged. It was part of life in our family.

I took a taxi from Lime Street station to the ship in Alexandra Dock and went on board to introduce myself to the Chief Officer. His first words were to the effect that the best thing I could do was to go straight back to Lime Street and catch the first train home. That done with, he then suggested that I settle in to my cabin and get some rest, as were sailing that night for Manchester and sleep would be in short supply. He was right. My fellow cadet (he was also a "first tripper", but ex HMS Conway training school, so he was well prepared for shipboard life) and I got by on cat-napping for the next 48 hours.

Sleep-wise, life did not improve much for the next few weeks. "CLAN MACLEAN" was newly arrived from the Indian sub-continent and was discharging around UK and continental ports, and for the sea passages the cadets were kept on four-on four-off watches. As Hamburg, Rotterdam and Bremen were the continental discharge ports, not much sleep was forthcoming there either!

I soon realised I was pretty useless as a member of the ship's crew. I knew nothing about navigation or chartwork (I could not even measure distance off the chart!). I did not know the terms used and something like "*hold the backspring*" meant nothing to me, so I was a liability on the bridge telephone, the position for the junior cadet at harbour stations. However, I was a good lookout and could make very good tea, but it was not a very auspicious start to my career.

Eventually we reached Glasgow, completed discharging and started loading for India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). We changed Articles on 5th October 1961 thus commencing Voyage 33, and shortly thereafter sailed for Birkenhead, our final loading port.

We were at Vittoria Docks, Birkenhead long enough for some of us who had undertaken the coastal voyage to have a weekend's leave. By now I was beginning to learn about shipboard life, so although it was good to see friends and family for a couple of days, I was looking forward to the deep sea voyage to my country of birth, India. It was therefore no great hardship to find myself back on board once more, helping in my limited way to prepare for the voyage.

We sailed from Birkenhead on 19th October 1961 and having disembarked the Mersey Bar Pilot we were on our way to the Suez Canal, and India.

The weather was choppy until Cape Finisterre, but from then on I remember it was balmy. The Chief Officer made it clear that by the time we reached India he expected his two cadets to be useful members of the ship's company. In East Pakistan, cargo information was sent mainly by morse signal lamp, so he expected us to be reasonably proficient by then. For my fellow cadet it was a matter of brushing up on his signalling, but I had to learn from scratch. The Electrical Officer made up a small battery-powered signal lamp connected to a redundant morse key "borrowed" from the Radio Officer, and this enabled us to send morse letters to each other. The Third Officer was our trainer and we accompanied him to the bridge at 1800 every evening at sea when he relieved the Chief Officer for his meal break. Weather and traffic permitting, we then had a concentrated half-hour of morse signalling every evening until we reached Madras, our first port on the subcontinent.

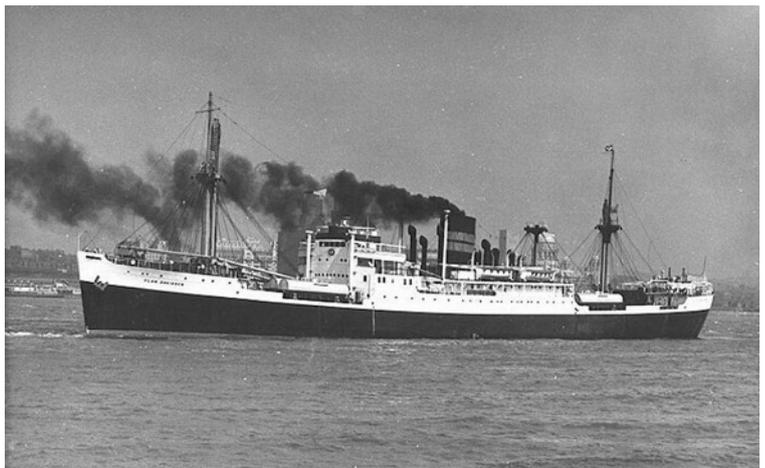
Work at sea was the usual mix of chipping, painting and scraping, interspersed by cargo gear maintenance. My first job of the day, as junior cadet, was to take the hold temperatures. This was hardly the most onerous task as the crew cook (bandhary) was already at work and it would have been churlish of me to refuse a curry puff or two on my rounds!

