

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

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## Post Captain's Log

All new Post Captains say it: their year as Captain of the Cachalots flies by and, just when you feel you are getting the hang of the job, retirement beckons and the badge of office is handed over to the successor. In my case, I had the very great pleasure of handing over to Captain Robin Plumley MBE, who I know will be a breath of fresh air and will stamp his own ways and authority on the position of "Captain of The Cachalots".

However..... He had no sooner received his newly polished badge of office than, bags packed, he and the lovely Karen (Mrs Plumley) flew off to South Africa for a "bit of sunshine"! Haven't they heard of the dangers of sunshine in February? No, I am not the least bit jealous.....of course I am not....! They are coming back for a Curry Lunch, though, while I – yet again - manage to miss it!

In my last Captain's Log I mentioned that as editorial restrictions precluded reports of functions after 28th October 2016, I would continue in the New Year. So here we resume:

The Harpooners' Dinner was held in the main room at the Royal British Legion Club in Southampton on Wednesday evening 16th November. As usual, John Davies and his team served us with an excellent dinner, which was matched by the service, and enjoyed by all. Sadly for us, John will be retiring this summer and I understand the Club Supper held in May will be the last time we will enjoy the wonderful service he and his team have provided us with over many years. No doubt Peter Grant and his team have ideas for a replacement, but I don't envy them their task. It will be a hard act to follow.

For those of you who may not know, a "Harpooner" is, or rather, was, a committee member and in days gone by their numbers were much greater than that of the present Management Committee. However, the Harpooners' Dinner was always a popular event and it was decided to carry on with it in its long-established format, that being by invitation of the Captain who was reaching the end of his year. It was a way of saying "thank you" to all who helped run the Club and its functions through the year, and in the past. Attendees on 16th November consisted of members of the Management Committee, Past Captains, Officers of the Club and "Cachalots who help". Apologies if you feel you were left out; please notify the Boatsteerer and he will apologise appropriately. By the way, ladies, it is not a "men only" event. One or two of our more sensitive lady members gracefully declined the invitation this year on those grounds (I am stretching credibility here; they obviously had something better to do, as their husbands were attending the event.) It was a very good evening. As usual, after the toasts, stories were told, jokes revived (some) and lamps were well and truly swung. Thank you all!

Regrettably, that turned out to be the last function I attended until the Sea-Pie Supper on 3rd February 2017. The Christmas Dinner was held at Kings Court, Chandlers Ford, on the evening of Saturday 10th December, but that clashed with a Warsash Association lunch on the same day in Portsmouth that Ann and I had committed to, many months before. We had intended to go to the Cachalots Christmas lunch instead, but that was cancelled.

The popular Burns Night Supper was held at Kings Court on 21st January 2017, by which time Ann and I were on our way

*Continued on p.2*



## New Captain, Robin Plumley MBE

Born in Guildford, Surrey in 1955, Robin attended school locally before going to sea.

He joined the Merchant Navy in 1972 as Deck Cadet with British & Commonwealth Shipping Company Limited incorporating, among others, Clan Line and Union-Castle. Served as cadet on *Clan Menzies*, *Clan Robertson*, *Good Hope Castle*, then as un-certificated 4th /3rd Officer *Edinburgh Castle*, and as un-certificated 3rd Officer on *Clan MacLean*, *Clan MacIver*, *Clan Graham* and finally *Pendennis Castle*.

Completed all training for certificates of competency through the School of Navigation at Warsash.

Gained Second Mates Certificate of Competency in June 1976, joining British Antarctic Survey in October of the same year serving on *RRS Bransfield* for two Antarctic seasons as 4th and then 3rd Officer. After gaining Chief Mates Certificate of Competency in 1979 returned to *RRS Bransfield* as 2nd Officer before transferring to *RRS John Biscoe* in 1982. After gaining Master's Certificate of Competency in 1984, was promoted to Chief Officer on *RRS John Biscoe* where he served until 1991 prior to transfer to the new vessel *RRS James Clark Ross*.

In 1992 after completing the maiden voyage south with *RRS James Clark Ross*, a vacancy as Master with Research Vessel Services arose. After a short spell of familiarisation and probation was appointed Master in January 1993 on *RRS Charles Darwin*.

Served as Master on *RRS Challenger* and *RRS Discovery* before transferring to Norway for the final build work and acceptance sea trials of *RRS James Cook* in 2006.

Invited ashore in November 2007 as Acting Head of Operations, becoming Research Ship Manager in the Senior Management Team from January 2009 until retirement in February 2015.

Awarded Polar Medal in 1992 for 'outstanding contribution to Antarctic science' and MBE for 'services to marine science' in 2015.

He is Area Secretary of Southampton & New Forest MG Owners Club.

Other interests include golf, gardening and family research.

to Portugal, where I treated her to an outdoor lunch for her birthday on 25th January (Sorry about that!). I understand that both the Christmas Dinner and the Burns Supper were enjoyed by all who attended and that others will report on their outcomes.

Finally – it is always the final event for the out-going Captain – we come to the 2017 Sea Pie Supper. Last year’s event was not one of our better ones, but I think it is true to say that this one was. A great deal of work went into ensuring this year’s event was successful. The work was not done by me I hasten to add, but by the usual group of Past Captains, Officers and Cachalots who put heart and soul into preparation and execution of the evening. Thank you all once again.

As is customary, The Captain (and others) meets the Official Guests in the “VIP Lounge” where they all gather before moving to the Main Suite to be greeted by Club members and other guests before being seated for supper. Not only is this a time of re-acquaintance, but it is also a chance to meet new guests in smaller, convivial surroundings. It is also a time for Terry Clark to sharpen up his photography skills. He customary photographs the Club Officers and Guests in a group, but this time he also had the inspired idea to have an additional group photograph of Past Captains, with Captain, Staff Captain and other Officers. This duly done (and Captain and Boatsteerer having panic attacks about the time taken, we all trooped along to the Main Suite for supper, where we arrived on time (more or less)! Well done Terry!

It is always a pleasure to welcome our guests in such an event, but it was a singular pleasure to welcome the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mr Nigel Atkinson and his wife Christine as Principal Guests for the evening. Mr Atkinson was invested as a Stowaway of the Club by the new Captain, Robin Plumley, and in his speech of thanks on behalf of the guests he provided us with a thought-provoking and highly amusing discourse that set the tone for the remainder of the evening.

Apart from our new Stowaway, two of our existing Stowaways also attended, namely Dame Mary Fagan (accompanied by husband Christopher) and Sir Malcolm Edge. It is always a sincere and very great pleasure to welcome our Stowaways, especially so on wild and wintry nights such as this was!

During the comfort breaks, several of our guests went out of their way to say how much they enjoyed the supper and the service. This was an area of complaint last year and it was my pleasure to be able to thank the staff publicly this time.

After the supper and speeches we arrived at what for many is the highlight of the evening – The Shanties! It might be my imagination but I thought the harmony and sheer power of the singing was much better than normal. Some even sang in tune!

Then, I noticed two things:

- i) All the Distinguished Guests remained at the table, and
- ii) There seemed to be more Welsh people in the room!

A sad note was touched when the Shantyman declared this would be the last performance of his colleague (father) and himself at our Sea Pie Supper. It was a surprise to all of us, but at least we have a year to find others. Our sincere thanks to both of them.

I also have one regret about the evening. I was unable to catch the Band Leader before he left the suite, although I was able to thank some of the band members – mainly those with the more cumbersome instruments – and offer my thanks. We shall have to do it another way.

And that was it. We had a bit of time at the end for people to say their good-byes. Many people stopped me to offer their thanks for a very good evening. Nice to go out on a high!

Best wishes Robin!

Leslie Morris  
Post Captain.

