

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 58

December 2015

Captain's Log

Quite a lot has happened since I wrote the last Captain's log. At the End of August, on a pleasant dry day I, along with a strong contingent from the club, attended the Merchant Navy day service. This took place at the Merchant Navy Memorial, which is situated at the bombed out Holy Rood Church in Southampton. This is now a memorial dedicated to those who served in the Merchant Navy, and lost their lives at sea.

When we moved into September, a club buffet supper was held in the club room which was well attended. Ken Dagnall, not only entertained us all with anecdotes from his time as British consul in northern France, but also tested our dexterity and French by supplying mini cheeses (try opening one of those whilst holding a glass of wine) that contained a French joke, or more correctly, a joke in French.

Then towards the end of September, a very enjoyable club outing to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard took place. Work prevented me from attending the dockyard attractions, and I believe that the proximity of Gunwharf Quays shopping outlet had a similar effect on some of the female members of the party. However, along with Trish I was able to attend the splendid dinner at the Royal Naval Club & Royal Albert Yacht Club. It was clear to me then that all involved, whatever attractions they sought out, had enjoyed their day.

On to October and the annual National Service for Seafarers was held at Saint Paul's Cathedral. It was a somewhat wet and dreary day, but the cathedral was still full and I know that other members of the club also attended, with such a large congregation I was only able to meet up with a few.

The Trafalgar dinner then followed and, if you missed it this year, get your names down early for next year. It was an excellent evening and we were honoured to have Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey deliver the immortal memory and propose the toast to Admiral Horatio Nelson. Afterwards Sir Alan mentioned that it was the first time outside of a naval establishment that he has seen the toast

drunk in the traditional manner of silence. Thank you to you all.

October ended with an interesting event for me, which was connected to, but independent of, an event I reported on earlier in the year. I, along with a small number of my work team and my boss, the above mentioned Sir Alan, were invited aboard a Dutch naval vessel to hand over to them, a 16th century cannon made for the Dutch town of Zierikzee. The canon was retrieved by a diver who is now serving 2 years in prison for his role in taking and illegally disposing of wreck. The cannon will now be transferred to another Dutch vessel named after the town of Zierikzee and transported there in December, where there will be a ceremonial handover and civic reception. I will report on both that event and the history of the Cannon in the next edition of the Cachalot.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all well for the coming Festive season and best wishes also for the New Year.

Jeremy Smart

Captain, Southampton Master Mariners' Club



Club Captain Jeremy Smart entertains our Guest, Vice-Admiral Sir Alan Massey, KCB, CBE, at the recent Trafalgar Night Dinner.

Sir Alan gave a very well received toast to the 'Immortal Memory of Lord Nelson'

Boatsteerer's Locker

Fellow Cachalots

Is it only twelve months since I compiled my first Boatsteerer's Blog and inflicted upon you my ramblings !!

Richard and your Committee are busy trying to organise the Sea Pie Supper 2016 and have had meetings with HALO at St. Marys Stadium as we are always looking for improvement, and the comments made after the last Sea Pie Supper have all received consideration.

Note – numbers are limited to 500 so buy your tickets early to avoid disappointment, these are on sale from Thursday 12th November in the Club Room.

We are also preparing for our AGM on Thursday 14th January 2016 and details are to be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

I believe that the Club is ticking over nicely but membership could be increased as due to natural wastage membership is slowly declining. As an incentive a tot from my promised bottle of malt whisky will be given to those members introducing three new members before our AGM.

Attendances on Thursday lunchtimes are I think abysmal so in a Winter month I hope to hold 'A Boatsteerer's Magic Lantern Show' one lunch time subject to the agreement of your Management Committee and if given you should bring plenty of handkerchiefs to wipe away the tears of nostalgia. As reported elsewhere I was persuaded to give a talk at a recent Club Supper on my time as one of Her Britannic Majesty's Honorary Consuls in France (My wife Margaret said that I did go on a bit as she was watching the clock and wants to know why my mention of malt whisky drew a large laugh. She also persuaded me not to wear my suite of rusty French armour at the Trafalgar Night Dinner as it might have upset our Principal Guest).

The cut off date for this edition of your Newsletter is early and before the 'Harpooners Dinner', the reason being is that our Editor and Meryl are going away on a 'Road to Mandalay' holiday complete with a Ken Dodd's big drum, pith helmet and tropical shorts (at the moment I don't know what Terry will be wearing). We will look forward to the account of their adventures at a future Club Supper.

Steve Hubert the SSC Manager from below has left for pastures new. We invited Steve for a farewell drink with us before he left and we welcomed his replacement Phil Gilbert. Another change below is that our lunch time snacks are now being prepared by Sam and Irena.

Before I forget it may be noted that at the bar we now have on sale 'Honey Dew' organic Golden Ale at 5% vol. The Ale by all accounts is reputed to have aphrodisiac properties and your comments would be appreciated (your anonymity will be strictly guarded).

The Annual Docklands New Year Service will be held on Monday 4th January 2016 at 09-30 hrs. in the Southampton Seafarers Centre and although not obligatory your presence would be most appreciated.

A gentle reminder that THE SEAFARERS' CENTRE meeting room is at our disposal on THE SECOND THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH to facilitate the attendance of those Club Members for whom the staircase poses problems, why not come and join them.

Finally Richard, Liz and the Management Committee would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a 'Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year'.

The Red Ensign



Following a Friday lunchtime discussion where several members were puzzled at the flying of the Red Ensign by non UK registered ships, our Boatsteerer decided to do some digging.

The Red Ensign is a flag that originated in the early 17th century as a British ensign flown by the Royal Navy and was later adopted specifically by British merchantmen to be flown as the civil ensign of the British merchant fleet.

The Red Ensign Group

The Red Ensign Group (REG) is comprised of the international shipping registries operated by the United Kingdom, three Crown Dependencies (Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey) and eight UK Overseas Territories (Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, St Helena and the Turks & Caicos Islands).

Any vessel registered in the UK, a Crown Dependency (CD) or an Overseas Territory (OT), is a "British ship" and is entitled to fly the British Merchant Shipping flag the 'Red Ensign' (or a version of it defaced with the appropriate national colour).

The 1995 Merchant Shipping Act (section 8, Part II) provides for the central register of British ships on the UK Ships Register, as it is currently known. Section 18 of Part II of the 1995 Act, allows by Order in Council, British possessions (both CDs and OTs) to establish different categories of register with restrictions on vessels according to the tonnage, size and type. Presently under the Merchant Shipping (Categorisation of Registries of Relevant British Possessions) Order 2008 (Statutory Instrument 2008 No. 1243), these registers are divided into the following categories:

<u>Category 1 Registers</u>	<u>Category 2 Registers</u>
Bermuda	Anguilla
British Virgin Islands	Falkland Islands
Cayman Islands	Guernsey
Gibraltar	Jersey
Isle of Man	Montserrat
United Kingdom	St. Helena
	Turks & Caicos Islands

Category 1 administrations operate large international registers and may register ships of unlimited tonnage, type and length.

Category 2 administrations can register commercial ships of up to 150 gross tons (GT) and pleasure vessels, that is, those not operated commercially of up to 400 GT (pleasure vessels, by definition, refer to ships used for sport or pleasure, which are not operated commercially).

It may be of interest to note that today, the owner of a ship flying the Red Ensign does not have to be a subject of Her Majesty nor, indeed, does her Master, any Officer or crew member.

Merry Christmas



Christmas Events

The **Christmas Luncheon**
will be held
In the Seafarers' Centre
On

Saturday 5th December
1200 in the Club room for drinks and
then 1230 downstairs for lunch.
Price now set at
£25 per head

The **Christmas Dinner**
will be held at
King's Court Masonic Centre
On

Saturday 12th December
1900 for 1930
Price now set at
£32 per head
Black Tie

Traditional Christmas Fare
A Merry Raffle will be held at each
event and suitable donations
will be welcomed

Burns Supper

King's Court has been booked again, on
Saturday, 23rd January

for our annual Caledonian Cultural
Experience and we hope to continue
with that rich traditional fare and
programme as enjoyed
in previous years.

