

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 59

March 2016

## Boatsteerer's Locker

Fellow Cachalots

Here we are again the first Cachalot Newsletter of the New Year and looking back briefly over the past year.

The Management Committee meets at least four times a year and tries to prepare for future years in order to keep the Club alive and well. The Committee is always open to suggestions from the members that may be of benefit to the Club and a help to increase membership.

*Clubrooms.* We are still fortunate in having the use of our rooms which are dependent upon the landlords and their use of the building. The Seafarers Centre's Manager has changed and Phil. Gilbert is the new incumbent having taken over from Steve Hubbert; we wish Phil. every success.

The Friday get-togethers are usually quite well attended but unfortunately the Thursday attendance is dismal although a few attend the second Thursday in the month downstairs in the Seafarers Centre with are less able members who can't navigate the stairs to our Clubroom.

I tried a slide presentation of 'British Shipping on the Thames in 50s & 60s' and I chose a February Thursday lunchtime as it is usually cold, wet, and dull. What happened? We had brilliant sunshine which spoilt the 17 attendees view of the screen. (If you would like another slide presentation please let me know.)

Unfortunately as reported at our AGM twelve members went 'Aloft' during the last year, amongst them our Archivist Hamish Roberts and the Club is now seeking a replacement – any volunteers ?

*2015 Shipping Festival Service.* Held in Winchester Cathedral in fine weather 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.

**The 2016 Shipping Festival Service is on 9<sup>th</sup> June and preparations are now underway with the engine telegraphs at 'Slow Ahead'.**

*AGM 2016* This went off with the only hiccup being that the accounts had not been returned from auditing in time for our meeting and would therefore require approval by the members at an EGM.

A ballot was taken for five Harpooners to replace those retiring under Rule 8 - Cachalots Chris Coote, Terry Clark, Bryan Chipperfield, Douglas Gates and Peter Grant were elected in a closely contested ballot as only three votes separated four candidates. The sixth Harpooner, John Noble, is due to retire next year.

I thank those Cachalots who applied but were not lucky to be selected this time.

George Angas has decided to retire from the Management Committee and it must be recorded the help that George has given to the Club during his term of office- Thank You George.

The new Staff Captain Robin Plumley MBE, having been selected by the Past Captains, introduced himself to the members and gave an outline of his career.

The Minutes of the AGM & M.C. Meetings for your perusal are in folders at the foot of our Notice Board and also on the new Computer (donated by Clive Robinson) in the library.

*2016 Sea Pie Supper.* This was held again at St. Mary's Stadium which proves to be a very popular choice and we managed to squeeze in 529 Cachalots and Guests. We welcomed the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, The High Sheriff of Hampshire, The Sheriff of Southampton and Stowaways Lord West, Capt Sir Malcolm Edge and Dame Mary Fagan amongst our honoured guests.

Our Speaker Captain Chris Wells, Master of 'Queen Mary 2', gave an interesting but long address to the audience and I take full responsibility for not briefing him properly as to timing and contents.

The Southampton Shipowners Association donated an iPad as a prize and a draw was held where a truly grand sum of nearly £4000 sterling + 10 Indian Rupees was raised for 'The Southampton Seafarers Centre'.

Undoubtedly, the Sea Pie Supper went well with only a few hiccups and thanks go to those nameless few who ensured it was a success I say a sincere "Thank You".

The Christmas Lunch and Dinner and also the Burns Night are mentioned elsewhere and were all a great success, no doubt due to the excellent behind the scenes organisation.

The Bursary, now known as 'The Captain Peter Marriott Bursary', is in the capable hands of Past Captain John Mileusnic and we trust that both Sea Cadet units will take advantage of it this year.

Much of the day-to-day administration is in the very capable hands of Richard James and our finances in the hands of Ian Odd both of whom deserve a big thanks as well as Liz behind the Bar.

Ken Dagnall

## From the Editor

*A slight change for this edition in that I am unfortunately unable to include the Post Captain's Log, so the Boatsteerer may be surprised to find his locker opened on the front page. The new Captain's details are on the next page.*

*I am pleased to report however, that in this edition I am able to bring you some content that is right up to date, just for a change. The article by Michael Grey on p.15, pertaining to our Sea Pie Supper, was published in Lloyds List on the 22nd February, the day that this newsletter went to press! Elsewhere you can read the latest on our Bursary and of the young people involved.*

*Sadly, it also includes the obituaries of six of our fellow Cachalots, all master mariners with command experience.*

*A contribution from Roy Martin is a little longer than normal, but it marks exactly the 75th anniversary of the events described and I didn't want to spread it over two editions, thus losing continuity.*

*To accommodate the above I have had to hold over episode 13 of '50 Years on Salt Water' until the next time, as well as a contribution from Richard Olden. At least I know that I will have something for the next edition.*

## The New Captain



**Capt. Leslie Robert Morris**

Born in India in 1944, Leslie Morris's family returned to the United Kingdom in late 1949. After primary school in North Wales, he was educated in Friars Grammar School in Bangor and passed his GCE 'O' levels in June 1961. Having been offered a cadetship by the British and Commonwealth Shipping Company Ltd (B&C), Leslie joined his first ship in September 1961, for his first voyage - back to India!

He remained with B&C until 1974, during which time he not only served in a variety of cargo ships on differing trades, but also on their passenger Mail ships to South Africa. During this period he obtained his 2nd Mate, 1st Mate and Master's (Foreign Going) Certificates of Competency. Between 1st Mate and Master he also graduated with an honours degree from the University of Southampton.

He left British and Commonwealth in early 1974 and joined Southern Ferries (P&O), sailing from Southampton. This was followed by a period with the Post Office cable ships when they moved to Southampton.

Following an approach from the (then) College of Nautical Studies at Warsash, Leslie joined the staff, becoming Lecturer-in-Charge of Radar Simulator training. He left the College in 1979 to act as Nautical Adviser and Master for a firm involved in ARPA development and Offshore Petrochemical Surveys.

He joined London Offshore Consultants Ltd (LOC) as a Consultant in October 1980 and remained with them for 19 years. During this period he specialised in towing and placement of large structures, such as offshore oil platforms, as both tow-master and as Warranty Surveyor. This entailed planning and approval of all marine movements of such structures for insurance purposes world-wide. He also acted for P&I Interests following ship casualties and became an accredited Expert Witness in England, Scotland, several States in the USA and other countries. He became an Associate Director of LOC in 1990.

Leslie founded his own company in 1999, specialising mainly in casualty investigation and consultancy, and was appointed to the Lloyds panel of Special Casualty Representatives in 2000. This entailed representing all insured interests during salvage operations.

He retired in 2011 and lives with his wife, Ann, in Whiteparish, near Salisbury.

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## New Members

**Ray Facey** is Commercial manager with Solent Stevedores. His experience of the port dates back to 1967 when he joined the then British Transport Dock Board as a Management Trainee. He worked in a number of ports with ABP and settled back in Southampton in the Operations and then the Commercial departments. He retired from ABP in 2007 but was then asked to help Solent Stevedores with their commercial development and has remained there until the present day. He has a strong interest in the shipping industry and the port and is a long standing Saints season ticket holder.

**David Simon Hibberd** is Director, Fleet and Operational Support, with Global Marine Systems Ltd (formerly Cable & Wireless). He is a master mariner who served his Deck Cadetship with Cunard Brocklebank and then six years with Bolton Maritime Management, serving as Deck Officer on board bulk carriers. He joined Global Marine in '89, gained his Master's ticket and achieved the rank of Cableskip Commander. Simon served twelve years as Master/Commander within the GMSL fleet before accepting a shore position as Fleet Operations Manager and DPA in January 2007. He was promoted to his present position in December 2011.

He is a member of the Nautical Institute and Director of the Ship Safe Training Group Ltd.

He lists his interests as Seafarer training, swimming and travel.

Simon joins us to network and socialise with like-minded industry professionals.