## Boatsteerer’s Locker

Fellow Cachalots

After the last edition of our newsletter New Year was upon us and we made our appropriate New Year’s Resolutions. An easy first was to resolve to keep away from people with any winter diseases and not to take a telephone call from someone with symptoms. We even tried to avoid disease ridden grandchildren when parents saying “I knew that you’d want us to come all the same” brought them to visit us. Other resolutions involved my sacrifices such as given up drinking alcohol, brown sauce and supermarket shopping which will not really help the World to be a better place to live in.

I missed the Burns Night Supper and our AGM and was pleased that Trustee Barry Peck took the Minutes while I went on a cruise through the Suez Canal to Dubai with stops enroute, the first being an unscheduled brief stop at Vigo, Spain for a medical emergency. At Malta it was necessary to replenish the burra memsahib’s gin locker at the duty free as I’d promised her that she would see the pyramids by moonlight from a back of a camel (how romantic) but alas it was not to be due to unrest in Egypt we visited Greece and Crete instead. An old seafaring friend asked me to check at Port Said if they still hung a searchlight over the bows for the canal passage and also did the bum-boatmen still come onboard. I was pleased to tell him on my return that nothing had really changed except the grandsons of George Robey and Jock McGregor came onboard and set up their wares in the Atrium in front of reception. At the mention of their illustrious grandfathers I was offered a special discount not to be disclosed to others.

Down the Red Sea we had an anti-piracy drill and rendezvoused with an ex trawler to transfer from a RIB several long black bags for the security men who boarded at our next stop Aqaba for the passage to India.

We did not meet any pirates much to the disappointment of one elderly lady with a zimmer who was heard to complain that she wouldn’t have minded the pillage and was looking forward to a bit of the other.

On our section of the world cruise we had some interesting speakers Eddie the Eagle and Michel Buerk amongst others as well as first rate entertainers.

Arriving back at Heathrow on Tuesday evening just in time to visit the office the next day and find that everything was in hand for the Friday Sea Pie Supper, which I’m pleased to say went off splendidly with good reports from the guests. Unfortunately our Shantymen announced that they were retiring and this was their last performance, they will be a hard act to follow.



The answer to the Boatsteerer’s prayers

## The Sea Pie Supper 2017



*Standing, left to right:* Past Capt Gerry Cartwright (MC), Capt Flavian K D'Souza (Master, HCMM), Cdre Duncan Lamb (RFA), Cdre Jeremy Rigby (Naval Base Commander, Portsmouth), Prof A E Hill (Director, National Oceanography Centre), Capt Ian McNaught (Deputy Master, Trinity House), Capt Sir Malcolm Edge (Stowaway), Capt John Lloyd (Nautical Institute),  
*Seated:* Mrs Sophie Riem, Rev'd Canon Dr Roland Riem (Acting Dean of Winchester), Mrs Christine Atkinson, Mr Nigel Atkinson (Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire), Capt Leslie Morris, Capt-elect Robin Plumley, Mrs Sarah Floyd, Mr Tom Floyd (High Sheriff of Hampshire), Dame Mary Fagan (Stowaway), Captain Christopher Fagan.



Fifteen Past Captains were also present and were encouraged to stay still long enough to capture the picture above.  
*Standing, left to right:* Odd ('14), Morris ('08 and '16), Salter ('11), Cartwright ('10), Mileusnic ('09), Grant ('12), Capt-Elect Plumley, Boatsteerer Ken Dagnall.  
*Seated:* Stirling ('02), Smart ('98 and '15), Kelso ('92), Noble ('89 and '13), Downer ('88, Senior Past Captain present.), Thomson ('91), Hughes ('97), Clark ('00), Tinsley ('04).



Master of Ceremonies, Gerry Cartwright, was not the only one entertained by Lord Lieutenant Nigel Atkinson's Response for the Guests. Having been installed as the Club's latest Stowaway by new Captain Robin Plumley, the Lord Lieutenant delivered a pertinent and amusing speech which was well received by the near 500 members and guests, even satisfying the unofficial time-keepers.



Outgoing Captain Lesley Morris introduces his replacement, Captain Robin Plumley MBE, and installs him as Captain of The Cachalots, under the watchful eye of Master of Ceremonies, Past Captain Gerry Cartwright.



**Fare Thee Well**

Honorary Shantyman David King and his father, Geoff, were in fine voice leading us in the traditional shanties at the end of the Sea Pie Supper. Unfortunately they announced that this would be their last Supper, having taken over the reins from Tony Davis in 2005 and appeared annually since. We now seek a new Shantyman to lead us in the 'Call & Response' style of singing that we enjoy so well and if you know of any suitable candidates, please let us know.

**Tony Davis R.I.P.**

Sad to report that Tony Davis, our previous Honorary Shantyman, went aloft on the 10th February, aged 86. The de facto leader of the Spinners, a Liverpool-based folk quartet, although he rejected that title and insisted they were all equals, Tony first appeared on our Sea Pie Programmes in 1981, becoming Hon. Shantyman in 1985. The Spinners formally retired in 1988, having enjoyed 30 years of success in touring and recording, but Tony continued to lead us in our sing-alongs, at which he was a natural, until ill health curtailed his appearances in 2004.

**Southampton Shipowners Association Draw**

The SSA again put up the prize of an iPad thingy for the Prize Draw and once the money from the envelopes had been extracted and the cards placed in the raffle drum two of the exquisite ladies who always grace Ashley Jenkins' table were recruited to do the honours. I had the enviable task of supervising them and in my excitement forgot to get the photos. Sorry Lou Lou and Jennie. The lucky winner was Steve Beck from the I.M.E table.

After another trawl through the envelopes, cards and drum for hidden notes, the Grand Total raised, after conversion of odd Euros and Dirhams was



**£3461.90**



**ALL** contributions have gone to the Southampton Branch of the Mission to Seafarers, specifically to support the ongoing transportation facilities for seafarers in the Port.

**Fantasy Football**



Club Administrator Richard James, called in to work out a seating plan for 32,505, takes a break to announce his team for the EFL Cup Final.

## The Peter Marriott Bursary

*As previously reported, last year the Southampton Sea Cadets Unit requested the full Bursary of £500 to go towards the cost of 12 Cadets having a week's training onboard T.S. Jack Petchey during the Autumn half term. This was approved and below is the Cadet Unit's own report on their experiences, unedited by me, other than their supplied pictures. Having read it, I hope you will agree with us that this is a fitting and rewarding use of the Bursary Fund.....Ed*

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016,

11 Cadets and two members of staff travelled to Gosport to join TS Jack Petchey for the week, this was the first time since the new offshore Power Vessels have entered service that the Unit had planned and executed such a venture, or some might say adventure. We joined the ship at 1500 hours with the remaining hours being spent on familiarisation and safety briefs.



|                                |                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| TS Jack Petchey                |                                       |
| Year Built:                    | <b>2010</b>                           |
| Builder:                       | <b>Bridgend Boat Company Plymouth</b> |
| MMSI:                          | <b>235075328</b>                      |
| Length overall (LOA):          | <b>23.5 m</b>                         |
| Beam:                          | <b>6.35 m</b>                         |
| Draught (max):                 | <b>2.2 m</b>                          |
| Height:                        | <b>11 m</b>                           |
| Gross Tonnage:                 | <b>67 tonnes</b>                      |
| Speed recorded (Max / Average) | <b>10.4 / 8.9 knots</b>               |

After a morning spent undertaking lectures and training in Harbour drills and Navigation Petchey slipped from her Gosport base, and steamed for Poole. On the passage to Poole the cadets conducted hourly bridge watches, steering, keeping look out plotting the course progress manually as Petchey and her sister ship are both paper ships so navigation is conducted on paper charts. We sailed out of Portsmouth through the Solent and the Western approaches, past the Needles and in to Poole. For nearly all of the cadets this was their first taste of being at sea and for some they found a few challenges, which included steering a straight course. Safely alongside in Poole for the evening the cadets and staff made good use of the ashore showering facilities.