1900 for 1930
Black Tie & Miniatures
£32 per head



Ladies that Lunch



Friday 29th January
1200 for 1230

The price, remains the same, at:
£11.50

lesley.odd@btinternet.com

Mob: 07730 586073

Lesley Odd reports: The Ladies lunch on 23rd October was a great success. We returned to Medbar with a little trepidation, but the refurbishment has made the room upstairs a lot more pleasant. The food was very good, and the service was good also. We will be returning on 29th January 2016. Hope all our regulars can come and any new ladies are more than welcome. I will be sending an e-mail after Christmas to all the ladies I have mail addresses for.

Sea Pie Supper 2016

Friday 5th February
St. Mary's Stadium

Tickets, to members only, went on sale on

12th November

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

Prices held as before:

Members £52, guests £60

Curry Lunch



The first Curry Lunch next year has been booked
at Kuti's in Oxford Street, such is our satisfaction
with the food and service there.

Join us if you can.

Saturday 20th February, 1200 for 1230.

Price held at **£12.50 per head.**

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

We had hoped to beat last years record **£692** and when all the monies from the donations, various raffles, sales and competitions were totted up we had a fantastic **£885** raised on the day, with a further £30 as late donations! With the Gift Aid on the donations we estimate a grand total of

£1080

Lesley Odd writes:

A very big thank you to all who baked, made and attended the coffee morning on 9th October. I would also like to thank Barbara Winsborough for bringing her lovely cards and Margaret Grant for once again making a beautiful Christmas cake for us to raffle. We have raised almost £1100.00. Which is fantastic!

I am going to stand down organising the coffee morning after this year, so we need a willing volunteer to take over the reins. I will of course help.

Picture Gallery

The pictures on this colour page relate to pieces that can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.



As Michael Grey reports on page 5, opposite, multi-million compensation claims were launched within days of the loss of the *El Faro*, left. Claims that, because the American vessel was undergoing engineering works while underway, she was therefore unseaworthy, were strongly refuted by the owners, Tote Shipping. You might also find Reg Kelso's article, *Hours of Rest*, on p.11 pertinent in the matter of the rapid accusations made against the late Master.

The mystery barque pictured on 'A Pre-War Cruise' in the last edition was quickly identified by our experts.

Cachalot Mike Bowles came up with "*Working as I do as a Race Director for Sail Training International (organisers of the Tall Ships Races) I know that my colleague (and boss), Paul Bishop, is one of the world's experts on sailing ships. I therefore asked him the question and after only a short pause for breath he came back with the email below.*"

"I am fairly confident that the photo of the Barque in the 'Cachalots' recent publication is the RICKMER RICKMERS that was built in 1896 in Bremerhaven and is now a museum ship in Hamburg. In 1916 she was seized in the Azores by the Portuguese authorities and was used as war transport by the UK under the name of FLORES, until being returned to the Portuguese when she was renamed SAGRES and used as a navy training ship until 1961. (Not to be confused with SAGRES II in commission today which is the ex ALBERT LEO SCHLAGETER). As the editor mentions, her six square sail rig on her main and foremasts was not that common but I understand that she had split Topsails and split T' Gallants, so her upper square sails would have been Royals and not Skysails."

Delving deep into the 'net I have determined that the *RICKMER RICKMERS* is, in fact, the second *SAGRES*, and the present one the third. There is much confusion because none of them were officially designated as *I, II* or *III*. There are few photographs of the vessel as *SAGRES (II)*, so Steve Mayall's is quite a rare one. As seen here, in Hamburg, she has a flush main deck, whereas the present *SAGRES* has a raised fo'c'sle and poop (and doesn't sport that sixth sail). In 1958, the *SAGRES (II)* won the Tall Ships Race from Brest to Las Palmas.



Another of the beautiful square riggers that has survived to the present day is the *Af Chapman*, left, which Charlie Chapman piloted into Southampton in the early 1930's, (*see Fifty Years on Salt Water*). Seen here as a Youth Hostel ship in Stockholm and under full sail on p.6.

Peter Haas / CC-BY-SA-3.0



H.M.S. WARRIOR, left, was the first attraction that was visited by our members on the recent visit to Portsmouth Dockyard. On arrival, our party was split into two for the conducted tour so I never managed to get that group photo. Our day was completed with a Club Supper held in the splendid RNC&RAYC.



Above, some of the eleven members who attended the Merchant Navy Day service at Holyrood Church on 30th August. Some other members of the congregation had some complaints, mainly about the poor sound system, the lack of service sheets and of seating. These were directed at Captain Reg Kelso, who has the air of someone who should be responsible for everything, in the mistaken belief that The Cachalots were somehow involved in the organisation of the event. Captain Kelso passed these complaints on to the MNA, Solent Branch, and received a very nice letter from Doug Piper, their Hon Secretary, explaining the causes of the problems and their intent to rectify them as best they could in coming years. The letter is posted on our notice board.

Chronicle of casualty

Lloyd's List Viewpoint 26 October 15 with permission of LL and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey

The tragic loss, earlier this month, of the big ro-ro ship *El Faro*, with all 33 souls aboard, is a reminder that the sea is a very dangerous place and weather around a hurricane exceedingly unpredictable.

The casualty also tends to undermine the 21st century assumptions about our ability to minimise and even control, risk, with our technology, communications and space-age oversight of what is happening on the surface of the planet. When such a ship, flying the flag of the world's biggest superpower, disappears in a storm, the first reaction is one of astonishment that such a thing could happen. The next instinctive action it appears is to seek to blame someone and already the first legal actions for massive compensation have been launched.

You might argue that there probably isn't a great deal of mystery about the loss – the ship broke down in the worst possible place and at the most vulnerable time, the head probably could not be kept to wind and the trailer cargo below decks shifted in violent rolling. Speculation, perhaps, but more likely, it might be thought, than structural failure of the 40 year old ship. There will be a sub-plot about what people are doing running ships of this age up and down the West Atlantic seaboard and what stops the US being able to operate more modern and efficient vessels to take trailers off the road, like we manage to do in Europe. But that is all about the Jones Act and another issue entirely.

Big, modern ships still do get overwhelmed by weather and it is not difficult to compile a substantial and melancholy list over a long working life. But it happens sufficiently rarely for us to remember just what the power of the sea can do, hence our disbelief at something that used to be described as “an act of God” and did not occasion such incomprehension.

Because it wasn't that long ago that maritime casualties were, if not taken for granted, greeted with a good deal more understanding of the risks that are always present when a ship goes to sea. This daily newspaper, after all, would provide acres of newsprint devoted to such casualties, notably more in the depths of winter, or when tropical revolving storms were wreaking havoc among those who made a living afloat in those latitudes. The casualty service, of course, still operates, but like the shipping industry itself, largely “over the horizon”, which is perhaps why the loss of a big ship, these days, takes us always by surprise.

Little more than a century ago, life at sea was very different. If you have any doubts about the matter, I would recommend a new book by Graham Faiella, which focuses upon the maritime casualties, calamities and catastrophes which were to be found in the Lloyd's List casualty columns. “Ate the Dog Yesterday”, might appear an eye-catching title, but this sizeable chronicle of disaster is a grim and remorseless commentary on the daily fare of *Lloyd's List* readers during a period from about 1870 to the first decade of the new century.

The period chosen is not without significance as it was one of unparalleled maritime expansion, but one also where sail and mechanical power were competing for business. And well worth remembering was that during most of this period, communications were primitive, marine radio was non-existent, navigation and position-finding hazardous in thick weather and weather forecasting confined to some stout fellow hoisting a storm-cone on the pierhead.

When you read this book, you are transported in time to this period, when our columns were reporting upwards of 10,000 casualties each year. There may have been a growing network of telegraphic communication established around the world, but no means of communicating with ships during a sea passage, other than a hoist of flags. Which is why it does not seem strange to read of so many cases, where the first news of a lost ship and all aboard, would come from a scrawled note found in a bottle, washed up weeks, or months, afterwards. It might seem a surprise that anyone would go to such lengths, until you remember that there was nothing else that could be done, with the ship sinking, the boats stove in and death very near.