**Stephen Andrew Holden** is also with Global Marine Systems, currently as Maintenance Account Director. Stephen served his time from '79 – '84 with Vickers Shipbuilding & Engineering as an electrical Apprentice and Plant Electrician before venturing to sea with Cable & Wireless as a Submarine cable Technician/Cable Engineer. Moving on to more supervisory positions he became responsible for of running departments and accounting.

In 1990 he was assigned to Manila to co-ordinate the construction and opening of a new permanent depot and in '93 he was seconded to the Operations Department in Chelmsford. He continued to gain experience in all aspects of the cable industry and in 1999 joined Level 3 as Senior Project Manager (Submarine) in the installation of the Tangerine Cross Channel Cable with responsibilities for both the land and sea sections of the cable installation and its maintenance.

He returned to GMSL in 2009 working in the provision of maintenance contracts and in his present position leads in the development of a project to convert one of the companies vessels to repair power as well as telecom cables and in the development of a universal power cable joint.

On top of this technical and commercial experience, Stephen has successfully completed a Diploma in Management with the Open University.

He is passionate about cable protection and lists other passions as travelling and cooking. He also enjoys history, gardening, cycling and, time permitting, the theatre.

**Christopher Hoyle** is a Master Mariner and an authorised Southampton Pilot. He serves as Vice Chair on the Technical & Training Committee of the UK Marine Pilots Association and his leisure interests include yacht racing and tennis.



## Skittles Evening



at the

### **SOUTHAMPTON (OLD) GREEN BOWLING CLUB**

(The world's oldest bowling green, Lower Canal Walk, Southampton.)  
On

**Friday, 18th March**

Another popular and relaxed evening and to keep it simple we have decided to stick with

### **Fish & Chips**

again for the main and there will also be the selection of delicious sweets for you to choose from.

Price retained at **£13** per head.  
1900 onwards

Names to the notice board or Richard a.s.a.p. please.



## Curry Lunches



Our second Curry Lunch this year has been booked at our favourite hot-spot,

Kuti's in Oxford Street.

Join us if you can.

**Saturday 23rd April, 1200 for 1230.**

Price held at **£12.50** per head.

## Ladies that Lunch



**Medbar & Kitchen**  
mediterranean cuisine

1200 for 1230

on

**Friday 6th May**

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](mailto:lesley.odd@btinternet.com)

Mob: 07730 586073



**WINCHESTER  
CATHEDRAL**

## **THE SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE**

**Thursday 9 June 2016**

7.15 pm latest for 7.30 pm

Preacher

**The Rev'd Reg Sweet**

master of St. Cross

**Southampton Albion Band**



Everyone is welcome to attend this historic annual service for the re-dedication of the National Ensigns and flags of the Merchant Navy and Missions to Seafarers.

## **A Club Supper**

has been arranged, in the Club Room  
On

**Friday 20th May**

A Club speaker has been volunteered to take off his Editor's hat and to give a short presentation:

### **The Irrawaddy Revisited**

*Butternut Squash & Red Pepper Soup  
Leg of Lamb with Cumberland Sauce  
Drambuie Crème Caramel*

1900 for 1930

Catering by John Davis

**£26** per head

numbers limited to **40** on a first come basis.

**MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**

The Macmillan Coffee morning this year is to be held on **Friday 7th October**, in the Club room.

The aim is to beat the impressive

**£1080**

raised last year.

Too early to start baking, but not too early to start planning.

## The Burns Night Supper



Past Captain Lionel Hall gave another well received 'Toast to the Lassies', top left, and Trish Smart retaliated with an equally well received response (above).



Past Captain John Noble prepares to 'trench the gushing entrails bright'. His ceremonial beastie was larger than in previous years and the new caterers hadn't skimped on any of the other offerings either.

## Training Days



Alex Anderson, above, was one of two Sea Cadets from the Southampton Unit who benefitted from 'The Captain Peter Marriott Bursary' last summer, on board the new *T.S. Royalist*, left. Read the full account of their experiences on the following page.

## A Happy Experience

"T.S.ROYALIST" Is a sail training brig built in 2014 for The Marine Society and Seas Cadets to replace an earlier vessel of that name. The new ship was built in Spain at a cost of nearly £5 million and she entered service in 2015. With a sail area of 641 sq.yards and an overall length of 105 ft. she has a complement of 8 -and carries some 26 trainees, the majority of whom are Sea Cadets from units throughout the United Kingdom.

Thus it was, that in August 2015, under the auspices of "The Captain Peter Marriott Bursary " awards (and with further assistance from their family members) two Cadets from the Southampton Sea Cadet Unit boarded "T.S.Royalist" at Dartmouth on August 22nd. 2015 to undertake a weeks sail training. Their voyage took them to Falmouth and Plymouth, where they disembarked on August 28th.

In their letters of appreciation for the generosity of "The Cachalots" the two young men - Alex Anderson and Luke Taylor- describe the voyage in detail and end with the accolades " My week on the T.S. Royalist is a week I shall never forget" and "My Royalist experience was one of the best things I have ever done, or will do, in my life."

Unfortunately, space does not allow for the publication of their lengthy reports in full but these are available in the Clubroom (*and on our web site*) for those wanting to read more about " one truly amazing week".

Travelling from Southampton via Salisbury,Exeter,Paignton, bus to Kingswear and ferry to Dartmouth, Alex and Luke met many Sea Cadets from other Units and by the time they boarded "Royalist" in the early afternoon they had already made friends with many of them.

Once aboard, they were allocated sleeping quarters,given "T.S.Royalist" tallies for their caps, fitted with climbing safety harnesses and oilskins and - shown how to climb the masts to furl the sails! This latter experience was variously described as "Great fun, although a little scary as we got closer to the top" and "I was really nervous, but after the Coxswain gave a speech to the people who were afraid I thought I would just do it !"

After safety briefings the Cadets were issued with life jackets, shown their life rafts, given tea in the mess room, allocated to Watches (Six to a watch), played icebreaker games and - after being read a story about " Gruffalo" by the Boatswain (Bo-Bo) it was bedtime.

Sunday "reveille" was at 0600 and after a hurried breakfast the cadets were shown how to control the sails and how to tack. Before departure, a VIP guest , Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope boarded and remained aboard for the day' sailing. Departure was at 1100 and, once clear of the river, the cadets hoisted the sails and, in fine weather and accompanied by a school of dolphins had a thrilling sail.

The Dart was re-entered - under full sail -about 1600 and as the ship approached Sandquay the dockside was lined with people "pointing, waving and clicking cameras - it appeared we had celebrity status".

Once the Admiral disembarked they were off again - sailing down the river and out to sea before anchoring at Start Point where the rescue boat (RIB) was manned by Alex and three others. Later, the cadets enjoyed a short swim but the cold water ensured it WAS short.!

Later that evening, with the cadets standing their allocated Night Watches, "Royalist" again set sail for the 60 mile passage to Falmouth and, at 0500 next day the sails were lowered and the ship anchored off Falmouth awaiting daylight to enter. Some cadets were sent ashore to act as linesmen and the ship was soon berthed alongside in Falmouth Harbour.

Shore leave was granted in Falmouth and Alex and six of his new friends - including three young ladies ! -enjoyed a pizza at a restaurant overlooking "Royalist".

Next day they awoke to rain and gale force winds so sailing was aborted and the morning allocated to lectures on sails and buoyage and the afternoon to "cleaning ship"- socialising and an early night.

The morning of Wednesday 26th. afforded much better weather and about 1000 the ship set off for Plymouth with the cadets taking "tricks" on the wheel and tending the sails as she "established a new speed record of 11.6 knots, with waves coming over the front of the ship". Singing sea shanties as they voyaged " with the wind in our hair and the sea in our faces" - and the Bosun giving his rendition of "He's a Pirate" they voyaged towards the River Tamar, sailed under the Tamar Bridge and anchored for the night.

Next day (Thursday) "Royalist" weighed anchor and, under engines, started the short passage to Plymouth. En route they had a "Man Overboard" exercise and then it was time to go aloft and stow the sails.