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016

The weather today was not as kind as it had been the previous day, so the cadets had a couple of hour's shore leave before slipping her berth and heading for Weymouth. Then the fun began after rounding Old Harry Rocks the rain closed in and Petchey turned beam on to the wind. It was at this point that many of the cadets succumbed to the dreaded sea sickness with the unaffected taking up the mantle of keeping the ship on course. On arrival in Weymouth the permanent crew told the cadets how impressed they were with their response to what was a pretty unpleasant passage, which was cut short by the weather state, and as a reward the cadets were granted a few hours shore leave to meet the TS Royalist Crew who had also taken refuge in Weymouth. Later that evening we were joined by our sister ship the TS John Jerwood. (The first but not the last time the two would meet this week).



Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016

A good covering of Sea Fog had fallen overnight and gave Weymouth harbour a mysterious eerie gloom this morning. However once the fog had lifted and after the outboard John Jerwood had slipped her moorings, Petchey proceeded out to sea. Pleased to say that the weather had cleared and by lunchtime we basked in bright sunshine, for our passage to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. En route it was decided that we should anchor for lunch, which we did in Lulworth Cove, after checking first with the Range Wardens to ensure that the Army were not about to shoot at us from Lulworth ranges. This is where the cadets got their first hand experience in dropping and weighing anchor. Once lunch was completed we carried on our way to Yarmouth with some man overboard drills added for good luck. The passage gave some breath taking views of Durdle Door, Old Harry Rocks and the Needles in bright sunshine.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016

A short passage day today, Yarmouth to Cowes, today was spent carrying out evolutions in the Western approaches. Once again with weather conditions in our favour the cadets carried out tasks such as engine watches, close channel navigation and anchoring. Whilst at anchor the sea boat was launched and the cadets were given a good blast out by the Coxswain. Once weighing anchor we proceeded to Cowes, but not before stumbling upon the John Jerwood on her way in to Beulieu, normal marks of respects were paid while passing, these also included Mexican Waves cheering and waving, general merriment. The rest of the afternoon was spent ashore in Cowes for a bit of well earned R & R.

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Happy Birthday Able Cadet Connie!

We woke to find Cowes, Portsmouth and Southampton invisible due to the Fog, so much so that the Queen's Harbour Master (QHM) Portsmouth has closed the harbour to traffic due to the fog.

So the cadets set to the task of cleaning the ship in preparation for Captain's Rounds, normally a task carried out alongside in Gosport, but as we were fog bound what else was there to do. The result is that after all the hard work the ship passed muster and the cadets completed their assessments for their offshore power qualifications. Once all of this had been completed we received the message that QHM had reopened Portsmouth so we steamed for Gosport and home. Alongside for the night in her home port Petchey became the venue for a birthday party followed by a treat for all of the cadets on the offshore fleet this week. The minibuses were employed in taking the cadets to the HMS Sultan Firework display.



Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Our final morning onboard the ship we had called home for the last week, Jack Petchey. Once the bunk spaces had been cleared and the trailer loaded with luggage the Skipper gathered the masses for one final address. Thanking the cadets for their efforts and providing the permanent crew with an enjoyable week the Skipper presented each cadet with their Offshore Power Hand Qualification, we then departed for Southampton.



Cadet Kyte

On Jack Petchey we went to a lot of interesting places including Yarmouth and Weymouth, the trip was very exciting and everyone at S.C.C. Southampton that attended this trip had lots of fun. My favourite part of the trip was looking at the engines and the shore leave. The staff onboard were very nice and supportive and were a great part of the experience. The shore leave was amazing due to us getting a look at the places we visited also another fantastic part of the trip was visiting HMS Sultan and looking at the wonderful Fireworks.

Thank You

Cadet Kyte

Dear Master Mariners,

I am writing to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to work on Jack Petchey for one



week. I had a really great time and achieved everything I wanted to achieve.

Whilst on the ship I learnt how to navigate our course, night watch, steering the ship and recording information from the engines. We were also able to moor up in different harbours and explore different sights that I had not visited before.

I have also been able to take some really good pictures that I could share with my friends and family.

Yours sincerely

Cadet First Class Weyman.



### Cadet Thoughts

Cadet Duggan

After returning from the Jack Petchey course I can say it was a great experience and one I will remember. The whole week was packed with fun, tasks and challenges to overcome. From steering the ship, to navigating, to tying up the vessel. I learnt so many skills that I had never dreamed of doing. My favourite was the fact that each day we got to see somewhere new whether it be a landmark at sea or a monument on land. The only negative was a very rough day which ended in 7 of us heaving over the side of the boat only 30 minutes in to that day's voyage, but it is all part of being a sailor.

## Marriages at Sea.

On the bus the other day a young lady behind me was telling her friend that she and her boyfriend were off on a cruise in May and that she intended to try to persuade him "to ask the Captain to marry us". The bus stopped and both got off - leaving me to recall a balmy evening sailing through a tranquil Mediterranean when in command of the cruise ship "Reina del Mar". The door to the Boat Deck was ajar and, in response to some frantic knocking I opened it to behold a young man and woman, both of whom had obviously been imbibing heavily. The lady grabbed my shirt-sleeved arm and, without further ado, announced " We want you to marry us". After some further discussion I told them that I was not empowered to do so ....but I would be very happy to give them a Cover Note for the duration of the cruise.



There is a widespread belief that the Master of a ship IS empowered to perform a marriage ceremony and in the long-past days of emigrant voyages under sail shipboard marriages were commonplace, with the Master officiating in the majority of them.

In the United Kingdom marriages are not legally recognised unless the ceremony is carried out by a Clergyman or an individual designated for that purpose. - and a UK registered vessel must comply with these regulations and a Shipmaster does not meet the legal requirements. That said, the Official Logbook requires the Master to record details of any marriage performed aboard his command but there is no guidance relating to the Master's inability to officiate. The Lords of the Admiralty, however, were more alert to the situation and they issued precise instructions prohibiting any such activity aboard HM ships.

Official Logbooks were introduced by The Mercantile Marine Act 1850 and it was at that time that the requirement to record shipboard marriages was stipulated. Prior to this the law relating to marriage throughout the UK had been clarified and changed - but there was no specific reference to shipboard ceremonies and some Masters interpreted the M.M.Act as conferring upon them the right to conduct marriage ceremonies and they did so in good faith. History relates the difficulties relating to shipboard marriages conducted by the Master of an emigrant ship on the New Zealand run in the late 1800's. He "married" two crew members to two passengers but, on disembarkation in New Zealand a Magistrate ordered the couples to re-marry in a Registry Office.

Certainly on long "emigrant" voyages under sail, marriages conducted by the Master were commonplace and it is recorded that one packet was the venue for some 200 weddings in the course of 116 round voyages. Undoubtedly, some were to confirm the legitimacy of children born aboard.

TODAY, however, although the situation relating to UK flag vessels is unchanged, in other registries the legal situation varies. Filipino law permits a Shipmaster ( or the Captain of an aircraft) to carry out a marriage ceremony where one of those involved is on the point of death but the Japanese are more liberal and Japanese citizens may be bonded in matrimony by the Master of a vessel under the Japanese flag. Both the Maltese register and the Bermuda register offer shipboard weddings with the Captain officiating. and, by "deserting" the UK register and lowering their Red Ensigns many cruise companies have taken advantage of this to enable them take advantage of this lucrative development.

Princess Cruises and Cunard ,to mention but two, actually advertise the advantages - especially financially - of wedding aboard one of their ships and enjoying their lavish reception facilities and it is said that some Shipmaster have obtained credentials such as religious ordination or accreditation as a Notaries Public to ensure the legality of the ceremony. It is not, however, simply a case of a passionate couple asking the Captain to marry them " on the spur of the moment" and various procedures have to be finalised prior to embarkation ....not least, the reading of the banns etc.

crk 22/1/17

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## New Members

**Ian Jacobs** is Chief Operating Officer with Solent Stevedores. After leaving school he spent his early working life in banking and business development before moving into the motor industry with Rover and BMW. He then gained experience in shipping used vehicles from the far east and Cyprus to the UK and Europe, spending some time in the far east before joining the expanding SSL in 2009. He joins us to meet like minded individuals and put something back into the maritime community.