Vessels went missing in considerable numbers and their fate could only be a matter of surmise. Storms, ice, shipwreck, fire or a leaking hull all would have contributed to these vanished ships and people. All have their places in this book, as it ranges from the tragic and pathetic end of fishermen blown out to sea or onto a lee shore, to the major disasters to liners and emigrant ships with hundreds lost. Here is pathos, panic, leadership and seamanship, tragedy and sometimes triumph in the always uncertain world of the seafarer and passenger alike, in those times.

While the incidents under *Lloyd's List* Maritime Intelligence and Casualties are the author's raw material, he accompanies this with a well-researched commentary and it is a book that can be appreciated for the considerable scholarship he brings. But it is also worth considering, as you turn aside from these pages, just how far we have advanced in making shipping safer and more certain, over little more than a century. The recent tragedy in the western Atlantic happened despite all the advances in ship design and position-finding, weather forecasting and communications. Such a casualty reminds us that nobody, even today, can take the sea for granted.

Ate the Dog Yesterday – Maritime casualties, calamities and catastrophes by Graham Faiella
ISBN 978-184995-089-3 Published by Whittles Publishing Caithness

www.whittlespublishing.com

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Fifty Years on Salt Water

Episode 12: After a twelve year wait, Charlie is finally called as a Trinity House Pilot and starts his new career as an 'inward' pilot at Southampton. It brings him into contact with some welcome faces from the past as well as some notorious ones from the future. We can assume that Charlie wrote these memoirs sometime after his retirement in around 1957.

On arrival in Southampton, I reported to the Sub-Commissioners of Pilotage, and was instructed to join the "Pilot-Cutters" and to accompany other pilots on journeys from the Nab and Needles to Southampton. On completion of these journeys, to the satisfaction of the Sub-Commissioners, I duly had my examination, and was granted a second class pilots licence. This meant that I could pilot ships inwards, up to the draft of seventeen feet.

I had to do this for three years, before handling any ship that required a pilot on our station. I joined a pilot cutter, on the appointed date, and had a bit of a shock at first, when I saw the size of it. It was comparable in size to a Brixham trawler, and was ketch rigged, but having no boom on the mainsail. She had a narrow beam, and a deep draft for her size, which made her very lively at times. There was also a motor engine, this took about a quarter of an hour to start, as the cylinder tops had to be heated with blow lamps, before starting with compressed air, and it was no use trying before that time was up, as the engine just would not start. What a difference to the Pilot Cutters on station at the present time.

The crew consisted of captain, mate, engineer, cook and two seamen. It was always a job for all hands, when putting a pilot on, or taking one off a ship, the two seamen rowing the boat for this work. How different to the present day, with engines in all the boarding boats. They had a very hard and dangerous job at times, but never did I hear a complaint from any of them. They were mostly Isle of Wight men and had spent most of their life in pilot cutters.

The pilots were accommodated in a saloon amidships, with bunks on either side, and a table down the middle. The crew lived foreward of this, with the cooking stove in their quarters.

The means of indicating that the vessel was a pilot cutter was by flying a red and white flag by day, and a white all round light by night. The flag was kept flying by day and night, but the reason for this I had no idea. At night, when a ship came in sight a white flare was exhibited. This was made by dipping a wad of waste into a tin of paraffin and turpentine mixture.

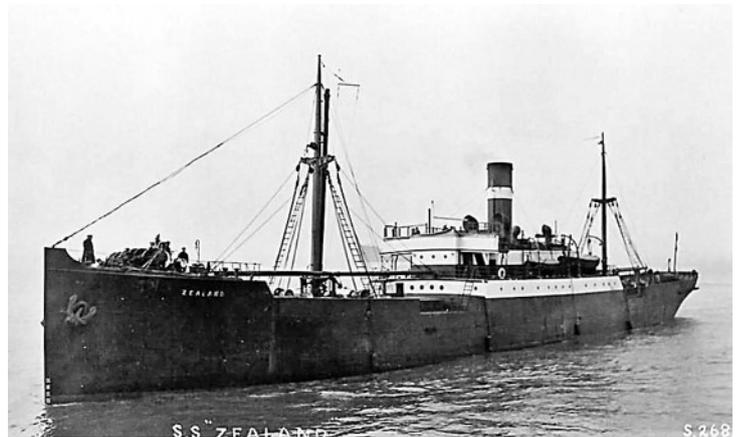
Life was not too strenuous, the pilots spending a week afloat, and the following week on reserve. This meant they could be called on if the work became too much for the pilots on duty. The pilots worked alternately from each end of the Isle of Wight, joining the cutter at Totland Bay, or at Seaview, which used to be the home of many of the old time pilots.

I will remember the first ship I piloted, it was the "Zealand" with a tonnage of 891 tons, and draft 14' 8", she came along an hour before I was due to be relieved, after spending a week without a second class ship coming along. The crew were so pleased to see the ship that they decided to put me on board in style, for my first trip. The boat was manned by the mate, the two able seamen and the cook, leaving only the captain and engineer on board the cutter. I was thrilled.

I recall one morning at daylight, seeing a full rigged ship anchored off the Needles, flying letter G, this flag denoting that the vessel flying it requires a pilot. As her draft was 16' 6", it was my place to board her. This I did and was surprised to learn her name was *Af Chapman*, and that she was a training ship for the Swedish Navy. Having no engines, I realized I had to sail her to Southampton, where she was bound. I was in my element right away, it took me back to my sailing ship days.



The Af Chapman, seen here under her previous name, GD Kennedy. She made her last voyage as a training ship in 1934 and is still in use as a youth hostel in Stockholm.



The ZEALAND, Charlie's first turn as an authorised 2nd Class Pilot

On the way up to Southampton, the Captain asked me my name, for log-book purposes, and I said "Chapman". He replied, "I am afraid you do not understand me, I know the name of my vessel, I want to know your name." Again I said "Chapman, the same name as your ship" and this caused quite a smile from those present.

It is of interest to relate, that a few years later, a niece of mine, while travelling in Sweden, came across this vessel moored in Stockholm, being used as a 'Youth Hostel', and she slept on board.

While on the subject of sailing vessels, one night, at the Needles, I boarded a large American Schooner called the "Helena". She had just won the

race for the King of Spain's gold cup, from America to Santander. I was amazed at the area and height of her sails. When the owner turned a searchlight on and directed it upwards, the canvas seemed endless, on that dark night. Although I was used to height in canvas, this was exaggerated by the fact that there were only two sails in height, whereas in a square rigger it is divided up by six sails, and does not look so high. It gave me quite a thrill, sailing such a beautiful yacht on a bright starlit night.

On another occasion I piloted the Steam Yacht *Liberty* to an anchorage off Hythe. Lady Houston, the owner, was on board and she asked me to put the yacht into a safe anchorage, as she had been there a week previous and a horrible pilot, to use her words, had anchored a ship too close to the *Liberty* to be comfortable and had refused to move when she requested. Consequently they hove up anchor and went to the Channel Islands for a week, much to the disgust of the crew. I did not think it a good policy to tell her that I was that horrible pilot, and that I considered that both vessels were in a safe anchorage.

My three years as a second class pilot soon passed and I qualified as first class, which meant I could pilot ships of any tonnage.

During my first week on the pilot cutter under my new status I was fortunate enough to board and pilot the old four funneled *Mauritania* up to Southampton, and the following week the *Aquitania*. These vessels were returning from a cruise as, when returning from New York on the Trans Atlantic run, they normally called at Cherbourg and picked their pilots up there.

Another vessel I boarded, was the *Rovuma*, a new ship, built for the Union Castle Line. There I discovered the captain was the same man that brought me back from Archangel, in the *Corfe Castle*, after my illness up there.

In our spare time, waiting for ships to come along, we passed the time fishing and on one occasion a pilot caught a skate weighing 120 lbs. This was brought on board by means of a boat davit, as it was so heavy. It ended its days as bait for lobster pots, in Alum Bay, the same as a six feet conger eel we caught.