In Plymouth the ship was visited by The First Sea Lord, Sir George Zambellas "and he was given a guided tour before meeting the cadets and asking them about the voyage. In response to that question Cadet Alex Anderson responded: "The week has been an amazing experience and I have enjoyed working as part of an excellent team and sharing in the responsibility for the sailing of the ship. I have learnt the importance of everyone helping with the everyday chores and have gained a greater appreciation of the importance of punctuality and working as part of a team."

With the final afternoon spent "cleaning ship" ( and cleaning brass work) and showing some Harbour Managers around "Royalist" the evening was spent packing and exchanging contact details with their no-longer "new" friends. Later that night they were presented with Certificates and badges to commemorate their time on the ship.

On Friday morning goodbyes were said to new friends and Thanks to the Captain and crew of TS Royalist " for the wonderful experience we had shared together over the past week".

They were taken by Plymouth station by minibus where, after final hugs and promises to "Keep in touch" homeward bound trains were boarded. "We had made many new friends with whom we had shared many incredible experiences."

*From: John Mileusnic, Bursary Officer:*

*Alex and Luke were proposed and came highly recommended by the CO of Southampton Sea Cadets Lt (SCC) Mark Lampart RNR. Reading the abridged version of their full reports I hope all members agree that they were worthy recipients of the 2015 Bursary. In a short week their experiences ranged from sailing at a record breaking speed for Royalist, to cleaning the brass, meeting new friends, becoming members of a working team and above all enjoying the valuable adventure. That they were both so enthusiastic and gained so much from their week on board TS Royalist reinforces the benefits of our Bursary.*

## Law and Justice

**Lloyd's List Viewpoint, 25 January 16,**  
*with permission of LL and the author, Cachalot*  
*Michael Grey*

The grim ordeal of those who had been aboard the *Seaman Guard Ohio* when it strayed into Indian waters entered a new chapter this month with the five year sentences imposed by a court in Tutincorin on the 35 crewmen. They have been detained since October 2013 and have already served 9 months in prison, before being bailed. They had also been acquitted by a higher court, before the appeal by the Tamil Nadu judiciary ensured that there would be no hope of leaving Indian jurisdiction. Altogether it is a rotten business.



*AdvanFort's Seaman Guard Ohio. Image: AdvanFort*

You can argue that all 35 men might be added to all those other victims of the scourge of piracy that made the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean such a dangerous place for merchant mariners. They are as much victims as the murdered, wounded and traumatised hostages of the Somali pirates, the Indian fishermen shot up by the Italian marine guards or the Thai victims killed in error by the Indian Navy in a botched rescue mission. If the pirates hadn't unleashed their reign of terror, none of this would have happened and ships would not be forced to cross these shipping lanes wreathed in razor wire with their crews afraid for their lives. That's where the blame lies and we shouldn't forget it.

I suppose it is possible to vaguely understand how this mess has developed, with the sensitivities over security in the Indian EEZ after the Mumbai terrorist attack and the Italian contretemps. It hasn't helped that the state and national judiciaries appear to have different agendas, with local noses out of joint after the earlier acquittal.

But somehow, in all this legal grandstanding and fierce interpretation of the letter of the law, the reason these people were at sea in the Indian Ocean has been entirely lost. These were not malevolent agents of some foreign power, but people whose mission was entirely benign and on the side of law and order. I would go so far as to say that their treatment in India has amounted to an insult to all the seafarers, many of whom have been Indian citizens, whose lives have been ruined by the Somali criminals.

What this court has said is that it doesn't really care about any of the extenuating circumstances that brought this hapless ship into Indian waters; its mission, the weather, the belief that they had permission to cross the boundary or its need for bunkers – none of this was taken into account. Canon Ken Peters of the Mission to Seafarers, which has for a lot of the time offered the only lifeline to these impoverished men, calls the decision "deeply unfair and unjust". What more can one say, other than to suggest that it has all been wholly unnecessary and if there had been the slightest exercise of common sense, the ship and its crew would have been sent on its way three years ago. Just who is trying to prove what?

You might argue that the attitude of the Indians reflects that nation's opposition to the principle of armed guards on merchant ships and of course, they would not be alone in this. We can all remember, with ships being seized almost daily by the pirates, stern lectures from everyone from admirals and politicians, to shipowner organisations and trade unionists about the hazards of weapons on merchant ships. The crews would shoot each other, or people who weren't pirates. The liabilities would be horrendous said the lawyers in anguish. We even had sundry world leaders giving stupid and exceedingly unhelpful advice about how wrong it was to pay ransoms.

But the point was, at that stage, before any naval assistance had arrived, nobody was doing a bloody thing to protect those aboard ships. There were various courageous defences, like a Bank Line ship whose crew threw railway sleepers at a pursuing skiff and the splendid defence of the Chinese crane ship whose crew made and used Molotov cocktails to beat off the boarders. Other than that it was advice to maintain best management practice and keep the deck water mains primed, which didn't fill people with a lot of reassurance.

It was in 2011 that I went to a meeting in Mumbai attended by about 300 seafaring staff of a major ship manager and we were given an impressive address by an Indian Navy officer about the difficulties of providing cover for all the merchant ships at risk in this huge expanse of water. But there wasn't an officer in that room who did not want armed protection and they weren't that fussy about who was to provide it.

The Indian Ocean, touch wood, seems reasonably free from the risks of pirate attack at present, and it is a fact that no merchant ship with armed guards aboard has been taken. The presence of naval units and BMP have contributed hugely, but it is the sensible, practical defence offered by a capable, licensed and properly authorised armed team that has really made the pirates keep their heads down.

It would have been so much more helpful if some more of the high-minded riparian states would have acknowledged the usefulness of these armed units and made it easier for the firms providing them to operate, without the need for floating arsenals and having to jump through huge regulatory hoops when trying to move the weaponry around.

Amid all the bureaucratic jargon, what they were in effect pointing out was that keeping ships unprotected was more important than the lives of those aboard them. Sorry, but there is no other way of saying this. The fate of the 35 crewmen of the *Seaman Guard Ohio* might be thought of as collateral damage amid all this self justification by people who didn't have any answers of their own.

*rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk*

## **Gone Aloft**

### **Captain William Hamish Roberts**

Born in Inverness in 1927, Hamish attended Edinburgh Academy before commencing his nautical training at Warsash Maritime Academy in 1944 and taking up a Cadetship with Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Company in late 1945.

After acquiring "Second Mates" in 1949 he served in a variety of foreign-going and short sea vessels worldwide from the Red Sea to The Great Lakes,,, acquiring his Masters Certificate in 1956. A year later he joined the Aden Pilotage Service and over the next three years wrote numerous treatises on the history and development of Aden, the structure of the colonial community, the carriage of pilgrims and the use of kwat - to mention but a few.

Returning to the UK in 1960, he studied for a Law Degree at London University, financed by employment as a Port Relief Officer with The Cunard Steamship Company, and - he joined The Territorial Army. In 1961 he was promoted to the rank of Captain, Royal Engineers and commanded a seismic survey vessel in the North Sea in search of natural gas and gas oil.

Hamish was called to The English Bar (Gray's Inn) in late 1963 and thereafter worked, inter alia, as a P&I Club claims handler, Legal Manager for Atlantic Container Lines, Director of Fenton Steamship Co. operating 18 ships and North European Agents for Hellenic Lines of Piraeus and New York.

1969 saw him promoted to the rank of Major, Royal Corps of Transport and Officer Commanding 265 (Maritime Squadron), RCT and, until retirement in the early 90's he acted as an Independent Marine Consultant and Surveyor acting in the UK and abroad for shipowners, marine insurers and maritime law firms. Appointed a Fellow of The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, he became a High Court expert witness and occasional maritime arbitrator.