**Karl Kerry** is Operations Director with ship repairers IME Engineering and Fabrication, a newly incorporated company, and has previous connections with similar local companies, Testbank and Burgess Marine.

**Adrian Williams** is a Fellow of the Institute of Travel and Tourism and is a Director with Business Travel Direct, a corporate and marine travel agency which acquired Amity World Travel in 2015. He had joined Amity in 1982 and is keen to maintain and develop relationships with the local shipping community, both socially and professionally.

## **A simple life**

With kind permission of **Baird Maritime Workboat World** and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey

As an expression, “idiot-proof” tends to be a bit judgemental, if not politically incorrect, but as life become ever more complicated it is sometimes difficult to think of a better term. There was once an engine, built in the Netherlands, which proudly boasted such credentials and which, indeed, appeared to be its greatest selling point. It was enormously successful in the Dutch dredging business, its simplicity and robust construction making it virtually “maintenance-free”.

I once went to sea for a couple of days in a dredger and the Dutch master told me, with deep regret, that this engine, which was no longer available, could be submerged in liquid mud for a fortnight, but would start up in a trice, aided only by a sharp kick with a steel-capped boot. It may not have been the world’s most powerful performer, but it was 100% reliable, which was not the case, he snarled, with the machinery powering his enormous brand-new twin -pipe sand-sucker.

It was also greatly praised, I was told, for its use as the driver of salvage pumps, for much the same reasons, as such kit tends to be, if not neglected, largely ignored, until all the alarms go and the tug sets off to sea.

It would be wrong to suggest that there is no current demand for simple, foolproof and robust equipment, despite the professed enthusiasm (by whom, you might ask) for Big Data, and ever more sophisticated marine equipment that is digitised up to its ears and attached to vast computer power. All over the world people are mourning for a more simple age in every respect, with equipment that was uncomplicated, the very opposite of sophisticated and capable of being fixed with a screwdriver or a spanner. But it is just not available, because all the money is in producing more complicated, more multi-functional and more impossible to understand equipment, whether it is in the engine control room, or for the bridge.

It is not difficult to discern the reason. Think of it in terms of comparisons. I know my seagoing days are rather lost in the sands of time, but I recall sailing in ships that were more than thirty years old, but which retained, I would guess, about 80% of their original equipment. Moreover, most of that equipment, when it wore out, or needed refurbishment or maintenance, would be fixed by the crew.

Today, if we are to believe half of what we are told by people from P&I clubs sadly contemplating claims, or important folk in classification societies, the technology is advancing in leaps and bounds, while the ability of people aboard ship to fix it is managing only small hops. And whereas, in the old days, the gear would outlast the ship, today, the all-singing and dancing, computerised, systems-based, digital, data-driven equipment will be technically redundant with no support available and thus require complete replacement, five years beyond its installation date.

And don’t you dare even think of opening it up to investigate why it won’t work; should you touch it with a spanner, all the guarantees will be voided instantly. Let’s face it, one of the reasons it is all so complicated is to ensure that all its servicing will remain the responsibility of the manufacturer, who will look upon the equipment he sold as the gift that goes on giving, on account of its maintenance contracts.

The manufacturer, if regular replacements and lifetime maintenance contracts were not sufficient, is also helped no end by his friends at the International Maritime Organisation, who have a habit of making the presence of the equipment, in operating condition, mandatory under one IMO convention or another. Thus, while in another age a ship would not be delayed on account of the radar being broken (what did we have eyes and Colregs for?) today, it must stay alongside while the agent rushes around trying to find a technician. Just count up, on the average ship, all the items of equipment and systems which will register a “detentionable non-compliance”, if they happen to be on the blink when the inspector calls. It is now quite a list.

You might suggest that all of this is both judgemental and unfair to the clever people who have brought us electronic charts and integrated navigation, along with machinery that will politely tell you that its bearings are wearing and even signal its distress to the shore-side technical department. It is why you can run enormous ships with twenty people, who can barely comprehend each other, whereas in earlier days the “simpler” ships would keep four times such a complement busy all voyage.

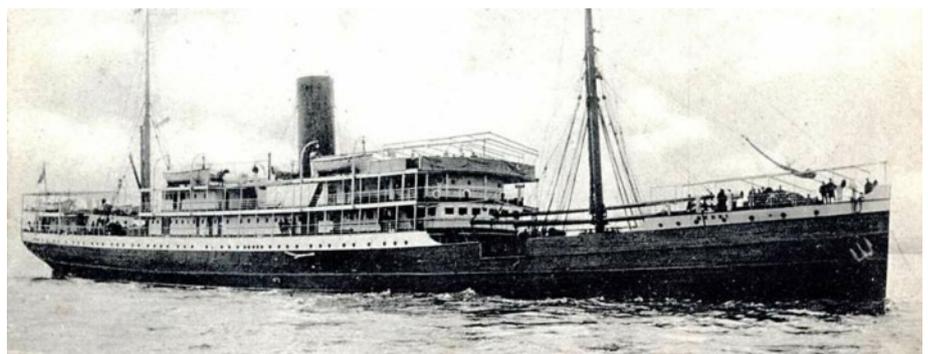
Well maybe I have just been listening to the wrong people, but in just about every department of life, let alone ship operation, there is a growing realisation that all is becoming just too complicated for our own good. I can remember when a telephone was something you applied to the ear and requested a number from an operator. Our latest telephones remain on permanent Summer Time, because we cannot work out how to change them to GMT amid all the unwanted computerised nonsense.

Goodness, it is not just physical equipment that is ever more complex. Take a look at the sheer weight of all the detailed regulations that surround us all, ready to pounce when something is neglected, forgotten about or omitted. It makes you wish for days when an engine could be started up with a kick from a steel-capped boot. Life was simpler then.

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## **The story of the S.S. Mendi**

The “Mendi” was a small passenger vessel of some 4,230GRT owned by the British and African Steam Navigation Company and operated by Elder Dempster Lines. In 1916 the vessel was requisitioned as a troopship by HMG and it was in this capacity that she called in Capetown in January 1917. There she loaded about 1,500 tons of Government cargo and embarked an African labour battalion comprising 823 men, most of whom



**S.S. Mendi, Elder Dempster Lines, LOA 370 ft, 4230 GRT, Captain Yardley**

were black and who came from many of the provinces of the (then) Union of South Africa. They were volunteer members of The South African Native Labour Corps and, as such, were not permitted to “bear arms” but they carried out vital work as stevedores, builders and general labourers. The vast majority had never seen the sea before and few, if any, could swim.

On departure Capetown in convoy and escorted by the destroyer “Brisk”, the ship called At Lagos, West Africa where a stern gun was fitted and then proceeded on passage to Plymouth. “Mendi” was under the command of Captain Henry Arthur Yardley, holder of a Certificate of Competency (Extra Master).

On the afternoon of February 20th “Mendi” and her escort “Brisk” departed Plymouth bound for Le Havre where the men of the SANLC would disembark. As she proceeded up-Channel the light wind fell away and the mist turned to fog. Three lookouts were posted (one in the crow’s nest and two on the forecastle head) speed was reduced and the whistle was sounded in accordance with the “Col.Reggs”. At 0345 on February 21st, the fog was dense and when the Second and Fourth Officers took the Watch at 0400 the vessel was on “Dead Slow”.

At 0445 the escort destroyer asked Captain Yardley to increase speed as she was finding it difficult to keep station but this the Master refused to do.