While we were in the Mediterranean, we overtook a ship that was smoking profusely. It was the "CLAN DAVIDSON" and she was on her last trip to the breakers. During the war, she was renamed "HMS BONAVENTURE" and became the mother ship for the midget submarines that attacked the "TIRPITZ" in Norway, amongst other things.

We reached Port Said and anchored in allotted area to await our convoy for the Suez Canal transit. The cadets assisted the crew prepare the Suez Canal searchlight under the watchful eye of the ship's Carpenter.

Sadly the Chief Steward was taken ill just before arrival and was put ashore in Port Said and later sent home. The Third Officer took over much of the Chief Steward's duties and I was delegated to help him. The Goan Chief Cook was a wonderful character, and both the Third Officer and I learned a lot from him, especially on matters such as food preservation and economy, while still providing good meals. I remember this as being a real and pleasant learning curve that lasted for the remainder of the voyage; it stood me in good stead when I made my own shipboard inspections later in my career.

Once the canal transit began in the evening, one cadet stayed with the Carpenter at the searchlight position, whilst the other remained on the bridge. Another long night!



Clan Davidson
'Smoking profusely'

Once we cleared Suez the weather became hot and we changed into white uniforms (or khaki work uniforms, in those days). The ship was not air-conditioned, so the open decks at the after end of the accommodation remained the most popular gathering space for the officers until we changed back into blues on our way home.

While we were in the Red Sea, in early November, we were all shaken by the news of the loss of the "CLAN KEITH" off the Tunisian coast with very heavy loss of life. There were only 6 survivors from a complement of 68, the large crew being due to the fact that there were two Asian crews on board, the extra crew being repatriated to Pakistan for leave at the end of their contract. Most of the officers and many of the crew knew somebody on the "CLAN KEITH" and the atmosphere on board was more than a little subdued for some time afterwards. The two cadets on the "CLAN KEITH" were both lost, one on his first trip. Some time later I was told that the cadet on his first trip was the one who was interviewed with me. There, but for the grace.....

The remainder of the voyage to India passed without further incident. We bunkered in Aden and a few days later dropped anchor outside Madras harbour and were told we had to wait about two weeks before a berth would be available. Eventually we berthed and discharged our Madras cargo. I was able to see a little of Madras while we were there. I was only 5 years old when my family left India, but I still remembered parts such as the railway station (of course, my father being an officer on the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways!).

Our next port was Chittagong in East Pakistan. The port and surroundings still bore the marks of the cyclone that had hit the area almost exactly a year before. Most of the cranes were still inoperable so we used derricks to discharge. The remains of the "CLAN ALPINE" lay about 15 miles north, but I did not visit the site as road communications were still difficult after the recent monsoons.

While we were in Chittagong, we received a cyclone warning, even though it was late in the season. The warning was withdrawn soon afterwards, but for a while it concentrated our minds. My brother had been on the "CLAN ALPINE" when she had been blown ashore and for a while I thought: not again surely? (See 'Last Voyage of the Clan Alpine' *The Cachalot*, 26 & 27)

After Chittagong we moved to Chalna. This was an anchorage port (in fact I don't remember seeing a port at all, as the cargo was taken away on lighters, and when we started loading, jute bales came to us the same way. The cadets kept the anchor watches overnight, although an officer remained on call. We loaded much of our return cargo in Chalna and spent Christmas and New Year there. I well remember how quiet things were on Christmas Day. Most of the officers retired to their cabins in the afternoon and when I asked why, I was told that their thoughts were with their families. We cadets were allowed a couple of beers on Christmas Day, which we shared with some other junior officers (who had a little more than us!).

New Year: still at anchor at Chalna. At midnight things were livened up by our siren and those of other ships. As the youngest on board I was invited to "ring out the old, and ring in the new" – 16 bells on the fore-castle bell!

There was a good social life between the ships on this coast. Not only between company ships we might meet up with, but also ships from rival British companies such as British India, Brocklebank and Ellerman Line, and also German and Dutch ships, to mention just a few. The Missions to Seamen (as it was then) padre and staff in the various ports organised get-togethers, with football playing a large part in these. (We also tried cricket, but the Europeans were not interested and the locals would thrash us.)