Hamish became a Cachalot in 1970 and, after retirement, served on several Committees before being appointed Club Archivist - a post he held until he "Went Aloft", on 16th December. Although very popular, he was a "private" person and said little UNTIL his interest was aroused by an adjoining discussion or a chance remark. He is greatly missed by those who were privileged to enjoy the true friendship of such a gracious gentlemen. CRK

*The funeral, family only, was held in mid January but Hamish's brother Donald was unable to attend due to his own sudden illness. Donald is recovering and will re-organise the Thanksgiving Service, which was due to be held in February, at a later date.*

*Cachalots will be kept advised.*

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### **Captain Stephen Thomas Samuel Household**

Universally known in the seafaring world as Sam, Captain Household went aloft peacefully at home on Monday 11th January 2016, aged 82.

Born and raised in Harrow, he began his training on the TS Mercury on the Hamble at the age of 12. He joined the Strick Line in March 1950 as Cadet and rose through the ranks. He passed his Master (FG) in April 1961 and immediately went Chief Officer, being promoted to Master in March 1971 at the age of 37, and remained in command when Strick Line was absorbed into the P&O General Cargo Division in April 1972. He remained with P&O GCD through to the end of 1982, taking his last command there twice to the Falkland Islands during and in the aftermath of the conflict. He then transferred to the P&O Bulk Shipping Division as Master, serving there until his retirement in 1988.

Sam was a Fellow of the Nautical Institute, having joined early in the 1970s, and was a Council member 1979 – 1985, and a member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee 1983 – 2003. He was a founder member of the Solent Branch in 1975, serving as Vice-Chairman (Sea) in 1978 – 1980 and then for some years on the Committee.

Sam joined the Cachalots in September 1993, though in later years his failing health prevented him from coming in to the club room and joining in the functions.

Sam is remembered by all who sailed with him as a gentleman and fun loving character. BEP

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### **Captain Michael Robert Robins**

Michael Robert Robins was born in East Sussex on September 4th. 1943 and, after grammar school, in 1948 he started his maritime career at Fairthorne Manor( on the river Hamble ) a YMCA administered facility affording educational training for aspiring seafarers.

After fifteen months, Mike started his apprenticeship aboard the 16,000 ton tanker "Eastgate" owned by Turnbull Scott and Co. remaining with that company until he obtained his Second Mate's Certificate in 1964. Shortly afterwards, he joined Bibby Line and rose through the ranks, eventually being appointed Master. His final command, before being made redundant in 1982 was "Herefordshire".

Later that year Mike joined the lecturing staff at The College of Maritime Studies, Warsash where he remained for many years, becoming an active member of The Nautical Institute - and a Cachalot. Thereafter, he branched out on his own into the world of commerce establishing a highly successful business marketing Transas Marine Simulators globally.

In 1996, Mike was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and immediately volunteered to be the first patient in the UK to undertake an experimental brain operation. The operation was a total success in that it removed the physical symptoms (tremor) of this distressing disease and he became something of a "television personality" together with the surgeon who became his close friend.

In 2010, after losing his wife Eizabeth, he was diagnosed with bowel cancer necessitating another major operation but his indomitable spirit and love for life carried him through and, although he "found the stairs a struggle" we were privileged to welcome this very fine and brave man in our midst until shortly before he "Went Aloft" on November 15th. 2015.

The several moving eulogies delivered by his family members bore testimony to the love and admiration with which Mike was held.

## Gone Aloft

### Captain Keith David William Edwards

Keith was born in Nottinghamshire in 1955 and after school joined P&O, attending the University of Plymouth for all his certificates of competency. As a deck officer he served with P&O Ferries then Thoresen Car Ferries before achieving his Master's Certificate of Competency in 1986. In the same year he joined Channel Island Ship Management, being promoted to Master in '91. In 1997 he made the move ashore, initially as Ship Superintendent (Nautical) for Wightlink Ltd. After five years he moved on to Bluewater Marine Management Ltd as Operations Director for two years, then Meridian Marine Management Ltd as Fleet Operations Manager for two and a half years. In 2006 he joined Red Funnel Ferries Ltd as their Group Technical & Quality Director and in 2010 moved to Gosport Ferries Ltd as Director & General Manager until he retired shortly before he passed away.

Keith was a keen sportsman and supported and played with the cricket section (SMMCC) of which he was Captain from 2013. He also played golf and watched and supported his favourite football teams.

In October 2013 Keith was diagnosed with cancer of the throat and despite various surgery and medication which put him in remission, he was diagnosed with secondary cancer in October '14. Keith was taken ill again in late October 2015 and admitted to hospital but sadly passed away on the 8th December, just after his 60th birthday. He sent me a text on his birthday to say he had made it!

Keith and Sharon, his second wife, enjoyed a large extended family. They enjoyed regular holidays with all the family in Greece and the Greek islands.

The numbers of family, friends and fellow Cachalot's who attended his funeral at Colbury Church bear testament to Keith as a true family man, friend to many and professional colleague to those that had the privilege to work with him.

He is sadly missed.

*Captain Robin Plumley MBE*

## Milk Bottle Tops Collection

The Club Room has been used for a number of years now as a collection point for milk bottle tops. These are taken away, filtered for things that should not be included, and taken to a collection point, currently in Dibden Purlieu, from where a kind volunteer takes them by the car load to a recycling firm in Eastleigh where they are turned into pellets that go into the manufacture of items such as traffic bollards and traffic cones. The recycling firm weighs the incoming tops and for a given weight makes a donation to the Gift of Sight charity.

The recycling firm only requires the standard size plastic milk bottle tops, (any colour) because the quality of the plastic is vital for the recycling process. Anything else such as fruit bottle tops are of a different quality and would therefore contaminate the recycling process. During filtering unsuitable items such as ring pulls, metal beer bottle tops, batteries, foil seals from milk bottles, and tops

contaminated with oil are often found, which means that everything has to be checked or the recycling plant will just reject all of it and will not be making donations for them. Many members are bringing in bags of bottle tops, which remain very welcome, but it would be most appreciated if they will ensure that other items are not included. Apart from anything else, the filtering process often results in dirty hands from the items that should not be there. The co-operation of members making bottle top donations would be much appreciated to ensure the efforts of volunteers can result in the maximum income to the charity.



## Library Computer

CData Services, the company owned by Cachalot Clive Robinson and which hosts the Club's website, has recently donated to the Club a newer and much faster computer for the Library Room with Windows 10 operating system. It is connected to the internet by Ethernet cable which is faster than the old wi-fi connection. There is a simple instruction page for starting it up on the table with it.

Due to its greater speed and capacity over the old one, it is now possible to fully utilise it as an asset to the Library, and apart from being able to surf the web it now has the latest Adobe Acrobat Reader as well as Microsoft Office 2016 software. It already contains in the "Documents" folder all the past editions of the Cachalot newsletter and various other items of interest. It also has in PDF format the minutes of recent Annual General Meetings, the Management Committees, the old General Committees and Executive & Finance Committees, plus the Annual Accounts for the Club and the Shipping Festival.

The computer is not equipped with e-mail facilities, but of course any member in the Club Room who has an e-mail account with web mail is welcome to use it for this purpose, as well as generally looking up websites of interest.

If any member has a suggestion for any further useful items that could be stored on it please advise a Club Officer.



## Prelude

Seventyfive years ago, in February 1941, ships of the British Merchant Navy and other allied vessels in the North Atlantic suffered terrible losses at the hands of a growing fleet of U-boats and surface vessels. With few escorts and poorly defended, some masters attempted to defend their vessels by ramming U-boats on the surface. We know that Churchill encouraged the practice but ordered that such action should NOT BE RECORDED IN THE LOG. In the smoke and mirrors world of both war-time and post-war propaganda and the need to show the armed forces in the best light, it is little wonder that the MN, even today, struggles to get recognition of its efforts and sacrifice. Here, Roy Martin relates some of the events that led to the Battle of the Atlantic.

Until early in 1941 the British convoy escort groups were assembled on a trip by trip basis. Warships concentrated on hunting U-boats away from the convoys; while the submarines sought them. In the second half of 1940 only nine German U-boats were sunk. In the four months from 3 November 1940 the Royal Navy did not sink one; though they did account for several Italian submarines.