About 0500, in a position some 11 miles off St.Catherine’s Point, IOW the Fourth Officer “heard a vessel approaching” and, almost immediately, saw the masthead light and port side light of a larger vessel approaching his starboard side, forward of the beam. The S.S. “Darro”, owned and operated by The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and commanded by Captain Henry Winchester Stump, holder of a Master’s Certificate of Competency, struck “Mendi” forward of her Bridge structure inflicting lethal damage to the cargo spaces housing many of the Africans, and the surrounding shell plating. It was subsequently ascertained that “Darro” was proceeding at “Full Speed” (with her engine at “Stand By”) and was not sounding her whistle in accordance with the Regulations.

Many of the men below decks aboard “Mendi” were killed outright in the collision and many were trapped. On passage from Capetown, several Accident Drills had been staged and, accordingly, the survivors mustered on the deck as she listed heavily to starboard and began to sink. The port boats could not be lowered and of the starboard boats that were lowered several capsized as the survivors clambered aboard from the icy water.

“Darro” made no effort to assist ( as the Master feared a submarine attack) but the escorting destroyer (who had not seen the collision due to the dense fog) put her boats down and rescued a number of crew members and black Africans.

Among those who mustered on the Boat Deck was a Congregational Minister who was an interpreter and he joined the terrified survivors huddling together as “Mendi” slowly but remorselessly sank into the dark icy waters. Realising the dire situation, the Rev.Wauchope “raised his arms aloft and cried out in a loud voice”

*“Be quiet and calm, my countrymen. What is happening now is what you came to do...you are going to die but that is what you came to do.*

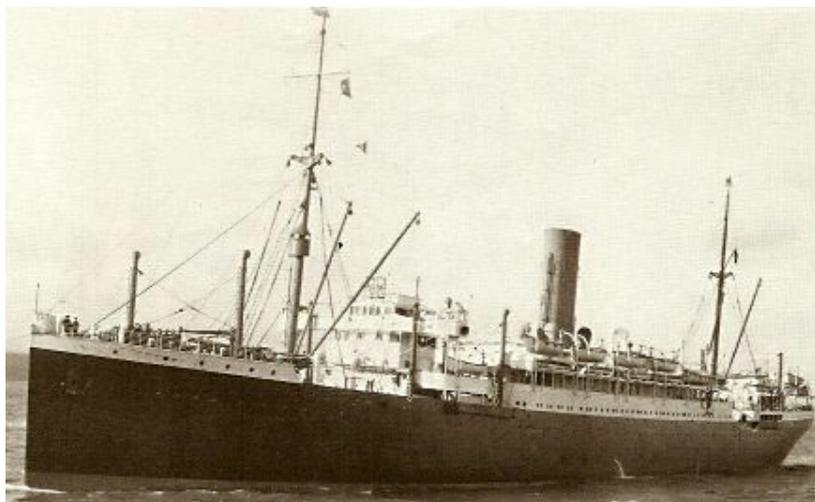
*Brothers, we are drilling the death drill ..I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers ....Swazis, Pondos, Basotho.....so let us die like brothers.*

*We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war-cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais in the kraal, our voices are left with the bodies”*

With that, the men took off their boots and stamped the Death Dance as “Mendi” slipped below the waters taking some 35 crew members, 7 white NCO’s and 618 black soldiers with her.

An investigation led to a formal hearing in July 1917 and the Court totally exonerated Captain Yardley but the Master of the “Darro” was found guilty of “having travelled at a dangerously high speed in thick fog and of having failed to ensure that his ship emitted the necessary fog sound signals”. His Certificate of Competency was *suspended for one year* - a sentence that drew criticism from many quarters on account of it’s extreme leniency.

CRK 22/2/17



**S.S. Darro Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.,LOA 501 ft, 11484 GRT, Captain Stump**

The Official Report on the findings of the Formal Investigation, dated 8th August 1917, can be found at [http://www.plimsoll.org/images/39085a\\_tcm4336418.pdf](http://www.plimsoll.org/images/39085a_tcm4336418.pdf)

The casualty figures quoted therein are:

30 Crew  
2 Military Officers  
7 NCOs

607 Native troops

There are many references to the Mendi disaster to be found online and, as usual, caution is advised. Internet generated anomalies abound. Perhaps the Official Report quoted above could be described as the definitive source but I doubt it. It took the Commonwealth War Graves Commission until 2007 to correct the names and spellings for the Memorial at Hollybrook Cemetery.

## The Cachalots and the Mendi Memorials

With the centenary of the sinking of the *Mendi* looming, Richard Hellyer, a Cachalot with South African connections (he lived there for 15 years and did his pre-sea training at the General Botha Training School before going to sea with *Union Castle*) asked if this was something that the Cachalots should be involved with and received a positive response. Richard is a volunteer involved with the *HSL 102* (a WWII RAF rescue launch) at Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust and was seeking permission to accompany *SAS Amatola* and *HMS Dragon* to the wreck site where a wreath laying ceremony was to be held on the anniversary of the sinking, 21st Feb.

We also learned that, on Monday the 20th, HRH The Princess Royal would be attending a Memorial Service at Hollybrook Cemetery in Southampton, where there is a Memorial recording the names of those lost in the tragedy. We were not to be included in that event, there being a large contingent from the *Amatola* present and security was very tight.

Richard had also received a positive response from the Naval authorities so, at 0700 on the Tuesday, I joined him at Victory Gate to complete the security procedures and then boarded 102 at her berth next to the *Warrior*.

There were just five of us onboard, the Skipper, Diggory Rose, Richard and another volunteer, 'Knotty' Ray, who were signed on as crew, Councillor Lynne Hook, the Mayor of Gosport, and myself. At 0810 we slipped our berth and left Portsmouth in company with *Dragon* and *Amatola*. While they proceeded out by the main channel to the Nab we were able to head south via Bembridge Ledge. The wind was blowing a good force 4 from the West and by the time we got to the West Princessa bouy, and out of the immediate shelter of the IOW, it was obvious from the sea and the swell that, even if we managed to get to the wreck site 10 miles south of St. Catherine's Point, we would be unable to safely participate in the ceremony. With limited deck space and no outboard rails, our wreaths might not be the only things to end up in the sea. Deciding that discretion is the better part of valour we snuck into Whitecliff Bay, in the lee of Culver Cliff, to cast our wreaths there.

I had come with a bio-degradable wreath, having rejected the normal RBL one which contained a lot of plastic and which surely wouldn't have passed the critical eye of any pollution aware observer. Likewise, Richard had two bio-degradable ones, one on behalf of The Society of Master Mariners South Africa, and the other representing the Mayor of Southampton. Councillor Hook had joined us with little notice and no time to have a wreath made up so was equipped with the conventional RBS poppy wreath. She led us in some moments of quiet contemplation and quoted the words of Isaac Wauchope, "*Be quiet and calm, my countrymen..... so let us die as brothers.*"

The wreaths were then cast into the waters and photographs taken. The two mayoral wreaths were then recovered, something that would probably have been impossible at the wreck site, and we made our way back to Portsmouth, arriving on berth around 1010.

Richard Hellyer took the Southampton wreath straight to the Hollybrook Cemetery and laid it alongside the flowers of the previous day. Councillor Hook took hers back to Gosport with the intention of investigating a report that some of the victims were actually buried in Gosport and laying her wreath there. The number reported, nine, gives rise to the suspicion that there might be some confusion with the nine known to be buried at Milton Cemetery in Portsmouth, where another Memorial Service had already been held the previous week.

Some personal reflections:

On the *Mendi*, Captain Yardley, an Extra Master, did all the right things and lost his ship and 646 souls.

On the *Darro*, Captain Stump, did all the wrong things but his ship and crew survived intact. He was steaming at full speed in fog, without sounding any signals, and it seems astounding to a modern seafarer that Stump was not censured for this seemingly reckless behaviour but it was accepted as permissible in war, there being a very real threat from submarines. There are now very few mariners who actually sailed even during the second world war and have any experience of such hostile conditions. Who knows how we ourselves would have behaved.