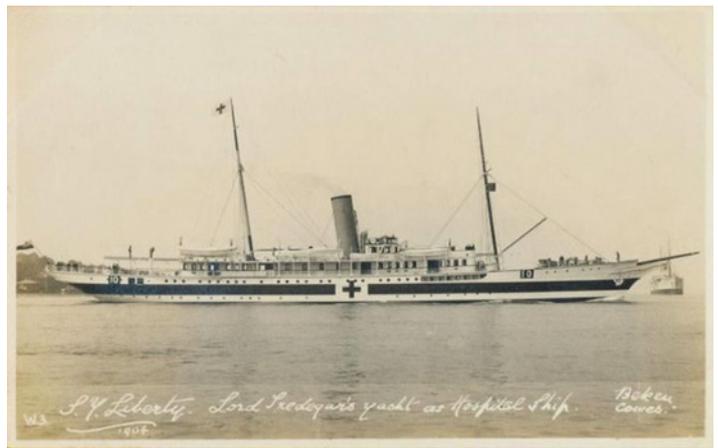
One night at the Nab, when fishing was good, a naval patrol boat ordered us to take the cutter about two miles nearer the Isle of Wight, as the shore batteries were going to have a firing practice. We had just anchored in our new position, when a shell took the top of our mast away, including the masthead light.

I often wondered if this was good shooting or just an accident, as apparently we would have been safer in the target area.

Fortunately a signal from the patrol boat to the shore batteries informed them we were not the target, but it was a near thing for us.

While on the subject of Cunard liners, I recall, that while on station off the Needles, the *Lancastria* had been diverted to Southampton to take the sailing of the *Berengaria*, which had been ashore in behind the Owers lightship. It was my turn to take this vessel up to Hythe, the boarding boat was lowered, and I was rowed alongside. Half way up the ladder, in the glare of the arc light, a voice said, "give me your hand, and I will help you up.

SY Liberty



According to that fount of all knowledge, Wikipedia, and the *Miramar Ship Index*, *Liberty* was built in 1908 for Joseph Pulitzer. Fitted with ramps and soundproofing due to Pulitzer's blindness and extreme sensitivity to noise, she was nicknamed "The Tower of Silence". Pulitzer died onboard in 1912 and she was sold to Scottish-Canadian businessman James Ross, who renamed her *Glencairn*. In 1914, after the death of Ross, she was purchased by Viscount Tredegar, who reverted her name to the original *Liberty*.

During World War I she was requisitioned by the Royal Navy and transformed to a hospital ship, No.10, operating within the North Sea and for much of the time under the command of her owner. She was returned to Lord Tredegar in January 1919. After refitting her as a yacht, Viscount Tredegar embarked on a world cruise, eventually going around the world twice, during which time he visited every colony in the British Empire. He then sold her to the shipping magnate Sir Robert Houston, in 1920. Houston, a Conservative MP described as "a hard, ruthless, unpleasant bachelor", married the then Baroness Byron in 1924. She was a widow and it was her third marriage. He died onboard, the second owner to do so, in 1926 and she spent much of her remaining life on the *Liberty*.

"Poppy" Fannie Lucy Houston was a colourful eccentric and a patriot who had donated £100,000 (some £3.5 million in today's money) to keep research going into the Spitfire's predecessor – the Supermarine S6, – when Ramsay MacDonald's government pulled funding for the project during the Great Depression in 1931, declaring "Every true Briton would rather sell his last shirt than admit that England could not afford to defend herself." In 1932, she offered to give £200,000 to strengthen the British army and navy. The National Government refused. She hung a huge electric sign, "DOWN WITH MACDONALD THE TRAITOR", in the rigging of *Liberty* and sailed round Great Britain. In a telegram to the Prime Minister, she wrote:

"I alone have dared to point out the dire need for air defence of London. You have muzzled others who have deplored this shameful neglect. You have treated my patriotic gesture with a contempt such as no other government would have been guilty of toward a patriot."

Lady Houston was so upset by the Abdication Crisis in 1936 that she stopped eating and died of a heart attack on 29 December 1936, aged 79, at her home in London.

So perhaps Charlie Chapman had got off lightly in his brush with that formidable Lady.

The *Liberty* was subsequently sold for scrap.

I have helped you out of an open boat once before, and I would like to do it again".

To my surprise, I discovered it was the midshipman from the Destroyer *Lysander*, which had saved us when the *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed. He was now the second officer of the *Lancastria* and, needless to say, we had a long chat over that incident. Many years later I met him again, he was then Captain MacKellar of the *Queen Mary*.

Strangely enough the next ship I boarded was the *British Workman*, a tanker and, on boarding her, I was met by the second officer who was none other than Don Barton, the fourth officer of the *Llandoverly Castle* when she was sunk. This was nearly ten years later, what a chance meeting with these two men, after all that time.

It was during this spell on station that I boarded and piloted the *Nomandie* to an anchorage in Spithead. I still think she was the most luxurious vessel that I have ever been on board. Rather an awkward vessel to pilot, as there was nothing visible forward from the wheelhouse to judge how the ship was swinging when turning round. It was easier to look aft. My first impression on going into the wheelhouse was, it was like opening a gate and going into a field, it was so large. It was unusual for a pilot to board this ship at the Pilot Cutter. Usually the choice Pilot for the Company, joined her in Havre, or off Brixham, homeward bound. On this occasion the weather was too bad to board off Brixham.

After a time I became one of the Choice Pilots for the North German Lloyd. This was very interesting work, as it meant frequent journeys to Bremerhaven to come with the ship to Southampton, and to Cherbourg when homeward bound from New York. By doing this, the ship did not have to waste time stopping at the pilot cutter, especially in bad weather. Also, it could help to save a tide at the same port.

I met many interesting people, while on these ships. On one occasion, when a function was being held on the *Europa*, I was introduced to Adolf Hitler and Herman Goering. Little did I think at the time that they would be the cause of so much suffering in the World.

On another occasion I had dinner with Goebbels and Hess and I still have the photo taken at that time. I found Hess a pleasant sort of man to talk to but Goebbels I did not like so much.

On one trip from Bremerhaven, I was chatting with a man who had quite an American accent, and I was very surprised when he told me he was a grandson of the Kaiser Wilhelm. I think he was he was Prince Louis Ferdinand, the eldest son of the Crown Prince. He had spent several years in Fords motor works in America, hence the accent.

I found the Captain and officers of these ships, *Bremen*, *Europa* and *Columbus*, very friendly and it was a pleasure to travel on them. Nothing was too much trouble for them, for my comfort while on board. This also goes for those members of the crews that I had any dealing with.

I had four trips on the *Dresden*, when she was the first ship to run the "Kraft durch Freude", (Strength through Joy) trips, from Bremerhaven, round the Isle of Wight and back. This was very interesting. The passengers numbered about one thousand, collected from all parts of Germany, and most had never been to sea before. The fare they had to pay was ten marks, equivalent to ten shillings in those days. We had a great send off on our first trip when thousands of people came to see the departure and, it appeared to me, there were as many swastika flags flying and being carried as there were people.

Doctor Robert Ley was a passenger on the first voyage, and I have an autographed picture of the departure, which he signed for me. (*Robert Ley was a Nazi politician and head of the German Labour Front from 1933 to 1945. He committed suicide while awaiting trial at Nuremberg for war crimes - Ed*) I enjoyed the trip very much, as I was the only Englishman on board and it was surprising how many people wanted to practice their knowledge of English with me. It was practically a full time job when I was not on the bridge. One lady, from the interior of Germany, asked me where we were going to tie up for the night, she could not believe that we kept on all the time. I facetiously replied, "to the nearest tree, if we come across one".