Our next port was Calcutta, its sheer size being a shock after Chittagong and Chalna. If my memory serves me correctly, we were only there for a few days. Kidderpore Dock was a good place to paint the draught marks as it was calm. It also had the most filthy and polluted water, so it was a junior cadet's job, of course. I was warned by the Chief Officer not to fall in, and to make sure the Roman numerals were painted correctly. Apparently it was not unusual for, say 20 feet (XX), to be painted twice! Thankfully, I managed to complete the task without error and avoided being rushed to hospital to have my stomach pumped and being injected with a course of antibiotics. The dead cow trapped under the pier nearby did nothing for my appetite at dinner, though.

After Calcutta, we were on our way home, although we stopped briefly at a couple of ports on the Malabar Coast to top up with local produce, including spices, both as cargo and for ourselves.

We had a brief stop at Port Sudan at the southern end of the Red Sea, and I think it was here that the Master's wife and young daughter joined us. It appears that he had won a substantial prize on the Irish Sweeps lottery and decided to fly them out to join us for the remainder of the voyage. That's the story we heard anyway.

The warm weather continued up to Suez, so by then the ship was looking rather trim, with well scraped decks and bulkheads, and gleaming fresh paint. We changed into "Medi-rig" (white tropical shirt and navy blue trousers) for the Mediterranean and gradually added more clothes after Gibraltar

One of my tasks was to distribute the heavy weather gear to the crew and they needed no urging to line up when the day arrived. Duffel-coats, socks pullovers etc were gratefully received and worn immediately, often in many layers.

The cadets went on to sea watches at Ushant, initially 4-on, 8-off, but 4-on, 4-off for the Dover Strait and the approaches to the Thames. These were the days before Traffic Separation Schemes and it was a bit of a free for all around Dungeness and South Foreland.

We arrived in Tilbury Docks at 2330 on 3rd February 1962 – a cold, wet and miserable night - the end of my first trip!

Post Script: I went home on leave and soon met up with some of my old school friends. It was a slightly sad meeting as it soon became obvious that we had little in common any more. My father realised the problem. He said: "Son, you have grown up".

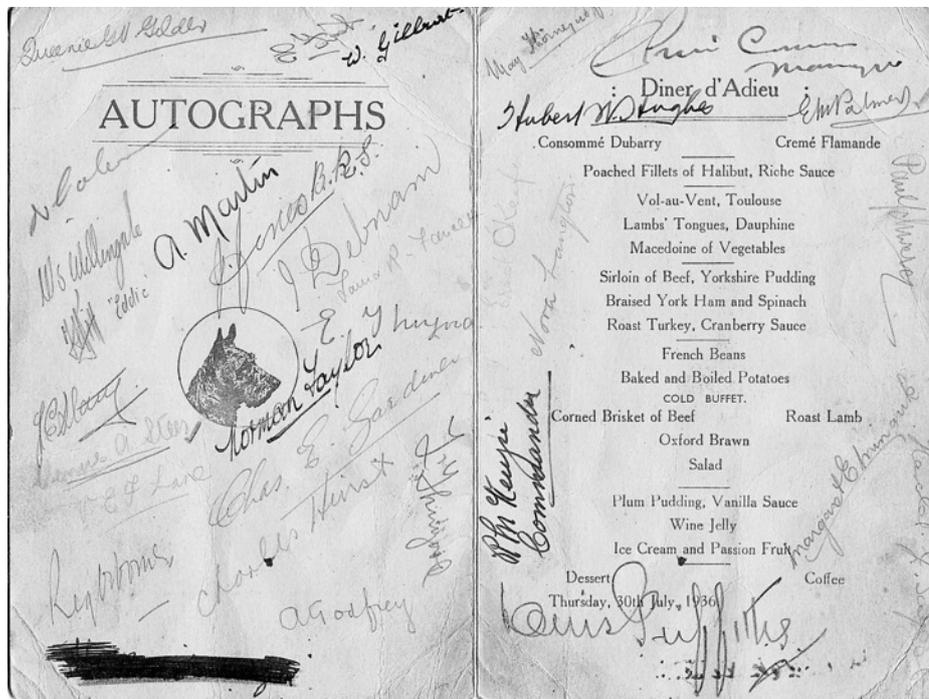
A Pre-War Cruise

With the boom in the popularity of cruising and the ever increasing number – and size – of cruise ships, nowadays there are cruises available to suit every taste and pocket.