The court found:

*Neither the loss of the s.s. "Mendi," nor the loss of life, nor the material damage sustained by the s.s. "Darro," was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master of the s.s. "Mendi." - The loss of the s.s. "Mendi" and the loss of life, and the material damage sustained by the s.s. "Darro," were caused by the wrongful act and default of the master of the s.s. "Darro." The Court suspends his certificate, No. 017169, for 12 months from the date hereof; not so much because of his neglect to observe the said Regulations under war conditions, as because of his failure to comply with section 422 (1) (a) of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, ..... inasmuch as he failed to send away a boat or boats to ascertain the extent of the damage done to the other vessel, and to render to that vessel, her master, crew and passengers such assistance as was practicable and necessary. There was no reasonable cause why he did not so comply, as very shortly after the collision he had the strongest evidence that his own vessel was in no danger of foundering.*

The men of the SANLC were designated as 'volunteers' but we all know that volunteering sometimes don't feel very voluntary. Volunteered by their country, they were not to be used as a fighting force and were forbidden to bear arms as there was a fear that they could revolt against military or civilian authority. It was, after all, just twenty years after the end of the Zulu wars, and only 52 years after the abolition of slavery in the US. Proud men, many from a warrior class, denied even the comfort of their assegais, they were to be used as cheap, expendable labour. They expected to be called upon to die, but not quite in these circumstances. Did the death dance actually occur? Who recorded Isaac Wauchope's stirring words, even mentally, under such chaotic and horrific circumstances? Who knows what actually happened that terrible night? The legend has grown over the years and it has become accepted that, yes, the death dance did actually occur. But Reg Kelso's account on the previous pages is aptly named, 'The STORY of the Mendi' and that is what it is.

I do think that it is shameful that the concept of brotherhood and bravery, reportedly shown by those dying African native labourers, did not extend to those responsible for their fate and in a position to save at least some of them. But we are looking at it from a distance of 100 years and with a different set of *mores*. Through the fog of time, in fact.

Terry Clark



HSL 102, top left, and the memorial wreaths cast.

Above, Councillor Lynne Hook and Richard Hellyer.

## Caveat Radar

I wish to relate the following experience of a yachtsman which asks the question “Is the ship visible to you?”

For many years Cate and I have enjoyed our summer cruise from the Solent across to Brittany in *YoHoHo*, our Fairey Swordsman 33. Fog has been a problem crossing the Channel on about half the trips and sometimes we have been caught out in thick fog for at least part of the journey. I have therefore got into the habit of switching on the radar as soon as we leave port. I think this is one of my better habits as it ensures that the set is working and it familiarises me with the use of radar again when I may not have used it for eight months during the winter. We also see which type of boat shows up on the radar and many yachts do not.

We left St Peter Port at about 1000 and by the time that the south of Guernsey was abeam we were on course for the N W Minkies Buoy at our regular cruising speed of 20 kt. Visibility was excellent and we sighted dead ahead the Condor fast cat ferry on a reciprocal course. We estimated the range of the ferry to be something over 10 miles. At that time there was no target on our radar and altering the range of the set still showed a blank screen ahead. The speed of these ferries is over 40kt so we were closing at over 60kt and on the present courses would collide in under 10 minutes.

After a short time a tiny “blip” appeared on the radar at a range of 5 miles. By this time the ferry was clearly visible still dead ahead, coming straight at us and we could make out some detail on the vessel and see the white wash. Not wishing to have a close encounter we altered course 20 degrees to starboard and instantly a strong echo appeared on the radar.

This experience leads me to make the following observations:

1. We hear about “stealth” aircraft which are invisible to radar. The fast cat ferry when viewed from dead ahead is like a “stealth” ship and the radar return is not what you would expect from such a large vessel. The shape of the bows must scatter the radar signal and very little is returned to give an echo. Viewed from the beam the ferry gives an unmistakable echo.
2. If the conditions had been different with poor visibility we would not have known that a high speed craft was approaching until there was only 4 to 5 minutes from a collision.
3. The size of the echo would have led us to believe that it was a small vessel, probably a yacht and in fog we might not have altered course in time to avoid a collision.
4. *YoHoHo* is fitted with the big Echomax 230 radar reflector and the Sea-Me active transponder on both X and S band radars so at least the ferry officers should have spotted us easily on their radar.
5. In fog we slow down but these ferries keep going so without the Sea-Me transponder, in thick fog, both vessels would have continued happily to collide head on.

My conclusions from this experience are that an active radar transponder is well worth the cost for safety and peace of mind and you should keep well clear of known fast cat ferry routes in poor visibility.

Alec M Macpherson O B E



## **MN Memorial at Weymouth the end of a Long Voyage**

The Merchant Navy Association Weymouth and Portland and District Branch was founded in 2010. The branch meets every second Thursday of the month at the Royal Dorset Yacht Club in Weymouth. Captain Paul Compton, a fellow Cachalot, is the Branch Chairman.

In 2014, the Branch started discussing the possibility of placing a permanent memorial on Weymouth Esplanade to all merchant seaman and fishermen who have lost their lives not only in war but peace as well. The design of the memorial, depicting the bow of a ship just before it disappears beneath the waves, was suggested by David Kennet, a former Chief Engineer. He was also instrumental in drawing up an excellent set of plans which were submitted to the local council for approval and planning permission. Due to the quality of the application and in recognition of the need for such a memorial, the Council very quickly gave permission for the proposed memorial to go ahead. Fund raising began in earnest in early 2016 and the needed sum of over £20,000 was raised in quick time, enabling the project to be advanced rapidly. The MNA was the chosen charity of Mayoress Caroline Churchill and she also assisted in making collections around the town. The Cachalots also made a contribution to the fund and the Club was invited to be present at the unveiling, and I subsequently volunteered to represent our Club at this event.



The memorial is made from Portland stone and the bronze fittings were moulded in Bridport with the railings being made locally in Weymouth. It was good to see that everything was made in Dorset. Viewed from the side, you can clearly see the profile of the bow with the anchors in place.

On the 9th of November 2016, a good crowd of ex and serving seafarers and fishermen as well as the general public assembled on Weymouth seafront close East of the existing War Memorial. Captain Paul Compton started by reading a message from HM the Queen expressing her warmest wishes for the day. The Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Angus Campbell Esq, unveiled the memorial stating "If ever a town, borough or port deserved to have a memorial like this, it has got to be Weymouth and Portland. I take my hat off to all those involved". The first wreath was laid by retired Bosun Tony Cash assisted by Bethany, the daughter of a fisherman who lost his life at sea. Tony Cash started his career at sea in 1939, he said it was a very proud moment: "It is so important that we remember the sacrifice of all those men and women who lost their lives at sea in the First World War, Second World War and the other conflicts around the world. I have waited a long time for this day. It is very moving to see the memorial on the Esplanade, a permanent reminder of their sacrifice"

I was invited back to the Royal Dorset Yacht Club after the unveiling for a light buffet lunch. This gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of the members of the MNA and to congratulate them on their splendid achievement. An excellent cake had been made to mark the occasion. It included a perfect replica of the Memorial and Bosun Tony Cash was invited to cut the cake.

This unveiling led me to wonder how many of our seaports around the UK still lack a dedicated memorial to Merchant Seaman.

Ian Odd



**Joseph William Ireland** was born in Southwark, South London, on the 7th January 1917.

During WW2, he began as a Signals Instructor with the Royal Hampshire Regiment, but was later transferred to the Royal Navy, as per his initial request.

He had worked with British Ropes Ltd., in Charlton prior to the war, and resumed again with them afterwards.

In 1948 they asked him to open their new branch in Canute Road, Southampton, as District Manager.

He was well known throughout the Port of Southampton, and supplied all the major Shipping Companies with every necessary type of rope requirement.

He began as a Messmate with the Master Mariners in the 1950's and played regularly in the Cricket and Golf sections, throughout his long membership.

After reaching his Century this year, he went aloft on the 15th of January, and will be fondly remembered by the more mature Club Members. God Bless Him.