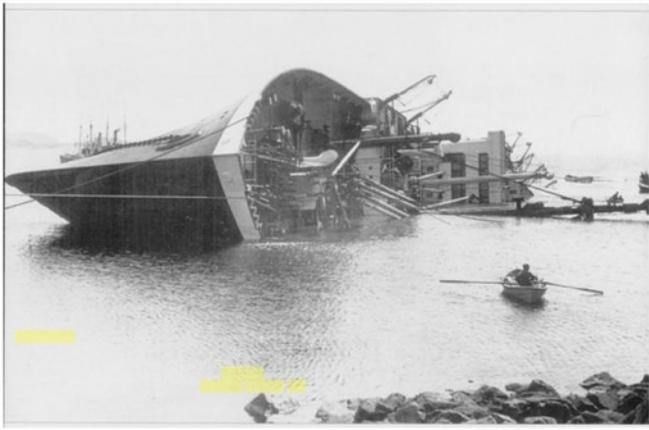
We had a German Naval Officer on board, who gave talks about the German Navy in the first world war. He also described the battle of Jutland, illustrated by about two hours of films taken during the battle. These were very interesting indeed, and seen from a German point of view, an eye opener. Later, when passing through Spithead, I pointed out the Naval War Memorial on Southsea Common and he came smartly to attention and saluted, saying, "Very Gallant Gentlemen". We had a number of the Hitler Youth Movement on board and, for some unknown reason, they thought I was a "Blackshirt" in England, and as the voyage progressed, so did my position in the Blackshirt Movement. But by the time I got to the Pilot Station I was even one of the leaders and, as I went down the Pilot ladder they sang in English, "Will you no come back again" which I was very surprised to hear.

On the way down the North Sea, during a gale of wind, a flare was sighted, followed by some morse signalling. We gathered it was a French seaplane that had come down on to the water and was sinking fast. As it was pitch dark, and a nasty sea running, it was hard to find it. Eventually there were no more signals, till suddenly a small light was seen for a brief moment, a boat was lowered and the five man crew were saved as the plane sank. Apparently, one of the crew found a match in his pocket and this small light saved their lives.

When the boat was hoisted, someone started to cheer, but he was told to keep quiet, so the boats crew came onboard in silence, which they did not deserve as they had accomplished a very dangerous job. But, of course, it was the ill feeling for the French which had caused this. The plane was stationed at Cherbourg and, I am pleased to say, I met the pilot officer there, on quite a few occasions later, and was entertained in their mess.

As there was no means of landing these men, they stayed on board till the ship returned to Bremerhaven and were then returned to France.

On one voyage the German cruiser *Leipzig* entertained the passengers by manouevring around the *Dresden*, laying a smoke screen and charging out of it at full speed and firing several guns, to them a very impressive sight. As also was seeing the full rigged ship *Deutschland* with all sails set and the cadets manning the yards for the benefit of the passengers, a thing none of them had ever seen before.



DRESDEN. Completed in 1915 as North German Lloyd's *Zeppelin*, the brand-new ship sat unused throughout WW1 and then was given to Britain as reparations, becoming the *Ormuz* of the London-based Orient Line. Repurchased by North German Lloyd in 1927, however, she became the *Dresden*, used on transatlantic crossings to New York as well as on Nazi party "Strength through Joy" cruises in the 1930s. It was on one of these voyages, to the Norwegian fjords, on June 20, 1934, that she struck a submerged rock off Kanmoe Island and began to flood. She later capsized (above) and was quickly declared a complete loss. [14690 gross tons; 570 feet long; 67 feet wide. Steam quadruple expansion engines, twin screw. Service speed 15.5 knots, 971 passengers (399 cabin class, 288 tourist class, 284 third class).]

After completing the fourth voyage round the Isle of Wight and back to Bremerhaven, it was decided to send the *Dresden* to the Norwegian Fjords, with a full load of "Kraft durch Freuderites". Unfortunately she struck a rock and became a total wreck, so I had no more trips on her.

The journeys up to Bremerhaven, to join these vessels, usually took about 24 hours from the time of leaving the Isle of Wight. Travelling by Portsmouth, train to London, then from Liverpool Street station to Harwich and over to the Hook of Holland, and by train through Holland and on to Bremerhaven. It was possible to sleep on the boat, from about 11pm. to 6 am., otherwise the journey was tiring. On joining a ship at Cherbourg, when homeward bound, there were various ways of crossing the Channel. Frequently it was possible to travel in a liner from Southampton direct to Cherbourg. At other times, the crossing was made on a railway steamer to Havre and this necessitated a long journey on a bus, from Havre to Cherbourg. At the best of times not a comfortable ride, over some of the country roads.

Other travelling we had to do were short journeys compared with these. It mostly consisted of getting back to the Isle of Wight, after taking a ship up to Southampton. There were three ways of doing this, Portsmouth to Ryde, Lympington

to Yarmouth and the Southampton to Cowes ferry. Sometimes on the last boat, it arrived after all public transport had stopped. You then tried all methods to get a lift through to Ryde. This happened to me one night, and noticing a hearse on the ferry with a coffin on, I asked the driver where he was going. He replied, "to Newport and Sandown" so I asked if it was possible to have a lift through to Ryde. He said, "yes, if you don't mind sitting on the coffin, as my mate is sitting in the other seat". He actually went out of his way to take me home to Ryde, as there was a direct road to Sandown from Newport. I must admit it felt eerie, sitting there on a very dark night, just surrounded with glass. It is extraordinary what a man will do to have an extra night at home. I remember one time, when one of the old Isle of Wight born pilots sent a telegram to the cutter, saying "missed 2.30pm. boat, will join tomorrow". The telegram was timed 1.10 pm.

The time had now arrived for me to transfer to the Outward Pilot Service. I had been looking forward to this, as in my opinion, the life was not quite so strenuous. Instead of waiting on a pilot boat outside the Needles, or by the Nab, rolling and pitching around when it was windy, you now waited for a telephone call, unless you were the duty pilot. He, of course, spent his time in the office by day and at home by night. I spent the same time in the Inward Service as I did waiting to become a pilot, that was twelve years. But I must say they were very happy years, being so near to home most of the time, after spending twenty years roaming around the world and not knowing when you would see home again.

to be continued

There is no record in our archives of Charlie ever having been a Cachalot, although many Southampton Pilots have been, before and since Charlie's time.

One name mentioned here is that of a Cachalot though, and that is Captain Andrew MacKellar, pictured here as a Second Officer with Cunard, as he was when Charlie met him again on the Lancasteria..

Andrew MacKellar was a cadet with Clan Line when he was posted, as an RNR midshipman, to HMS Lysander, the destroyer that saved Charlie and the other eleven survivors of the Llandoverly Castle sinking (see Cachalot 53). He had lent Charlie his white muffler on the way back to Plymouth.

Andrew joined Cunard in 1924 and gained his first command, of the Ascania, in 1950. He went on to command the Saxonia, on her maiden voyage in '54, as well as the Carinthia, Caronia and Ivernia. He was appointed permanent Master of the Queen Mary on 26 Aug 1958. Sadly, after leaving New York in July the following year, he was taken ill and had to be stretchered down the gangway on arrival in Southampton. He died in the Southampton General Hospital on 2nd Aug '59.

Captain MacKellar, whose home was in Montreal, joined the Club on 19/11/46..



First Tripper

The account in the last issue, by our Staff Captain, Les Morris, of his first trip at sea, has stirred the memories of a few and this offering comes from Tony Ireland, also a cadet with British and Commonwealth at around the same time. The story, which details the temptations facing a young cadet, could have been called, "Confessions of", or perhaps, "Tally...Oh!"

After finishing my pre-sea training at the School of Navigation in December 1960, and been accepted into the British & Commonwealth Shipping Company, I joined my first ship in Vittoria Dock, Birkenhead on the 29.12.60.

It was no less than the tss 'Clan Davidson' – a training ship with 13 cadets. (As a point of interest and, as mentioned by Captain Morris, the vessel was seconded by the RN in WW2, named (HMS) Bonaventure, and was the mother ship for the human torpedoes that attempted to sink the 'Tirpitz' holed up in a Norwegian fiord).

On my Father's advice, I joined in my School of Navigation, blue reefer uniform. After introducing myself to the Chief Officer, who seemed to stifle a smile – he told me that, as I was in uniform, I should go and tally the incoming cargo of crated Guinness in No.2 lower hold.