My own seafaring career did not include any experience of passenger or cruise ships and like many others I thought that the luxury of cruising was, until relatively recently, reserved for the wealthy.

I was intrigued then, when Cachalot Richard Olden sent me a memento of a pre-war cruise on the *T.S.S. "Esperance Bay"*. It was in the form of a souvenir menu card of the farewell dinner on a cruise of the Atlantic Isles from the 18th to 31st July, 1936. It came from Richard's neighbour,

Steve Mayall, and the passenger in question was Steve's Uncle Thomas.



The inside of the card displayed the menu and there was ample space for the autographs of Thomas's fellow passengers. And crew, for there is also the signature of the Commander, R. McKenzie. But why the determined obliteration of one at bottom left?

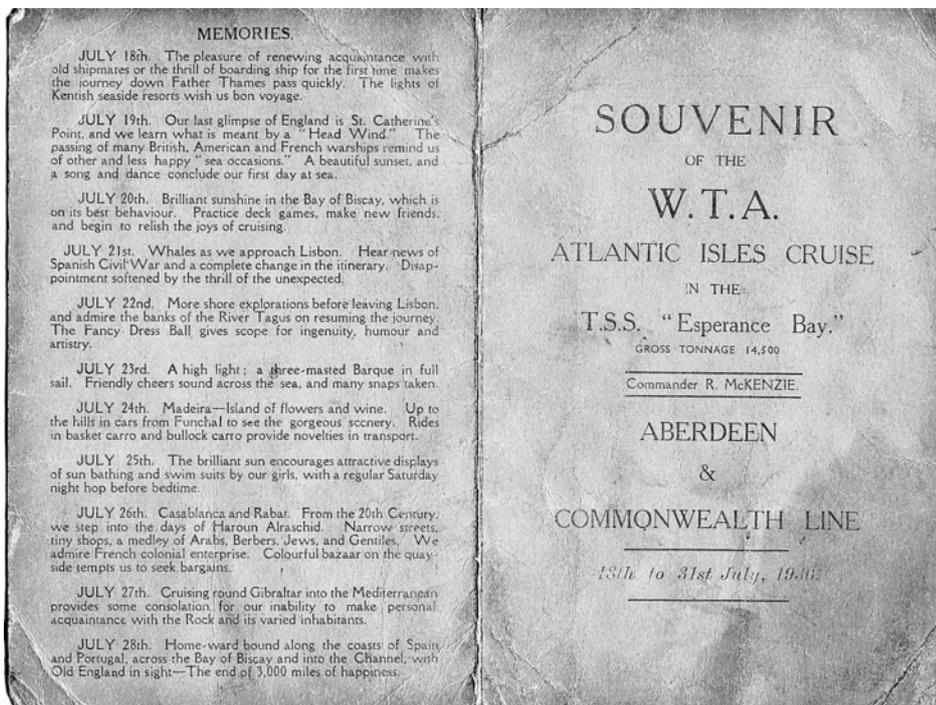
On the back was a page of printed memories and it was these that had sparked Richard's interest. They were obviously relevant to that particular voyage but were they Thomas's own words or a distillation of events as drawn up by the purser's team. Richard says, "It appears that the MEMORIES must have been those of Thomas, and each passenger's MEMORIES would have been on their individual Souvenir for the farewell dinner. It seems that, before the meal, the commander had signed each souvenir, and each passenger's name had been

written at the bottom of the AUTOGRAPHS page. The heavily-inked erasure appears to be blotting out "..... Mayall", presumably by Thomas, as it wasn't his signature. Having myself, for many years a navigating officer in Union-Castle passenger ships, been used to feeding last-minute info to ship's printers (each vessel had just one) for our farewell menus, I can visualise the task faced by the printer of "Esperance Bay". The voyage ended on 31st July, but the date of Thomas's last Memory was July 28th, and probably all passengers were given the same deadline, giving the printer a couple of days in which to print all the individual Memories."