Many convoys and independent ships crossed the Atlantic safely; mainly because Dönitz had only a fraction of the 300 U-boats that he needed to bring Britain to its knees. But the few boats that he had were able to wreak havoc when they discovered the convoys.

February 1941 was typical of the disastrous months of that winter. During the first week the enemy sank twenty vessels. The first convoy to be attacked was HG 53, bound from Gibraltar to the UK and escorted by the sloop *Deptford* and the destroyer *Velox*. It was sighted by *U-37* (Clausen) while on passage towards Freetown. He began the attack at 0400 on Sunday 9 February, just after the moon had set.

The *Courland* and the *Estrellano* were the first to be sunk. The Master, twenty seven crew and two DEMS gunners, went down with the *Courland*. The 1910 built *Brandenburg* stopped to recover the Master and twenty crew from the second casualty, six were lost. Clausen remained in contact and vectored in a group of Condors who seriously damaged the *Varna*, but she was able to continue. Then, in quick succession, they sank the *Britannic*, *Jura*, *Dagmar 1* and the Norwegian *Tejo*. When the *U-37* sank the *Brandenburg* only one person out of the two crews on board survived. On that night eighty six seafarers died, seventy three of them British merchant seamen. As the Convoy Commodore was among the casualties the Master of the *Egyptian Prince* took charge.

The *Velox* returned to Gibraltar to re-fuel and land survivors; leaving the sloop as the sole escort. Lt Cdr Thring was aware that the *Admiral Hipper* was at sea. Clausen directed the heavy cruiser to the convoy, where she sank the *Iceland*.

On the night of 13 February the damaged *Varna* sank in what Thring described as: 'the most monumental gale ... the sea running was the heaviest I have ever seen'. All of her crew were rescued by the *Empire Tern*, a 2,600 grt cargo ship completed in the USA in 1919. Later Thring said: 'How *Empire Tern* managed such a feat will always be a mystery to me, it must have been one of the finest bits of seamanship ever carried out.'

By 30 January 1941 sufficient ships had assembled at Freetown to make up another convoy in the series Sierra Leone for Liverpool – this was SL64. Nineteen of the ships were unlikely to be able to maintain the convoy speed of nine knots. The Navy could not spare escorts for two convoys, so once at sea the slower ships were left behind. A single Armed Merchant Cruiser stayed with the twenty eight ships of SL64. The remainder were styled as convoy SLS64, with the Master of the *Warlaby* as Commodore. This group were unescorted, though *Deptford* was charged with meeting up with them at a later date. So a single sloop was supposed to provide an escort for two convoys.



**The sloop HMS Deptford**



**The cruiser Admiral Hipper**

Early in the morning of 12 February the *Margot* of SLS64 sighted a strange Man-o-War, it was the *Hipper*. The Commodore signalled all ships to alter course and at 0625 *Hipper* opened fire on *Shrewsbury*. She then attacked in order: *Warlaby*, *Derrynane*, *Westbury*, *Perseus*, *Borgestad*, *Lornaston* and *Oswestry Grange*. *Derrynane*, *Borgestad* and *Lornaston* had opened fire on the enemy and received 'very heavy punishment.' The first two sank with all hands and *Lornaston* was badly damaged, *Borgestad* appeared to have hit the control tower of the *Hipper*. The *Margot* was next to be attacked.

The *Polyktor* saved twenty one from the *Perseus*. Other ships involved were the *Ainderbury*, which, with survivors, made Funchal escorting the *Lornaston*. *Clunepark* was damaged, abandoned and re-boarded, and with her rescuer *Blairathol* (also damaged) she also made Madeira for repairs. *Blairathol* had rescued eighty six crew from four ships.

The *Gairsoppa* (from SL64), whose cargo included three million ounces of silver, was sunk in mid-February. Of a crew of eighty five only the Second Officer survived after an epic voyage in a lifeboat. The *Nailsea Lass* was sunk on the 24 February; five of her crew died and her Master was taken prisoner – a common practice at that time.

Almost 250 seamen from convoy SLS64 lost their lives – sufficient to crew five ships; but the Admiralty regarded these ships as independents and did not count them in convoy loss statistics. The Master of *Warlaby*, was killed in action as was his Second Officer; the Chief Officer survived and made a report. George Medals were awarded to Captain D A MacDonald of the *Blairathol* and Captain I L Price OBE of the *Margot*.

Outward bound convoys to North America were prefixed OA and OB. OB285 had sailed from the UK on 11 February and dispersed on 17 February. On 22 February, when the ships were nearing Newfoundland, they were set upon by the battleships *Gneisnau* and *Scharnhorst*. *Gneisnau* sank the *Trelawney*, the tanker *Harlesden*, the cargo ship *Kantara*: plus the steamer *A D Huff*, which had been in convoy OB286. The *Scharnhorst* sank the tanker *Lustrous*. These ships were together in position 47° 12'N, 40° 13'W, with the exception of the *Harlesden*, who was reported to have been sunk about three miles away. It would appear that they had been together as a 'group', though the Navy avoids saying that they were in convoy. Normally they would have at least had an AMC as an escort. Ten crew members were lost in the attack, the rest were taken prisoner.

Convoy OB288 had originated in Liverpool. Other ships joined from Loch Ewe, including the fairly new motor ship *La Pampa*. She should have been in a previous OB convoy; but, after sailing from the Tyne with a part cargo of gas coke, she struck submerged wreckage and returned to dry dock. She had substantial bottom damage. A repair specification was drawn up and the vessel was booked to drydock in Baltimore, after discharging.

After a day at sea the *Empire Fusilier*, *Empire Steelhead* and *Kasonga* (*Kasongo*?) turned back with mechanical problems. The *Keila* and the *Kingston Hill* were bombed and were escorted back by the corvette *HMS Picotee* and the Smit tug *Thames*. Captain Walter Niven, the Master of the *Kingston Hill*, was killed in this attack. Now the convoy was reduced to 41 ships.

The other escorts were the destroyers *Achates*, *Antelope*, *Georgetown* (Senior Officer Escort), the corvette *Heather* and the trawler *Ayrshire*. An "Ocean Boarding Vessel" HMS *Manistee* was also with the convoy. Both the *Ayrshire* and the *Manistee* were requisitioned merchant vessels.

At 1623/21 the convoy was ordered to steer 270° after passing 59° 44' N 09° 00' W, to avoid a U-boat. At 0900/22 the escort signalled "HELP" when in 59° 40'N 12° 40' W, because of an air attack. At 1900/22 the convoy was plotted as being in 59° 20'N 14° 32' W. A further course alteration to 270° was ordered at 2100/22 [but not carried out?] and at 0900/23 to 300°. The C in C Western Approaches signalled OB288 'disperse at dark 23rd'.

Even though the convoy had been attacked by aircraft, and the C in C WA knew that it was being shadowed by one or more U-boats, the escorts left it to its fate on [the morning of?] the 23rd. From now on they had no defence against submarines. The Commodore was lost in the later attack, so we will never know why he kept the convoy in formation, on a north westerly course and at convoy speed, until the evening of the 23rd. It was tracked all day by a U-boat [*U96*] and six others were converging to form a patrol line running NW/SE through 59°N 21°W.

The Commodore ordered the convoy to disperse at 2100 [BST?] that evening - but told the ships to maintain convoy speed for 30 minutes after dispersal. The vessels fanned out on courses between North, through West, to South South East. The weather was fair with a light wind and a moderate North Westerly swell. There was no moon, but visibility was recorded as being about seven miles with the northern lights.

An extract from *La Pampa*'s log summarise what happened next:

Feb 23rd continued: -

- 2130 Convoy dispersed. (P. Log 67'). Set Co 237° [T] in accordance with convoy instructions.
  - 2200 Encountered enemy S/M barrage. S/S Margalau torpedoed. Position 59° 31' N, 21° 02'W. Proceeded at utmost speed and varied courses accordingly.
  - 2344 Observed enemy S/M at periscope depth close on starboard bow. Manoeuvred ship to ram it and passed immediately over S/M as it dived.
- Posn. 59° 26' N 21° 08' W (Radio). Clocks retarded 1 hour.
- Weather: Smooth sea. Mod swell. Fine and clear.