As I left the centre accommodation I passed the Night Watchman who'd just come on duty, he remarked that on the previous ship he was on, (not B&C incidently) the Cadet that had tallied booze was too squiffed to climb out of the hold.! I naturally assured him that I was from the School of 'Nav', and had been properly trained !

After climbing down on a vertical fixed ladder, past upper and lower tween decks, I finally reached bottom. My life at sea had commenced in the lower hold !

The Gang Boss and Stevedores were already there, all Irish, and we are loading the 'Black Stuff'!! The cargo was 'un-conditioned' and on it's way to Mauritius, by which time it should have finished its final fermentation in the bottle. The pint bottles were 12 to a wooden crate. These crates were stacked in slings and sent down by crane to land on a contraption that can only be described as a table with a wheel on each of the 4 legs. This loaded table would then be pushed to the after end of the hold, and the crates stacked with the aid of the Stevedore's hooks.

After several successful stowings, the Boss came to me and suggested opening a crate and enjoy a Festive sip! Again my S.o.N training kicked in, and I said 'No Way – I'm here to tally this stuff!' Of course, after a wink aloft from the Boss – the next sling came crashing down, and several crates started oozing 'black stuff!' I then agreed to just one crate, and was amazed at the expertise shown by the Gang Boss, prising out the securing nails on the crate lid with the point of his hook with such precision.

Ping, ping, ping and we all seemed to have an opened bottle of still fermenting dynamite ! I remember removing my cap, jacket and tie and working with the stevedores to finish the stowing of the cargo in record time. They had even given me a hook to use!

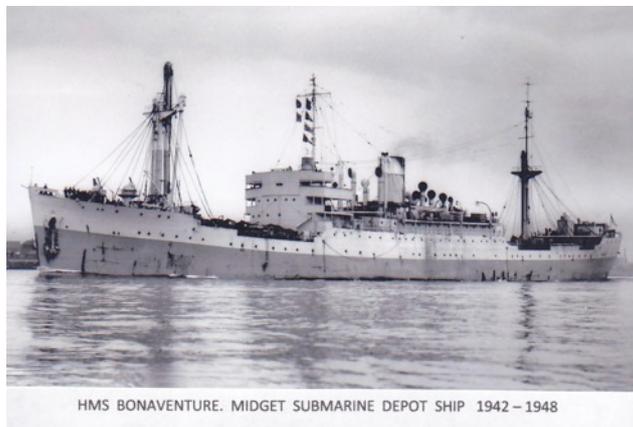
The high climb up out of the hold was now too daunting, let alone dangerous. So as the Gang of Stevedores with Tally Cadet were all lifted out by crane in a cargo sling – I remember coming over the hatch coaming to land on deck, and noticing the knowing and wistful expression on the Night Watchman's face !!!!B*****d !

Our next port was Glasgow at New Year to load Whisky!.....I've already admitted too much, but it was yet another episode in the 'real world of that time', that somehow didn't seem to have been covered in my 'pre-sea training !!!'

Anyway, although I was the only S.o.N. cadet amongst the 13 on board, we all got along famously and enjoyed some great times together. The cadets were responsible for everything forward of the midships bridge. We did wash down all the decks of that accommodation, but also chipped, painted decks, masts, derricks, side rails, greased running and standing rigging, in fact maintained the forepart.

The crew were Indian and the Serang (Bo'sun) and his team maintained everything aft of midships.

At Stations for entering and leaving port, the Serang and crew went aft with the Second Officer. The cadets went forward with the Chief Officer. We used to spice up the heaving lines by putting a steel nut or bolt in the monkeys fist. When entering Bombay, the C/O saw me with heaving line ready to throw to the forward tug, and ordered me to throw. The 'loaded' line was heaved heavenwards and landed down the tug's funnel ! As we were all staring agog, a door opened in the tug accommodation and a boiler-suited engineer came out scratching his head ! It was too much for us cadets, who collapsed with laughter ! The C/O also had to stifle his own laughter to restore order.





TSS CLAN DAVIDSON CAYZER, IRVINE & Co. 1948 - 1963

Our home port after this first trip was Avonmouth, and the Captain advised us that there was a Customs training school there, and that the 'Junior Blackgang' would turn the ship over upon arrival.

This became a mental challenge amongst us 'Men of the Sea' (after just 4 months no less !!) and the similarly aged Customs wallahs !

I don't want to give away how 'Cargo Brand' and contrabrand were moved along the top of vent shafts in the working alleyway to avoid the young tigers, but just mention that apart from the Senior Cadet, the rest of us had 2 berth cabins with upper and lower bunks.

We had to stand by in our cabins for inspection. Two of us awaited two of them. When it was our turn, they really

turned the cabin over – mattresses were upended, draws of clothes upended etc. etc., until one of them noticed some yarn under a screw in the drip tray of the porthole box. (some paint had been disturbed on the screw). Immediately the pair of us were ordered to stay put, and they went outside shouting to the rest of the Blackgang to come and witness their 'Discovery' !

With all present, and packing our little cabin, a screwdriver was presented, and the 'Discoverer' unscrewed all the screws around the drip tray, making sure he had hold of the yarn – which he pulled and pulled and pulled – until he finally brought up the whole bale of twine, to the end of which I had tied just one cigarette!!...Ha !

With his feet covered in masses of yarn, holding a solitary ciggy on the end, amid the loud sniggers and laughter from his own!.....I think it was a 'Coup for Cadets' and also realised my 'Pre Sea Training was NOT all in Vain!Yeh !

Hours of Rest

In the recent past there was a shipping company whose Chairman interviewed every newly-promoted Master prior to his joining his first command. The interview was brief and seldom varied: Having congratulated the fledgling Master on his promotion the Chairman would then instruct him that when onboard his command he must, at all times, act as if he (the Master) was the Owner of the vessel - and the vessel was uninsured.

Thereafter, the Masters did not hesitate to act in full accordance with the Regulations in any situation where the safety and wellbeing of ship and crew was threatened even if that meant a delay in arriving at their destination. The company also employed Marine Superintendents whose responsibility, inter alia, was to ensure that the ship was manned by an adequate number of competent people, thus ensuring that all regulations relating to the maintenance of efficient watch-keeping (including lookouts) could be adhered to. All communications relating to the operation of the ship (be they from the owners or charterers) were channelled through the Chief Marine Superintendent who ensured that the Master was not subjected to unwise commercial pressure. That company (and many others who operated in a broadly similar manner) traded successfully and safely for many years.

Over the years much has changed and, some time ago, in an article by Michael Grey in Lloyd's List ("Serious business of sleep") we read of today's less fortunate Masters, many of whom are seduced into putting the commercial considerations of their command before the safety of ship, crew and cargo, deliberately flaunting the regulations relating to the working hours of watch-keepers by falsifying the records of their hours of work.

Almost certainly, tucked away amongst the myriad piles of instructions issued to these Masters is an instruction that he or she will ensure that all maritime legislation is adhered to at all times - and, just as certainly the Master knows that sparse manning and the continuous commercial pressure from many sources make this utterly impossible and so the records are falsified and fatigue is commonplace.

Today's air-conditioned Bridge (with its comfy armchairs) and fatigued Masters and Watchkeeping Officers are a dangerous combination and we have already read reports of collisions and strandings resulting from dormant Watchkeepers. In many ships forecastle head and/or bridge wing lookouts, even in zero visibility, are a thing of the past.

Sooner rather than later a Shipmaster will face a manslaughter charge and very real prospect of a lengthy term of imprisonment and it will be extremely difficult to defend his or her actions when it is proven that the Hours of Rest records had been falsified, that the Watchkeeper at the time of the accident had had insufficient rest - or that no lookout was posted.

What the consequences for the Owners might be is problematical but there can be little doubt that failure to adequately scrutinise the Hours of Work records (and identify the potential hazard) will not escape the attention of the Underwriters. However, there is one certainty- it will be the Shipmaster who "carries the can", serves the sentence and loses his or her employment.

crk

South Georgia Salvage

Roy Martin recounts another unsung saga of marine salvage, this time in the deep south.