# A Salvor's Lot

## **By Roy Martin Part III - The Price of Oil**

*During my seven years in Singapore we successfully carried out 196 salvage operations. Most were saving cargo ships or tankers; but three of the casualties were drilling rigs:*

In November 1981 the oil rig *D M Saunders* struck a reservoir of inert gas while drilling in the Java Sea. This caused one of her three legs to sink into the seabed and the rig to tilt at about 35°. Rainer Kasel, our Salvage Manager, and I flew to Jakarta, as did David Hancox from Selco.

The following morning we met the Reading & Bates reps for a working breakfast, surely a short cut to indigestion! It was immediately obvious that the rig would require a serious heavy lift capacity, and, as Selco's only sheerleg was in Bandar Aceh, we were the only ones who could do the job.

Rainer outlined how he proposed to upright the rig, using our two biggest sheerlegs the *Smit Cyclone* and *Smit Monsoon*; we usually called them cranes, though they didn't slew. Between them they could do a main jib lift of 900 tons: then the biggest in South East Asia. Now the largest single unit in the Smit FELS joint venture, which we set-up in 1985, has a capacity of 5,000 tons.

I was asked what the units would cost and I gave a day rate of \$25,000 per crane/per day. The American said, 'we are talking US dollars aren't we?' I said 'of course'; with that Rainer slid under the table so that the man wouldn't see him laughing. Our pricing was always done in Singapore Dollars, at two to the US\$, so I had seized the opportunity to double the price.

Rainer reappeared and said, 'we're going to need one of the Mobile Salvage teams as well.' I was then asked what that would cost; I replied another \$25,000 per day. At this point the Texan went quite white and I realised I'd overdone it! However we both knew that he had no alternative, so we had a deal.



**Rainer Kasel**



**A similar collapse**

There was only one seat on the first helicopter, so Rainer went out on that. I went on the next flight and, as we were nearing the casualty, I could see that the rig had a jack-up accommodation unit next to it. The photograph (left) shows a similar collapse. When we arrived I found that the Texans were being ordered here and there by Rainer; one of them said 'Gee this is some Kraut, but we can't understand a word he says.'

The mobile salvage crew were quickly at work and one of the cranes, which had been salvaging a dredger in the Java Sea, arrived soon afterwards. The second one was towed from Singapore. Lyle Craigie-Halkett was in charge of one and Edward (Ted) Hosking the other. Both were ex Risdon Beazley men, made redundant when the firm closed earlier that year. With Ivan Woodford they made a great team of Salvage Officers.

With both cranes stabilising the rig for 24 hours, they cut off the lower leg. This allowed them to straighten the hull and allowed the rig crew to jack the unit down and disconnect the drill string, which had been under tension.

After recovering the remains of the leg the whole spread was towed back to Singapore. Another complex job, completed in about a week.

\*

One evening in January 1983 I went to a friend's house, who greeted me as always, 'still got your pacemaker on then', pointing to my pager. Shortly afterwards the 'pacemaker' beeped and I went to the car and called the Operations Room on the company frequency. I was told that they had Mr Kasel for me. Rainer's message was that, after leaving the Keppel ship repair yard, the drill ship *Eniwetok* fouled the Sentosa cable car. As I wasn't needed I went back to the party! Less than half an hour later the pager went again. It was Rainer - can you come down as 'this is getting political, the BG is here.' The BG was shorthand for the Brigadier General; Prime Minister Lee's eldest son Lee Hsien Loong. Some Singaporeans said that BG stood for 'Baby God.' Indeed that Lee is now the Prime Minister.

I made my way to the PSA tower, the north terminal for the cable car. It seemed that four cars, with thirteen passengers were stuck amid the fouled cables. Those in another two had been thrown in the water, killing seven people. Though we didn't know it at the time one youngster had survived the fall. Rainer told me that the *Smit Monsoon* was on her way; but that the PSA team couldn't, or wouldn't, tell him the height of the cables. When I insisted that we be told I was given a figure of fifty meters; this was just within the working height of the *Monsoon* with the 20 meter fly jib that she had rigged.

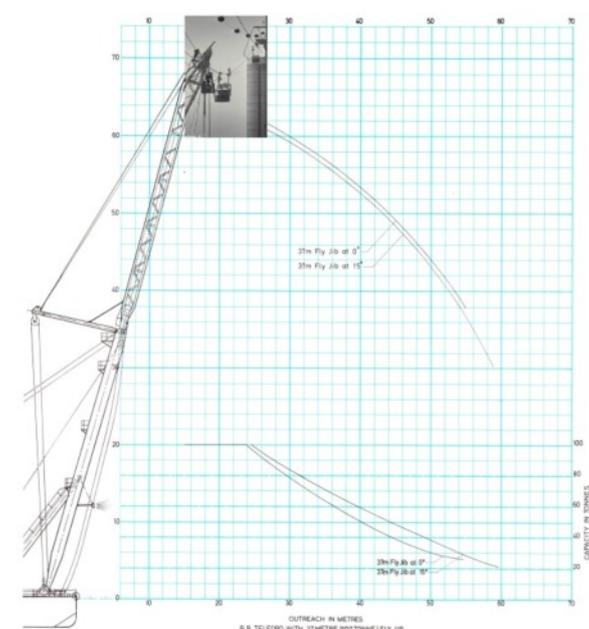
Not long afterwards the crane arrived. It was difficult to see from the tower, but it looked as if the jib was short by a tantalising amount. For Ted Hosking and his team, who were looking up, it was impossible to see. At this point it should be said that handling the crane in the strong current was a nerve wracking business, one error and more people would have been killed.

Ted decided that the only way was to climb up the jib; in the dark and with a strong breeze, this was no easy task either.

When he got to the top he found that we were indeed short by a couple of meters, however he was able to talk to the terrified people in one of the cars. Now Ted comes from the land of Francis Drake and his report, which seemed to come through at full volume, was 'there's three women and two children in this car; um's scared, but not as s\*\*\* scared as I am.' Rainer shouted 'kill that radio', as it was near I reached across and switched it off. I then went to the PSA managers. They at first claimed 'your crane is too short.' I replied that they had given me the wrong height, it turned out later that this was the clearance height.



**The only photograph I have found: the bold hero at the top is believed to be Boatswain Danny MacDonald.**



up the jib and lash it somehow, to evacuate the passengers. I invited him to come and show us how this could be done, but he declined!

Our involvement in that part of the operation was over; but we remained to be treated to the finest display of flying that I have ever seen. An Australasian helicopter pilot, and his Malay winchman, succeeded in rescuing all the trapped passengers. At the time we thought the pilot was a Kiwi, but it now appears that he was an Australian.

Rainer had spent much of his working life with the Harms cranes, *Monsoon* had been their *Magnus II* (and then the *RB Telford*). He felt that we could untangle the wires after 'flipping' the cars. We offered to do this for a day rate.

The tugs took the crane back to our Jurong base. The crew spent the night lowering the jib to the horizontal, removing the 20 meter fly jib and fixing the 37 meter jib in its place. When you consider that these men had done a day's work, had their well-earned evening drink interrupted, and had spent all evening under stress; it was to their great credit that the crane was back on site for the mornings work.

At the end of that day one car remained to be untangled. I went back to the PSA tower to tell them that it was too dangerous to continue in the dark and we would need another day, on hire. They seemed confused that I hadn't charged for the rescue attempt, but now wanted to sting them for an extra day. I pointed out that seamen don't charge for life salvage. They couldn't get their heads round that and we got the sack. I was mad as we had done the hard bit! On the way in Singapore Broadcasting Corporation had asked me for an interview. I gave it on the way out and those who heard it told me that my 'frustration showed' and I was broad Dorset.