Nine merchant ships were lost in this encounter, plus the *Manistee*. In all 246 Allied and Neutral seafarers lost their lives, including 192 British merchant seamen. The bulk of these were from the UK, others came from as far afield as Canada and Aden.

*La Pampa* docked at Baltimore and the repairs undertaken were summarised in Lloyd's List. On the 21st March a signal was sent to London:

FOLLOWING FROM BALTIMORE BEGINS "MASTER BRITISH SHIP "LA PAMPA" IN DRY DOCK REPORTS MARKS ON THE BOTTOM INDICATES ATTEMPT TO RAM U-BOAT WHEN CONVOY (LOCH EWE FEBRUARY 20th) WAS ATTACKED FEBRUARY 23rd SHIPS 59° 26' NORTH 21° 8' WEST MAY HAVE BEEN SUCESSFUL, REPORT FOLLOWS". ENDS.

The extract from the log of the *La Pampa* was enclosed together with a letter written by the British Consul in Baltimore on the 25th March, which went on to say:

Captain Toder is of the opinion that the long score mentioned above was caused by contact with the U-boat, and as he was half loaded with coke at the time, he probably would not feel this contact - particularly as his ship vibrates a lot when not fully loaded. The U-boat was first seen 200 yards off on the surface (not at periscope depth as stated in the log) about two points on the

starboard bow. Engines were immediately put to full speed and helm put over to make for the U-boat, and they machine gunned her from the bridge. The U-boat crash dived, and the ship passed exactly over the spot where the U-boat disappeared and was doing about 13 knots at the time. No number was seen on the conning tower owing to the darkness, but the conning tower was very large”.

The interviewer added, "I attach hereto a sketch showing position of U-boat and ships. It seems to me that the action of the S.S. (sic) *La Pampa* probably saved the other ships in company from the waiting U-boat”.

On the 8th April 1941 the text of the report made by the British Consul in Baltimore was sent to the Director of Naval Intelligence in Whitehall. The day before this, Ottawa (?) wrote to F W Bennett in New York “BY SAFE HAND”



***La Pampa* in May 1949**

Thanks for your B/379 of 3rd April and letter of 4th April. I have sent your remarks, along with the Master’s report, to the Admiralty. I am sure they too will agree with your views but I thought it was as well to send the whole correspondence in case the Master starts making more reports when he gets home.

Bennett’s remarks have not been unearthed, but, reading the last line of this letter, one can assume that they were dismissive of the Master’s claim.

The Germans claimed to have sunk a large tonnage of allied ships in the week ending the 28th February. The British, unaware of the full extent of the calamity, dismissed the claim. In fact their total losses in that week exceeded 200,000 tons of merchant shipping – mostly from four convoys.

In March the British had decoded the German Ultra reports for February and knew that no U-boats had been lost. However the Italian submarine R. Smg. *Marcello* had failed to respond to signals after the 22nd February and had been posted as missing. The British tried to credit her sinking variously to HMS *Periwinkle*, HMS *Hurricane*, HMS *Montgomery* and a Sunderland. By 1949 they had to admit that three of their claims were not possible. They therefore informed the Italian authorities that the remaining claim, made on behalf of H.M.S. *Montgomery*, an old ex- American four stacker, must have been the correct one. The *Montgomery*’s logbooks could not be traced at the Public Record Office; but a report filed in ADM199/2040 states ‘1550/22 HMS *Montgomery* attacked firm contact with six depth charges, there was no evidence of destruction’.

In contrast the Master of the *La Pampa* is quite specific about the time and position of his attack on a submarine. It will be remembered that he says that ‘No number was seen on the conning tower owing to the darkness, but the conning tower was very large’. The conning towers of Italian submarines were unusually large and not numbered, so I started by assuming that she had sunk the *Marcello*. But examination of the Kriegstagesbuchs of the U-boats who were involved gives the following translation for *U-69*:

Commenced stern tube attack on Norwegian heavy lift carrier [M Div 900 is the book “Marine-Dienstvorschriften” part 2 picture 45]. During the approach the Northern Lights intensified, so that the water surface was coloured as if illuminated by searchlights.

The steamer turned towards the boat, increased speed and opened fire with 2 cm guns at 400 meters around the boat. Was only able to avoid damage through emergency dive AK at full speed.

0135 underwater cruised away and surfaced”.

Thus by causing the *U-69* to dive *La Pampa*, whose sisters were under the Norwegian flag, saved herself and the three ships that were with her.

Jost Metzler [the commander of the *U-69* – a former merchant service officer] spent about 100 minutes underwater, after which the *La Pampa* and her group had disappeared. He attacked another ship, which saw the torpedo trail and avoided it [*Harberton?*] and finally he was heavily depth charged.

On 25.2.41 he made the following entry in his KTB: -

Clear for Reloading.

When opening the on-deck container it was ascertained, that the tail end of the torpedo was totally collapsed. Torpedo unusable. Upon inspection of the container it was noted, that one arm of the lid closure was broken and the watering valve evidently leaked. The leakage of the valve must have been caused by concussion of aerial bombs and depth charges.

Continued return passage

Considering the reports from the *La Pampa* and the *U69* together it would seem that the score on the bottom of the *La Pampa* was probably caused by contact with the closing mechanism of the upper deck torpedo hatch on the *U69*. Bombing and/or depth charging is unlikely to have caused such localised damage. It follows that not only did the *La Pampa*’s action save the ship and

possibly the others with her; it also prevented the *U69* from reloading his torpedoes. Thus the trip had to be abandoned, maybe saving other ships.

It is interesting to note that the *U-69s* logs [and the other U-boat KTBs] are stamped "This document is Admiralty Property-". So both the *La Pampa's* report and the Kriegstagebuch were with the same establishment and should have been available to the post war committee who ploughed through these records in an effort to credit U-boat sinkings.

We are left with several questions including: who did sink the *Marcello*, and for that matter the *U-47*, and were other attacks by merchant ships ever properly investigated? Why was the convoy left by the escorts and why were the vessels kept together in formation all day giving the submarines ample time to converge and mount an attack? Even though the British could not decode the messages between the U-boats until later, the chatter should have alerted them to their presence. Unfortunately the March decodes of February signals, filed in TNA DEFE3/1' only begin on 26/2.

No escorts returned to assist the merchant ships: but the *Heather*, *Churchill* and *Leopard* came back to rescue the crew of HMS *Manistee* when she sank at daybreak. Presumably these were the vessels that depth charged *U69* and the *U96* around midday on the 24th. Could they have accounted for the *Marcello* also, or was she sunk by a merchant ship?

In May 1941 Captain Toder was hospitalised in Montreal with stomach ulcers, having handed over command to the 1st Mate Mat Frame in mid Atlantic. Toder had been in command of the *La Pampa* for 18 months, without more than a few days break. He died in October of that year and is buried at his home village of Heswall, Cheshire, yet another unacknowledged casualty of the war.

Convoy OB 290 left Liverpool on 23 February, with a six ship escort. The convoy was not detected until Prien, in the *U-47*, chanced on it on 25 February. He called in six FW 200 bombers, who attacked repeatedly. Aircraft sank the *Beursplein* (Dutch), *Llanwern*, *Mahanada* and *Swinburne*. The *Amstelland* (Dutch) was taken in tow, but sank on 28 February; they damaged the *Leeds City*, *Blankaholm* (Swedish), *Suriname* (Dutch) and *Melmore Head*. *U-47* sank the *Borgland* (Norwegian) and *Kasango* (Belgian) (from OB288). Her third victim, the *Rydboholm* (Swedish) sank on 28 February. *U-47* also damaged the *Diala*. The Italian submarine *Bianchi* sank the *Baltistan*. There were fifty two deaths; lost cargoes included aircraft, military stores and vehicles.