The mountainous island of South Georgia is mostly just south of the 54° parallel, about 800 nautical miles east of the Falkland Islands. It is almost 100 miles long, lying roughly NW/SE. Though it is well outside the Antarctic Circle its climate is not dissimilar to that of Spitsbergen. It was first recorded in 1675 by a London based French merchant called Antoine de la Roche. Captain Cook made the first survey in 1775. It is interesting that the commercial chart that was produced using his work is 'south up'. (*The Admiralty did not set up the Hydrographic Office until 1795; they poached Dalrymple from the East India Company to head it.*)

Shore based whaling and sealing did not begin on the island until 1904, when Captain C A Larsen based his Argentina de Pesca operation at Grytviken in Cumberland Bay, others followed. Whaling ceased in 1965. Christian Salvesen, who had operated Leith, Stromness and Prince Olav Harbour, acquired the leases of Husvik and Grytviken in the early 70s. In 1979 Salvesen granted a salvage contract to Davidoff, an Argentinian scrap merchant. He began work at Leith some when in late 1981. Argentina seized control of Grytviken and Leith on 3 April 1982, and this marked the start of the Falklands Emergency.

In 1988 my colleague Lyle Craigie-Halkett suggested that we, Marine Salvage Services, should approach Salvesen about continuing the work, but without starting another war. An American financier agreed to fund the venture. Our timing was opportune as Salvesen had decided that there was no future in whaling and they wished to relinquish their leases. Before allowing this the Government was insisting that the stations should be cleaned up.

Our American must have decided that he had bitten off more than he could chew, for he faded away. We let Salvesen know of this unfortunate development. Shortly afterwards their Company Secretary came back and asked if we would still be prepared to survey the stations at their expense, and price the salvage and clean-up. This we were only too happy to do!

Early in December 1989 Lyle and I flew to the Falklands from RAF Brize Norton, with a refuelling stop at Ascension Island. We were to join HMS *Endurance*, with Dr Nigel Bonner and Mr Rolf Casperson, representing Salvesen. From 1953 Nigel had spent long periods in South Georgia, both as a scientist and an inspector; Rolf had been the Chief Engineer at Leith for many years. Lyle had been to the island a number of times. His grandfather, as Colonial Treasurer, was a signatory to the original agreement with Pesca in 1904. I was the only new boy in our party. Other passengers included Ian Hart, who later wrote a history of Pesca, and a representative of the Foreign Office.

The survey took just under three weeks, at the end of which we had assessed the amounts of fuel, asbestos, fibre glass metals and other residues that needed treatment. We also attempted to quantify the arisings that could be sold.

Having completed our work we were in Grytviken for Christmas Eve. Andrew Salvesen had arrived in another ship and cheered us all by settling our mess bills!

We visited Shackleton's grave at the cemetery. Days before we had stood at the door of the manager's house at Stromness, where Shackleton, Worsley and Crean had ended their epic journey from Elephant Island. After a sixteen day voyage in the twenty three foot *James Caird*, they made landfall at Fortuna Bay on the windward side of the island on 9 May 1916. They then established 'Peggotty Camp', beneath the upturned boat, further up the bay. Leaving two sick members of the crew there, with another to attend to them, the three set off at 0300 on the 19 May. They crossed the spine of the island, arriving at Stromness mid-morning on the 20th. Worsley afterwards described them as:

Ragged, filthy and evil-smelling; hair and beards long and matted with soot and blubber; unwashed for three months, and no bath nor change of clothing for seven months.

The manager and his wife fed them, then arranged baths and changes of clothing.

Those RN personnel on the present day HMS *Endurance* found it difficult to comprehend that these three were merchant seamen, like another of their heroes, Captain James Cook, had been.

We then went to the little church, the only one on the island, for a late night service. The FCO man played the miniature organ, while the ship's doctor drizzled brandy down the organist's throat. On Christmas morning the doctor didn't seem to be as bright as we expected. No wonder, he had spent much of the night stitching up the face of a soldier from King Edward Point, who had attempted to kiss a fur seal goodnight.

Christmas dinner was served in the Ward Room, unchanged since it had been the saloon when the ship was the *Anita Dan*. After the meal a weary Lyle rested his head on the table and fell asleep, opposite the Captain who had been invited for the meal. We anchored off Port Stanley about 29 December and the Captain managed to disembark us on the weather side, so we all got soaked – he got his own back!

On 12 January we made our report to Salvesen and priced the salvage operation. There was quite a lot of preparatory work to do, so it was agreed that Lyle, his son who is a welder/fabricator, and two Falkland Islanders, would spend the remainder of the Austral summer on the island. They left from Brize Norton on 12 February. During the next three months they cleared many of the oil spills at the stations by hand. In their spare time they cleaned the indescribable waste from the manager's villa at Grytviken and made the building weathertight, ready for the full team to paint the place and stock it as a museum of whaling. Cruise passengers are now taken to the building, but nowhere is there any acknowledgement of the work of these two groups.

Back in the UK I carried on with the planning for the next seasons work. There was a major problem; we were without an expedition ship. We had looked at two vessels in the Falklands, neither was suitable. Even if they had been it would have meant shipping all the equipment down via the Danish ship *AES*. The only vessels that we could find, without going out onto the commercial market, were two RMAS ships in reserve in Portsmouth. We had looked at one, the *Throsk*, in the spring; but could not go over the other as 'no one can find the keys'! The third photograph on www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/T-Ships/throsk1977.html shows the 'laid up' ships.



Roy Martin, Nigel Bonner, Lyle Craigie-Halkett and Rolf Casperson

After a September meeting in Whitehall I was walking back to the FCO with Robert Macaire, a young civil servant who had recently taken over the Falklands and South Georgia desk. I told him that the project was in the balance because of the lack of a ship and that the Admiralty had two suitable ships, which they weren't using. It turned out that Robert's previous posting had been with the MOD and he promised to see what he could do to secure one of the vessels. He responded very quickly.



HMS Endurance alongside at Grytviken

There was no way the Admiralty would charter *Throsk* to Marine Salvage Services or me, even though I had been managing ships for twenty years. But they had been 'persuaded' to charter her to Salvesen; what they had not realised was that Salvesen had been out of shipping for quite a while. Once the charter party was signed, at a token one pound per month, the ship was handed to me to manage. Salvesen still had connections in the marine insurance market and were able to get Hull and Machinery insurance and P & I cover. One thing that did worry me was that the *Throsk* did not have a port of registry on the stern and was supposed to fly the Blue Ensign. Strangely this never caused a problem during the eight months we had her on charter.

The early weeks of autumn were the busiest I had known since my time in Singapore. *Throsk* was delivered to Southampton, towed by an RMAS tug – not a good sign! A & P Appledore dry docked her in KGV. The two of us set to work. We had to recruit a crew, bunker and store the ship, purchase second hand equipment for the project; while reporting regularly to Salvesens and the FCO. Denholms acted as our Agents, and found us some freight to reduce the costs. I was fortunate to recruit my friend William Sandell, formerly of Sandell Brothers, who took on the bookkeeping. I had seen an advert for some straightforward accounting software, so I ran a parallel set of accounts on my MS-DOS computer.

The problems were many, but do not need recounting here! Finally sailing day came and I was relieved to see the ship sail off down Southampton Water. I got home and was about to pour my second, or maybe third, drink. The phone went: 'this is Niton Radio, I have the *Throsk* for you.' There was a fault in the steering gear. The RMAS seemed not to have spares, even though they had two sister ships. I spent hours tracking down the piece that was required – delivery took two frustrating days.

Fortunately that was the only problem we had with that nice little ship and eighteen days later I was on the quay to see her arrive in Montevideo. There we loaded more stores and equipment, before she set off for Port Stanley and South Georgia. After *Throsk* had sailed I looked at a couple of tankers that the Agents had found for us and chose *Copemar 1*, a former Danish 499grt vessel equipped with a steam generator.