The front of the card threw up another intriguing question, that of who, why or what was the 'W.T.A.'

Having trawled through over 100 acronyms online (Womens Tennis Association, Wisconsin Telephone Association, and a lot worse) without success, Steve, who had also scoured the 'net, came to my aid with the following: "The Workers Travel Association (WTA) which was established in 1921 by Trade unions and the Co-operative Movement to offer organised, affordable overseas travel to working class people. It became known as Galleon World Travel Association Ltd, but folded in the 1980's. The member of the association could make small regular payments into a fund which could be redeemed against travel, and I have two original payment books one of which starts in 1937."

Having determined my interest Steve forwarded me a couple of photographs and one of the Share books and these provided even more interesting questions.



The picture of the barque, mentioned in the 'Memories', was taken by Thomas and was subsequently published in his local newspaper in Oldham, Lancs. I have been unable to identify the ship but perhaps some member with the time and inclination may be able to. Here are some pointers:

Picture taken on 23rd July 1936, between Lisbon and Madeira.

The number of people on board and the portholes along the length of the vessel would indicate a training ship.

Is that a Portuguese flag? The third of the flag at the hoist seems to be a different colour but that may be an optical delusion.

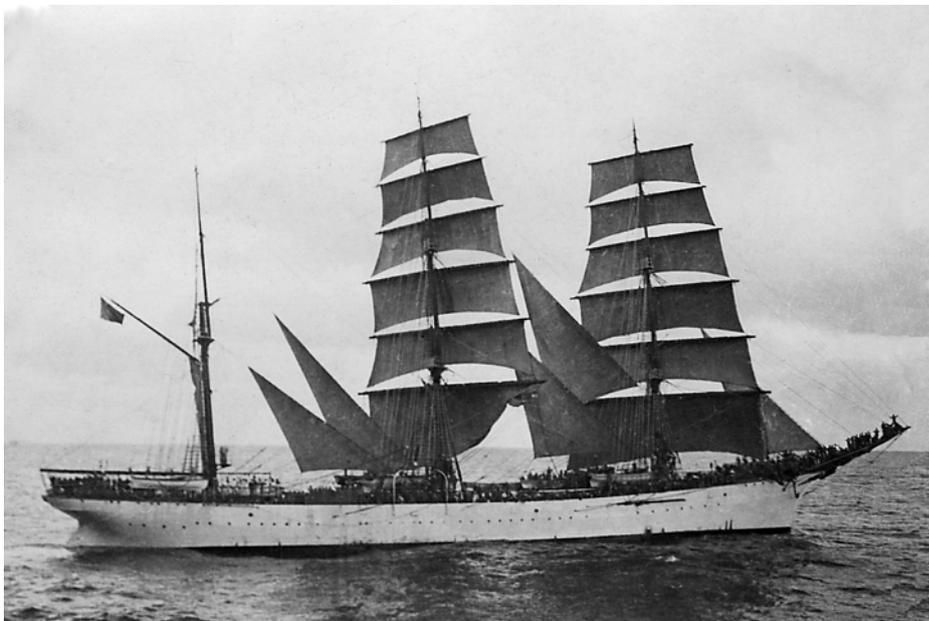
She is carrying a skysail at the top of the fore and main masts. This is unusual in that most of the sailing vessels that I came up with in my search, even in contemporary pictures, are rigged with five sails at most on each mast. However, sailing ships were frequently re-rigged to suit economic constraints so this may be another red herring, although a sail trainer with an abundance of hands might be expected to maintain a full rig.

The paying-in book also provides some interest to a saver and scrimper like me. It dates from late '37, after this particular voyage, and Thomas contributed a modest £1 a quarter until the war years. After the war he contributed a bit more but the average until March 51 was around £3 per year. He made no more payments until this particular book closed in Oct. '62 and the interest earned in those last 11 years was almost as much as the total that he had paid in during the previous 14. My calculator reveals interest rates from 3.7% to 4.95%. Those were the days! Depression, poverty, rickets, war and rationing but at least they had a half decent interest rate.

My trawl also revealed some information about Captain McKenzie. I had Googled 'Commander R McKenzie Esperence Bay' (go on, try it, or you can click [here](#) and [here](#)) and was quite pleased with what was revealed.