The next merchant ship to attack a submarine was the ss *Merchant*, which machine gunned one on 1 March 1941. This report has not been seen, it might help solve the mystery of the *U-47*, who was never heard of again. Another merchant ship initiated the next known sinking of a submarine, the *U-70*, on 7 March. After being torpedoed the Dutch tanker *Mijdrecht*, with an enormous hole in her side, swung and rammed the U-boat which was forced under the full length of the ship. The crew tried to surrender to the *Mijdrecht*, but three Royal Navy ships claimed the credit for the sinking, as the submarine had 'only been lightly damaged by the *Mijdrecht*.'

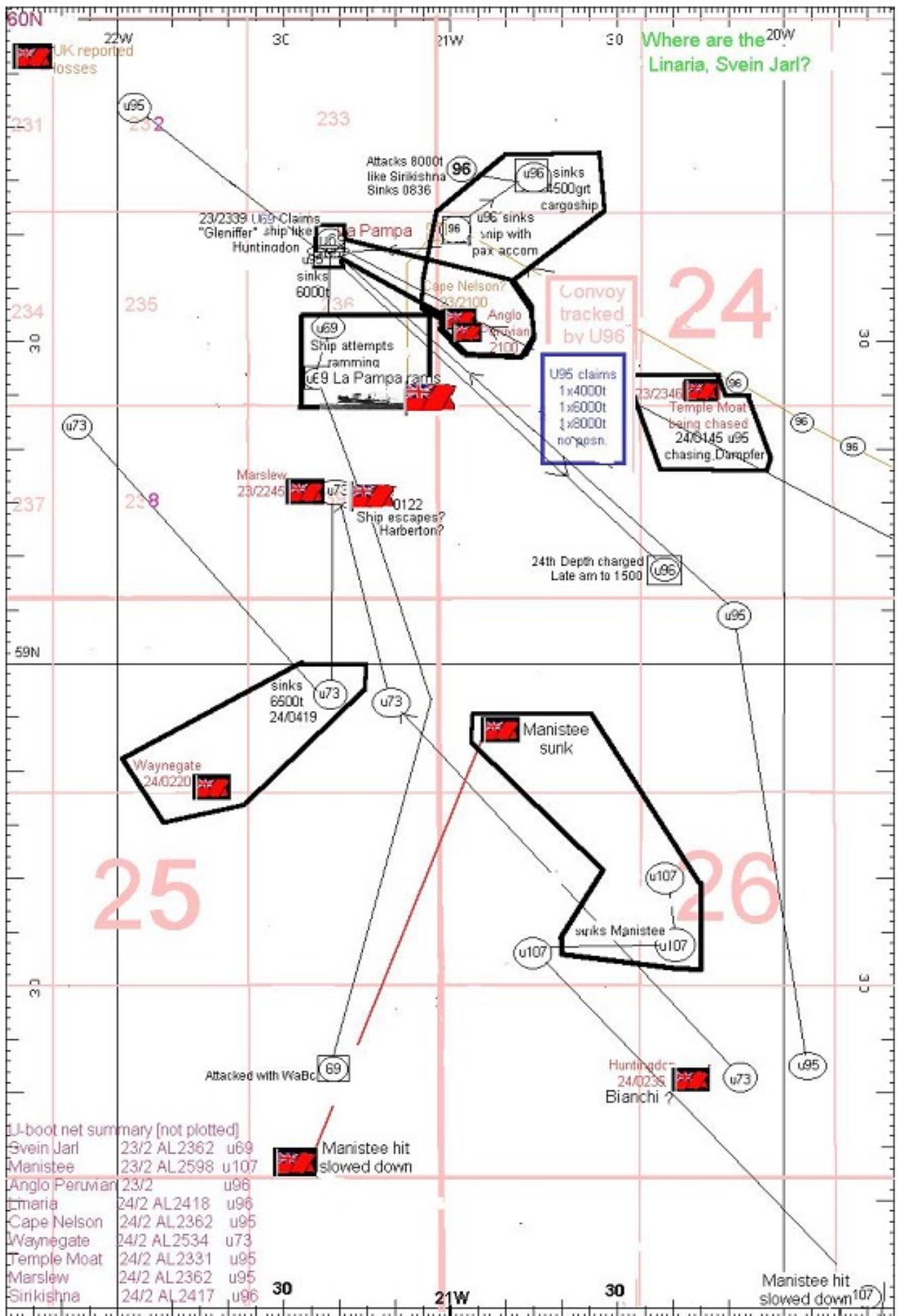
In a telegram entitled 'Report on military situation' dated 2/3/41, the British told the Americans 'Since commencement of hostilities 54,693 ships have been convoyed, out of which 192 British ships and 31 Allied ships and 19 neutral have been lost.' The Americans must have wondered why the Limeys were bleating about only having a few weeks food and fuel left, when they had lost so few ships in convoy. For the Germans this was the first 'Happy Time'

In February the Western Approaches Command, under Admiral Sir Percy Noble, had been moved to Derby House in Liverpool. Admiral Noble appointed Vice-Admiral Sir Gilbert Stephenson to train the escorts at a base on the island of Mull. Admiral Stephenson became known as the 'Terror of Tobermory'; but the rigorous training he organised, and weeding out the incompetent, meant that the escort groups at last began to reach the standard needed.

On 6 March the Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared the start of the Battle of the Atlantic. In doing so he was admitting that the hunting groups that he had keenly supported were ineffective. As Minister of Defence he chaired the Battle of the Atlantic Committee. He presented a thirteen point action plan to the committee, to achieve a successful outcome in this desperate fight. In addition to the obvious need to hunt and kill U-boats and Condors at sea and bomb building yards, bases and airfields, his points included:

- Fitting 200 merchant ships with catapults to launch fighters, so that every convoy would have four such ships. (Only thirty five were modified)
- Concentrate the aircraft of Coastal Command over the Northwest Approaches, where the main convoy routes were moved.
- 'Allow' all merchant ships that could steam at 12 knots or more to sail unescorted. (*this resulted in even more losses and was later cancelled*)
- Give priority to arming merchant ships with anti-aircraft guns and improve AA defences at the main seaports.
- Improve the turn round of merchant ships at home and abroad and substantially reduce the number of damaged ships awaiting repair at British shipyards.

Immediately after the SLS 64 disaster the convoys SL65 and SLS65 were combined; their escort included a light cruiser, seven destroyers, a sloop and two corvettes. The much needed improvement in standards took longer to take effect and allied merchant ship losses were: March, 139; April, 155 and May, 124. When the improvement came it came was dramatic, in July only forty four ships were lost; and in the ten months from March 1941 the Kriegsmarine lost a total of thirty five U-boats.



The pink figures are the U-boat block numbers

## Scene at the Sea Pie Supper



Above, left, Captains Jeremy Smart and Leslie Morris with the Stowaways present, Admiral Lord West, Dame Mary Fagan and Sir Malcolm Edge.

Right, Captain and Captain-Elect, this time with the Dignitaries, Nigel Atkinson Esq., The Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Lady Portal, the High Sheriff of Hampshire and Councilor Cathie McEwing, the Sheriff of Southampton.

Below, left Captain Smart invests Captain Morris as the new Captain of the Cachalots.

Centre, Principal Speaker, Captain Chris Wells , Captain of *Queen Mary 2*.

Right, Honorary Shantyman David King, accompanied by his father, Geoff.



### The Prize Draw

Once again, The Southampton Shipowners' Association had generously donated a prize, an Apple iPad mini, to be raffled on behalf of the Southampton Seafarers' Centre. The total in the envelopes collected from each table came to £3820. Meanwhile, the MCA contingent had held a sweepstake of their own, on the length of the Speaker's speech. The long-shot winner of that sweep kindly donated his winnings, £85.50, to the same cause, making a total of

**£3905.50**

Left, Ashley Jenkins, of Whitakers Tankers and the SSA and one of his guests, Jelena Bavrina, with MC Gerry Cartwright. Jelena drew the lucky place-card and presented the winner, Mark Towens, on the Amico Marine table, with his prize.