\*

Late in October 1983 we received a message that a drill ship *Glomar Java Sea* was missing in the South China Sea. On further enquiry it seemed that the ship was on hire to the Chinese, but was working nearer to Vietnam, in disputed waters. At 2348 on 25 October the Assistant Rig Manager had called the owners to report that the ship was caught in typhoon LEX and experiencing 75 knot winds. He also said that she had an unexplained 15° list. The call was broken off and nothing further was heard from the *Glomar Java Sea*. The Chinese let it be known that they suspected the Vietnamese of 'taking' the ship. We offered the *Smit Manila*, one of the former Risdon Beazley vessels, which was fitted with a hull-mounted sonar; probably the only such unit then in South East Asia.

Our ship was loaded with anchors and chains, to moor over the casualty if we found it; plus a small ROV and all the other tackle that we thought we might need. The decks were well cluttered. Late in the evening the American charterers turned hostile, saying that if the vessel didn't leave by midnight we would be off-hired. As the crew still had much of the sea-fastening to do it was agreed with the Salvage



**Smit Manila 5,000 BHP**

Officer, Lyle Craigie-HHalkett, that we would sail; but only as far as our floating base the *Eastern Salvor*. There the crew made the ship properly ready for sea.

*Smit Manila* arrived onsite and began searching, within hours she had found a large contact. As the deck was encumbered the moorings were transferred to a Chinese supply vessel, who laid them, more or less to Lyle's requirements. Once on the moor the small ROV was deployed and the contact was confirmed as the *Glomar Java Sea*. Subsequent reports said that the Master of the drill ship had wanted to pull the moorings as typhoon Lex was forecast to track over the ship. He was overruled by the Offshore Installation Manager, who insisted that the ship remain so that drilling could resume as so as the typhoon had passed.

As far as we could work out: some time after the typhoon struck, the starboard bow mooring chain parted and the ship capsized in 317 feet of water. Eighty one people died, including, we were told, two teenagers who were sons of people in the management team.

One of the lifeboats may have been launched, but no one seems to have survived. On the 27th a merchant ship reported a distress message from a station using the *Glomar Java Sea*'s call sign. The US Coastguard report on the tragedy said that this could only have been a manual transmission from the lifeboat. The following day a capsized lifeboat was spotted by a Chinese helicopter. There were wild stories that some of the American crew had picked up and were imprisoned in Vietnam. This was yet another in a long line of disasters in the marine oil industry.

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## **Making something happen**

### **Lloyd's List Viewpoint 19 January 17**

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

In journalism you have to steel yourself against being too "adjectival" and sometimes it is jolly difficult. That is until you find yourself descending into irony, when you can make a New Year's resolution to be more disciplined and direct. Thus, a *high-level* commission, produces an *in-depth* study, subsequently developing into a *searching* inquiry and a *controversial* (or perhaps *deafening*) report. It is difficult, in an age of spin, to convey mere ordinariness.

I shouldn't be so cynical, but found my mind wandering in such a fashion when I read that the UK's Maritime Growth Study Inquiry, which gave rise to a *much-debated* (sorry) report in September 2015, is now to be the subject of an inquiry by the House of Commons Transport Committee. It will examine, *thoroughly* if not *searchingly*, what progress has taken place since the report was issued, in respect of government and industry action.

The committee has invited submissions addressing pretty well all of the main points in the Maritime Growth Study and I guess we should welcome their interest. Will it make any difference? Will it, as it were, hold the feet of industry and government to the fire, and ensure that all the laudable aims of the study will not merely be overtaken by events or lost in the sands of time? I haven't a clue, except that past experience would suggest that inquiries and reports and commissions and the search for "evidence" can sometimes be mistaken for useful action.

Months give way to years and there is nothing meaningful accomplished, other than the vast accumulation of paper. I have seen quite a few of these processes over the years; even given evidence to a couple, but it is quite hard to identify where the gathering of data ever gave way to positive action. It starts to look promising, then the minister, or the whole government, changes and it all gets forgotten as much the same procedure is repeated, but with a different cast.

You might, if you were very charitable and a lot less cynical, suggest that the Transport Committee's scrutiny will ensure that the whole Maritime Growth Study will not get filed away in the "long-forgotten" basket as the government gets down to the nuts and bolts of other distractions, like Brexit. The industry has the benefit of a reasonably fresh report into relevant issues that face it, an energetic shipping minister and institutions that are arguably working better together than they have done in the past. There jolly well should be progress.

Against this, there is the "real world" and a shipping (and offshore) industry that is suffering from global problems that everyone knows about and which inevitably are reflected in our national attitudes to any solution. There may have been progress in changing the culture of the Maritime & Coastguard Agency and encouraging more ships onto the UK register, for instance, but has there been any real progress at improving the miserly rewards of the government survey service, something that is not unconnected?

And while everybody seems to be terribly happy when Mr Grimaldi registers his fine new Atlantic Container Line ships in a UK port, is there really much gain if there is not a single UK soul employed on them? You might ask why it remains so difficult to find berths for British cadets and trainees on so-called Red Ensign ships (or any other for that matter), and even harder to find a job as a junior officer, once qualified?

It is said that British maritime training is among the most expensive in the world, which begs a lot of different questions. It is expensive because it is so predominantly college based and it has to be college based because a trainee aboard a ship where barely a soul speaks English as a first language is probably not going to learn a great deal. It is not going to be possible to square that circle. But this is what is on offer, when cheap shipping is judged more important than quality shipping and the world is awash with tonnage that barely makes a living.

And at the end of the day, while a future maritime skills shortage might have been identified, trying to persuade an inadequately rewarded industry to train, rather than poach, is asking quite a lot. You might argue that the marine industry is no different to any other, with plenty of industrialists making angry noises about their access to cheap foreign labour being constrained by Brexit and why they should do anything other than train British young people. I was shouting at the radio just the other day at one of these whingeing "remoaning" manufacturers", who really need to be forcibly trained to train their own, when they much prefer to import them at some other mug's expense.

But let us not discourage the enthusiasm of the Transport Committee for speedily uncovering the rate of progress with their *searching* questions. Forget the cynicism of this writer. It's just that I have been here before.

*rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk*

## Curry Lunch

The next Curry Lunch is again booked at our favourite hot-spot,  
Kuti's in Oxford Street.



**Saturday 22nd April, 1200 for 1230.**

Unfortunately we have to increase the price to **£14.50** per head  
but still excellent value.

44 attended and enjoyed the last lunch in Feb, join us if you can.



## Skittles Evening



at the

**SOUTHAMPTON (OLD) GREEN BOWLING CLUB**

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

**Friday, 24th 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 a sweet.

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

## Another Last Supper

Last year we held a Last Supper when we left our  
previous Club Room. This year it will be the Last  
Supper catered for us by John Davis before his  
retirement. Another hard act to follow and if  
anyone knows of a mobile caterer able to provide  
food to a similar standard then please let us know.

**Wednesday 31st May**

In the main RBL Club room

Speaker:

The Rev'd Reg Sweet, Master of St. Cross

*Cream of Asparagus Soup*

*Venison & Ale Pie*

*Fruit & Cream Meringue*

1900 for 1930

**£26** per head

numbers limited to **43** on a first come basis.

## The CACHALOTS

**The Southampton Master Mariners' Club**

**1st Floor, Southampton Royal British  
Legion Club, Eastgate Street  
SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3HB**

Tel: 023 8022 6155

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[postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)  
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[membership@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:membership@cachalots.org.uk)  
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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. There is no catering on  
site but there are many sandwich outlets within easy  
walking distance.

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 | 24 Mar | Skittles Evening, So'ton (Old) B C |
| Sat | 22 Apr | Curry Lunch, Kuti's                |
| Wed | 31 May | Club Supper, RBL                   |
| Thu | 8 June | Shipping Festival Service          |
| Sat | 8 July | Curry Lunch, Kuti's                |

The cut-off date for the next edition will be  
19th May 2017

|   |
|---|
| <b>250 Club</b>                         |
| Nov      R Plumley      M E Winter      |
| Dec (£100) T E Clark      M Tilbury     |
| Jan      A Cartwright      G Cartwright |
| Feb      R Lowther      M E Winter      |