He had been in command of the *Esperence Bay* since she was built in 1922 and continued to be so until the war when she was requisitioned by the Ministry of War. He went to Australia to retire but accepted command of the *Commissaire Ramel*, a French cargo/passenger liner which had also been requisitioned and was managed by Shaw, Savill & Albion. This vessel was sunk in the Indian Ocean by a German raider and McKenzie ended up held for many months in Italian East Africa with 200 other allied seamen until the British gained control there in March '41 and they were released.

I'm afraid that my Googling has led me to meander somewhat from the original story but I hope that you find it as interesting as I did. *Editor*



Can anyone identify this barque?



Thomas Mayall, *pictured left, on the cruise*, spent most of his working life in the textile industry in the proud Lancashire cotton mill town of Oldham as a "time served sheet metal worker". My Uncle started work at 14 and was always very proud that he was "time served" because it meant that he had been through the rigors of a five year apprenticeship giving him the title of a "skilled man" which came with a better wage packet at the end of the week. Uncle Thomas manufactured all manner of components for the textile industry from hoppers and chutes to carry raw cotton, to cylinders for carding machines used to comb out and straighten the cotton fibres, before spinning into yarn.

Thomas was one of the lucky few who managed to stay in employment throughout the difficult days of the 1920's and 30's, a benefit, he claimed, of being a "time served man" which enabled him to fund and take time out for a cruise. In 1936 this was both unusual and exotic for the ordinary person from Oldham to even contemplate. *Steve Mayall*

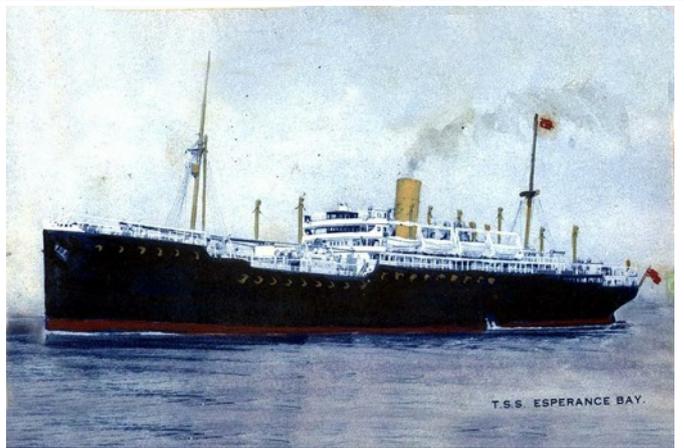


The *Esperance Bay*, and her sister ships, *Hobson's Bay*, *Jervis Bay*, *Largs Bay* and *Moreton Bay* were built for the Australian Commonwealth Line in 1921/2 and purchased by the White Star line in 1928. All were transferred to the Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line in 1933. They ran a one-class passenger service between the UK and Australia.

The Atlantic cruise was not just a one-off as, when trawling the 'net for images, I came across another such souvenir card, this time for a Fancy Dress Ball on a similar W.T.A. cruise in 1934.

Later in 1936 the *Esperance Bay* was transferred to the Shaw, Savill & Albion Line and renamed *Arawa*. *Hobson's Bay* took up her name.

The *Jervis Bay* was the only one of the sisters not to survive the war, being sunk in 1940 by the German cruiser ADMIRAL SCHEER while protecting a convoy as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. Her valiant action gave time for most of the convoy to disperse and earned her captain, Fogerty Fegan, a posthumous Victoria Cross. See <http://hmsjervisbay.com> The remaining ships were scrapped between 1955 and 1957.



This particular class of Bay boats were twin screw ships of around 14,000grt and 531 ft long.

The Southern Song Shipwreck

Cachalot Roy Martin recounts the frustrations and difficulties of trying to do business and work with the Chinese authorities in the matter of an historic wreck and a treasure trove of artefacts..