## **A Sense of Entitlement**

### **Lloyd's List Viewpoint 22 February 16**

*with permission of LL and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey*

My favourite shipping dinner has come and gone, with the celebrated Southampton Master Mariner's Sea Pie Supper now a receding memory. We have been holding it at the Southampton FC St. Mary's Stadium for the last couple of years, where the arrangements work admirably; if they can cope with thirty thousand rowdy soccer fans on a Saturday, 500 noisy master mariners on the Friday night are a doddle.

There was a certain discontent about the length of the speeches, which went on so long that the advertised programme of sea shanties had to be attenuated. Fortunately my favourite sea song Spanish Ladies (which always brings a tear to my eyes) did feature. The principal guest Captain Chris Wells, master of the Queen Mary 2, ranged widely and at length in his speech,, itemising his career and offering a trenchant opinion on a wide variety of maritime topics.

He was particularly fierce in his criticism of ports around the world for failing to properly accommodate the latest generation of enormous cruise ships which are being inflicted on them (my term) by ship owners obsessed with gigantism. I thought he was somewhat harsh about the Port of Southampton, which only has managed to construct three of these specialist terminals, when he seemed to suggest that such was the importance of the cruise sector that the whole infrastructure of the port and surrounding city should be converted to serving these monstrous vessels.

Failure to accommodate them would, he hinted darkly, only give encouragement to their nearby Hampshire rival. He may be onto something, as the Navy will be dredging out the Portsmouth approaches to enable the two new carriers to lie alongside and there may well be a civilian spin-off available as more of the shrinking Grey Funnel Line vacates its historic premises. He also seemed to appear vaguely insulted that the Port of Sydney had not managed to jack up the Harbour Bridge to accommodate some of the current cruise ship fleet, which are so high that they cannot fit underneath its celebrated span. To make matters worse, the burghers of the New South Wales city have contrived to close down some of the cruise ship berths in the innermost part of the harbour, banishing them elsewhere. He seemed to suggest that he would not be that surprised if these important passenger ships were not forced out of the picturesque ambience of Port Jackson to the grim and utilitarian surroundings of the container infested Botany Bay. Such would be grand for the proprietors of motor coaches, but may diminish the experience for the passengers.

While loath to criticise a senior mariner, I might suggest that he is seeing the world through a somewhat one-sided lens, although he will be doubtless cheered to the rafters by his employer. I am a strong supporter of ports and the industry they engender, and invariably critical about all these miserable people who would like to see ships banished from the wharves forever and the vacant spaces filled by luxury condominiums overlooking the occasional marina and an otherwise empty harbour. I try and remind them (although they are invariably deaf to such arguments) that ports were ports before their adjacent cities had been thought of and they really should not be so sniffy about the presence of ships.

Mind you, in recent years, such is the extravagant imagination of naval architects seeking to indulge the demands of ship owners, I am becoming rather more sympathetic to those who would rather not have their view ruined by either piles of containers and huge gantries, or monster cruise ships so high that they block out the sun in winter. Let's face it, if you were paying top dollar for a sea view and the aspect of a beautiful harbour, you would be enraged beyond belief if some greedy developer built a fifteen story edifice slap-bang in front of your sitting room. I know it is a ship (although it is hard to believe it sometimes) and it will sail, but there will be another almost identical pile of hideous metal there tomorrow. And every day after that, as long as the cruise season endures.

I know there are some pretty ships remaining, of modest and pleasing proportions, but they are older and there are fewer all the time, in the battle for profitable floating real estate and scale economics. I know that it is all in the eye of the beholder, but the whole point of these huge and identically hideous monstrosities is that the people who pay to use them don't have to look at them. Perhaps persons of taste might shudder inwardly, as the tender carries them back from a shore excursion in an anchorage port, but I doubt that there will be many who will notice.

There are chief executives of port authorities who work their fingers to the bone trying to lure cruise companies into their harbours, but these people will always want more for their port dues. If you give them two terminals they will want four – if you give them thirty feet of water alongside the berth they will want forty, cold ironing and a 2000 vehicle car park. And in giving them all this stuff you may well lose the support of the surrounding population, which you may well need to help along your next container terminal or dredging development.

Cruise folk have a sense of entitlement and are never going to be satisfied with what you give them. Captain Wells, true to type, complained at his ship having to berth in Brooklyn, rather than mid-town Manhattan, when on the trans-Atlantic service. They should be so lucky. In my day we were overjoyed and humbly grateful for a berth in Brooklyn, the horrible alternative being a desolate and remote berth through the Kill van Kull in New Jersey.

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## Gone Aloft



### Captain John Crawford Moffat

Past Captain John Moffat, went aloft on 9th December 2015. Born in 1928 he was keen to join the Merchant Navy as a deck cadet and in 1943, at the age of fifteen, he applied to nearly thirty shipping companies but there were no vacancies, probably due to the loss of ships. To gain some experience he found himself a berth as cabin boy on a small explosives carrier until, in May '45, just as the war was ending, he was accepted as a cadet with Clan Line. His first ship was the *Clan Forbes*.

After gaining his qualifications John went on to join Canadian Pacific, where he gained much experience in large liners, but reached the pinnacle of his career as a highly respected master with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. He was master of just about every class of post war RFA ship, around seventeen vessels in all, too many to list here.

John joined the Club in June 1958, serving as Captain in 1990, and he and his wife Joan were regulars at Club functions. His funeral Service at Portchester on 24th December was well attended by fellow Cachalots.

Joan pre-deceased him in November 2015.

Our condolences to his son Richard and family.

### Captain Harvey Smith

Harvey Smith was born in 1932 and attended Allan Glen's School before going on to the Murray Sea School. He joined Donaldson Line in 1952 and sailed as Senior cadet on the *Captain Cook*, an immigrant ship to New Zealand, visiting Pitcairn Island on the way.

On gaining 2nd Mates he moved to Cunard, sailing on cargo ships initially then as 2nd officer/ principal navigator on the *MVS Britannic*, the last of the White Star Line. Then on to the *Caronia* and returning to cargo ships before attaining his Master's in 1961.

He sailed on the *Ivernia*, *Saxonia*, *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Mauretania*. In '67 he joined the *QE2*, then being built on the Clyde, and sailed on her as 1st officer, Chief Officer then Staff Captain. He spent 1974 in Copenhagen overseeing the building of *Cunard Countess* and *Cunard Princess* and a further year and a half in Italy fitting them out. He returned to the *QE2* in the new role of General Manager.

In 1982 he was involved in the Falklands War, overseeing conversion to troop carrier of *Cunard Countess*. He sailed as Master and received a commendation from the Admiralty after landing troops in the Falkland Islands. In '83 he was promoted General Manager of *Countess* and *Princess* and in 1990 he was posted to New York as Vice-president Operations Trafalgar House. He retired in 1990 and returned to the UK doing consultancy work.

Harvey joined the Club in December '71 and was Sea Staff Captain in '83. He went aloft on 16th November 2015.

## The Southampton Master Mariners' Club, (The CACHALOTS) 1st Floor, 12-14 Queens Terrace, SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3BP

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The Club room is currently open **two** days a week, Thursday and Friday, 1130 - 1500. Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink and she can take your orders for meals, sandwiches and snacks. Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this newsletter will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.

### Dates for your Diary

Fri 18 Mar Skittles, Sot'on (Old) Bowling Green  
Sat 23 Apr Curry Lunch, Kuti's, Oxford Street  
Fri 20 May Club Supper, Club room  
Thu 9 June Shipping Festival Service, Winchester  
Sat 9 July Curry Lunch, Kuti's

The cut-off date for the next edition will be  
13th May 2016

**250 Club**

November	T E Clark	D Gates
December	R C Plumley	W H Roberts
January	M R Donaghy	I B Thomson
February	J N Mileusnic	Margaret Grant

*Hamish Roberts went aloft on the day that the December draw was made. His £100 winnings have been donated to The Southampton Seafarers' Centre.*