The crews worked valiantly, in the most trying conditions, completing the job on time. The tanker heated and loaded 1,800 tons of FFO and diesel, which she took back to Montevideo. There the Agents sold the cargo to a Montevideo utility company, at a good profit. However I got a call from the owners of the tanker, she had suffered so much heavy weather damage that they were considering scrapping her. We took her on for another voyage, so they carried out the repairs! On the second trip the tanker loaded about the same amount. Sadly the oil price had fallen considerably; in all we only made a profit of £697 on an outlay of £190,931. But most importantly the oil was off the island. We kept the remaining diesel for *Throsk's* homeward trip.



Copemar 1 steaming tanks

To carry out their work the team made temporary repairs to jetties, rail tracks and pipelines and dealt with bunkers in several of the abandoned catchers. In addition they entombed quantities of blue and white asbestos and large amounts of unused fibreglass in pressure vessels and oil tanks.

It would take far too long to list the work that was carried out, and be very boring! I can provide the information if required.

As with any salvage jobs this one was not without problems and lighter moments.

Dirk Geelen, one of the engineers, asked if he could spend the night ashore at Stromness. Depending on which version of the story you believe, this was to observe the wildlife or to get away from the endless Pavarotti issuing from the next cabin. Dirk was kitted out with all the right gear and a VHF schedule arranged. The next morning he called earlier than expected. As he sounded very disturbed the launch was immediately sent from the ship at Leith. Dirk was waiting on the jetty, with his gear. It was some hours before they found out what the problem had been. Dirk had crawled out of his sleeping bag to look out of the window, with its one remaining pane of glass, hoping to see the reindeer grazing near the building: instead he saw a naked blonde washing in the stream, tough girl!



Summer! Throsk alongside

What had happened, in Lyle's words 'The Greenpeace clapped-out ex supply boat *Gondwana* had hove in (to Stromness), with her attendant oil slick from a leaky stern gland.' Obviously some of the crew had gone ashore, including the blonde.

'Interaction' with Greenpeace was part of life. Lyle was left with one of the oil tanks, well away from the tank farm, with the piping shot. The oil had to be disposed of, so they piled dry timber on the almost solid oil and set it alight. The smoke went straight up (I have a photograph – but one column of smoke is much like another). Along came



The team at the Grytviken manager's villa that they had renovated and stocked in their spare time

the environmentalists, who asked what the heck he was up to. Lyle, not thinking, said 'it's alright there's a hole in the ozone layer and the smoke will go out through that!' To be told, you are not taking this seriously Mr Halkett.

I was next to have a problem. I received a message through Portishead Radio; a clumsy business because messages one way or the other had to be sent by the Post! The team had found about fifty tons of acid in a tank, what should they do with it? I called the chemists that we used to use in the Risdon Beazley days. They said that the important thing was to add the acid to water to dilute it, not the other way round. I worked out a disposal method; which was put to Greenpeace. When they rejected it I asked what they suggested. The answer I got was to the effect 'it's your job to suggest a solution and our job to tell you that you can't do it'. Helpful!

In the event the Master and another of the engineers took the job on, they camped ashore, with only blonde reindeers and brunette fur seals for company (plus a few thousand penguins). They set up piping and slowly drizzled the acid into a nearby

fast flowing stream, thence to the sea where it was massively diluted.

With the task completed the *Throsk*, loaded with plant, non-ferrous metal and whaling artefacts, sailed for Port Stanley. Much of the plant was sold in Stanley and, after a short break the UK crew sailed for home.

The stay in Portsmouth was brief. The metals were sold locally, for a profit of £45,890. This might have been more, but the merchant claimed that there was no market for the metals that the Corvette propellers were made of and we didn't have time to find another buyer. The Corvettes had been purchased by, or allocated to, Salvesen in lieu of war losses; they had been used as catchers until replacements could be built. The Norwegian skipper/gunners had them removed because they blamed the drop in catches on the 'singing' props! There were also ASDIC sets and domes in the stores.

About eight Konsberg whaling guns were distributed around various museums; from memory we only got acknowledgements from two or three. Two steam donkey engines that had been built in Bourton, Dorset, were sent to Breamore House near Fordingbridge.

The job was budgeted at £662,000. The final bill, a year later, was £679,711.

We wanted to put in an offer to buy the *Throsk* but she was transferred to the Ecuadorians instead. There was no newspaper coverage about our efforts. An article about the clean-up appeared in the Independent on Sunday, but it failed to even mention us. The idea was that the job had been done by the FCO, or the whaling stations were 'self-cleaning.'

However on 13 March 1992 the Chairman of Christian Salvesen wrote:

I write formally now to thank you and your company for the highly professional operation carried out on our behalf in the most difficult of conditions.

It was not only well done technically in terms of fully meeting the exacting conditions laid down, but it was also done within the critical timing conditions and within budget.

It was an operation that could only have been performed with the highest degree of skill, resourcefulness and initiative and we congratulate you and thank the Director and crew involved in this significant achievement.

Yours sincerely, John West

I wrote to Robert Macaire to thank him for his help, he sent me a charming reply. Last year, when I handed most of my papers about the project to Lyle, I asked Robert's permission to include his letter. He replied by e-mail:

Dear Roy

It was delightful to be reminded of my days on the Falklands and South Georgia desk, and the operation to clean up the whaling stations. You and the team did a great job, as I recall. And it was a fascinating project to be involved in.

Of course I am very happy for you to include whatever I wrote at the time as part of the archival record.

I hope you are well, and wish you the very best. Since we last met, my career has taken me to Romania, the US, India and Kenya (As High Commissioner, after which he was made a CMG) and I am now working for an oil and gas company, though only temporarily before returning to the Foreign Office. But I still remember those Falkland Island days with great affection.

Yours ever Rob



**Left, Roy Martin, the author,
as a Harpooner
and
right, fit for a
Christmas Card,
Grytviken Church**



Rope Ends

CLUB A.G.M.

Thursday 14th January 2016 at 18-30 hrs

The Club Captain and Staff Captain plus 5 of our Harpooners (Cachalots - Angas, Cartwright, Clark, Coote, Gates) must retire in accordance with Rules 6 & 8 of our Rules 2013 rev 01/15.

[6. The Captain and Staff-Captain shall retire annually at the AGM, but shall be eligible for re-election. The incoming Captain and Staff-Captain shall be chosen before the end of the year, at a meeting of all available Past Captains, the current Captain, Staff-Captain, Boatsteerer and Storekeeper (such assembly being referred to as "the Past Captains"). A quorum of five being required.

8. Harpooners will retire after two years but will be eligible for re-election.]

The Boatsteerer would be pleased to receive :-

Submission of nominations for the posts of Captain and Staff-Captain to the Past Captains for their consideration at their meeting on Saturday 9th January 2016 which should be received by Friday 17th December 2015.

The nominations required for the 5 Harpooner positions which should be received by 7th January 2016 and any other resolutions for consideration at the AGM.

Members wishing to become members of the Management Committee are invited to place their name on the Nomination Form which is displayed on our Notice Board.

New Member

Neale Rodrigues is a Master Mariner and Associate Director of Tindall Riley (Britannia) Ltd., P&I Club. He is a senior member of their Loss Prevention team, which provides marine and technical advice to Claims Handlers, Underwriters and Members. He has seagoing experience on container, RoRo, bulk, tanker reefer and multipurpose vessels.

Neale is a Liveryman of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, a Trustee of the Mission to Seafarers and a Younger Brother of Trinity House.

From the Editor

We currently produce just four of these pages in colour, as many of the pictures that I unearth are in b&w anyway and it wouldn't warrant the extra cost to go full colour for the printed edition. The unfortunate result is that sometimes, when I try to cram as many colour pics and associated text onto a page, it can look a bit 'fussy'. (*p.4 for example*)

When I filch pictures from the internet I try and credit them where I can and hope that the copyright police don't come banging on our door about the rest.

One website that I find particularly helpful in keeping me abreast of maritime news is gCaptain:

<http://info@gcaptain.com>

You can subscribe, for free, and receive a daily bulletin of marine happenings, complete with pictures and videos.

If you have any stories, with or without pictures, that you think may interest your fellow Cachalots then I will be most pleased to receive them. The article about pre-war cruising, in the last edition and the follow up here, all started with a souvenir menu card and has proved to be of great interest.