After signing the contract

When I returned from Singapore in August 1986 I needed to think about earning a living; so three of us started a company, with the rather grand name of Maritime Exploration & Recoveries PLC. We selected the Dutch East Indiaman (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) ship *Rhynsburg*, which had sunk in a typhoon in 1772, as our target. The *Rhynsburg* was a 'Country Ship', on a voyage from Batavia to Canton; her cargo included tin and silver. Our researcher had found the survivors reports and the log of the English East Indiaman *London*, which survived the storm and logged the sinking of the *Rhynsburg*.

In 1987 I obtained a licence from the Chinese government to search for, and recover from, the VOC ship. The licence was granted on the condition that we entered into a joint venture with a Chinese (government) salvage company. We used their ship, but provided all of the information and expertise ourselves. The survey equipment came from a firm in Hong Kong.

Lyle Craigie-Halkett, then headed up the operational team, which included Kevin Smith as Hydrographer and Danny MacDonald our Bosun. We searched a fairly large area; finding one wreck and very small object, which our surveyor described as 'significant'. The wreck was of no interest, so we put the Chinese divers on the small object. For several dives they reported that the object was a small coral head. As the seabed in the delta was of fine silt our Project Director, himself a former diver, insisted that they repeated the dive. The report was that the object was indeed a coral head, but it was surrounded by shards of porcelain!



Setting up one of the survey stations on an island in the Pearl River delta. In the background can be seen some ruins which appeared to be very European. The Chinese seemed to have no idea of their history, nor any interest in them.

After a delay of several weeks, while the Guangzhou people found a barge with a grab that we could use, our team started work and were recovering white porcelain and corroded metal. At that time we thought that we had the VOC wreck. Then in quick succession we found Chinese coins, more sophisticated porcelain and, finally a long gold chain (which did not look Chinese to us). We were told to stop work and this we did.

Right: The gold waist chain



Below: some of the cargo we landed



Little information came out of China, but we were told that the Guangzhou Museum had described the gold chain as being of 'gold plated brass chain' and about 5% of the porcelain was dated to the Song dynasty. There was no mention of the other two hundred, or so, items. The copper coins dated from the Southern Song Dynasty: the Chinese concluded that the wreck was Chinese and from that dynasty. All that could be said for sure was that it did not pre-date the Song Dynasty and the cargo was of Chinese-made porcelain. The presence of silver ingots could indicate that it was an early Yuan wreck; which, though probably Chinese, could have been Malay, Persian or Arab. The loss was about the time that Marco Polo was at the Yuan court. Then along came a group of Australian archaeologists, who knew nothing about us; they apparently warned the Chinese not to deal with big rough salvors, without university education.

We made a number of attempts to find out more about the wreck, to no avail. Then several years later we heard that a team of Chinese archaeologists had, with difficulty, relocated the wreck and were working on it. Had they asked we would have given them the position! We have not received a cent in compensation, even though the whole exercise cost us a great deal of money. We later heard that the cargo which we had recovered had been 'smashed'; the inference being that we had done the deed!

In 2007 the Chinese recovered the complete wreck in a steel caisson and moved it to a purpose built museum on Hainan Island. It is now known as Nan Hai (South Sea) One and is probably the most significant Asian ship wreck that has ever been found from that period. There is a great deal of information online.



The wreck with the silt removed

Google: Nan Hai (South One) wreck

or click on the link below

http://english.cntv.cn/2014/12/31/VI_DE1419956638483588.shtml

THE INNOVATORS.

When they sailed outward they did not know where they were going to, when they arrived they did not know where they were and, when they got back, they did not know where they had been.

The Age of Discovery, an era of geographical research by seafaring adventurers from various European countries, commenced in the 15th. Century with the discovery of Africa and a sea route to the East by the Portuguese, the American Continent by Spain and numerous exploratory meanderings by other nationals.

Lacking any worthwhile navigational equipment, they depended to a large degree on "Portalon Charts". The name comes from the Portuguese for "Sailing Directions" and they were drawn up some two centuries earlier by the Italians, Spanish and Portuguese. Their information was based on "Deduced Reckoning" using an estimate of speed and distance travelled in a "known" direction.

Speed was ascertained by throwing a lump of wood (a "log") overboard from the forecastle and timing its passing the stern (a known distance) and the direction travelled was ascertained by floating a lump of lodestone on a small wooden raft in a large container of water and noting the angle from "North".

It all bears a passing resemblance to the present day expression "Dead Reckoning".

Undoubtedly, the Portalon charts were surprisingly accurate and their accuracy steadily improved as many Shipmasters contributed to the sailing directions and attached sketches of the landmasses encountered. Indeed a historian of the time marvelled at the detail in the diaries and records kept by these intrepid travellers and wondered why those who explored the Globe by sea maintained such detailed accounts but those who explored on land seldom did so. This was the era of competitive trading and many countries were not prepared to share their navigational information with their rivals from other countries and, indeed, some passed laws preventing the promulgation of such information.

The passing years saw a steady improvement in shipboard navigational equipment and both logs and compasses became more reliable and these advances, coupled with the ability to ascertain an approximate "latitude" – the distance from the Equator using calculations based on the angular height of the noon Sun or Pole star (or other bodies at their zenith) – gave the voyagers more assurance.

Latitude was ascertained by using a cross staff or an astrolabe and the latter is described in Google as "A very ancient astronomical computer for solving problems relating to time and the position of Sun and stars in the sky" – and, although a computer it most certainly was NOT, I think I will leave it at that!

Additional navigational aids – back staffs, cross staffs, kamals, quadrants and octants soon appeared on the scene and all served to contribute to a greater accuracy in seafaring navigation. A kamal is described as a lump of wood or bone to which is attached a length of knotted rope – and it is used for determining the altitude of heavenly bodies!

Ascertaining Longitude with any worthwhile degree of accuracy still posed many problems and it was commonplace to use the Portalon chart to steer North or South and then turn 90 degrees left or right, maintain a sharp lookout, heave to during the hours of darkness- and hope for the best.

The Portuguese and the Spanish seafarers were undoubtedly leaders in the production of navigational almanacs and their "Pole Star Tables" and "Regiment of the Sun" – a record of the Sun's declination in various Latitudes – contributed massively to the use of use of mathematics to solve navigational problems and seamen started to talk about "Plane Sailing" –making no allowance for the curvature of the Globe, Mercator Sailing which did and even "Great Circle Sailing". Compass variation had been recognised and tables drawn up – but, an accurate method of determining Longitude was lacking.

Those with an interest in the subject recognised that time and Longitude were closely related but the problem WAS –how could one keep accurate time aboard a ship heaving and tossing in humid and hot conditions. An accurate clock and one not dependent on a pendulum had to be found and, spurred on by the offer of a huge sum of money from the Government to anyone who could solve the problem, many seafarers, astronomers and mathematicians set about finding one. The inventions – and they were many and varied – were submitted to the Board of Longitude but none was found to meet the desired criterion.

Many years passed and then a young carpenter from Yorkshire, John Harrison, presented the board with a chronometer that was accurate to the desired standard and he walked off with the huge prize of £20,000 – although it took him some years to screw the money from HMG!

Once he knew he was on the right track Harrison spent many years perfecting his invention and soon it was possible for ships to maintain a truly accurate record of Greenwich Mean Time – the essential component in ascertaining Longitude.

Were I to proceed further with an explanation of the relationship between GMT and the calculation of Longitude it would, I fear, offend many of our erudite readers so I will move on.

Harrison was not the only person to build an accurate timepiece and one that would withstand the rigours of shipboard life and a Frenchman quickly came up with a replica. Soon marine chronometers were reasonably plentiful and with the publication by the Astronomer Royal of a comprehensive and more accurate Nautical Almanac in the late 1700's and the invention of the sextant by an Englishman, navigational accuracy was almost assured. Later again the chronometer error check by radio made timekeeping even more reliable and the chronometer "error book" was an essential part of every chartroom.

Today, it is all very different and no longer must the Second Officer await the arrival of the Admiralty Chart Correction data and then spend long hours correcting an abundance of charts, the majority of which the ship was never likely to need.

The relatively recent introduction of ECDIS (Electronic Chart Display & Information System) is an IMO approved computerised navigational system producing Electronic Navigational Charts or Digital Nautical Charts and these are replacing "paper" charts although there have been incidents involving the grounding of vessels when the underwater obstruction has not been "charted". It is claimed that "e-navigation" will bring about increased navigational safety through better organisation of data on ships and ashore. Only time will tell if this claim is valid.

