

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 68

June 2018

Captain's Log

When getting older, time seems to disappear as a flick of a switch. It was back in January 2017 following the past Captain's meeting that Captain Les Morris phoned me and informed me that I had been nominated as Staff Captain for 2017.

This is now over 13 month ago and I was then, at the past Captains meeting in February 2018, formerly selected to be Club Captain for 2018.

I would now like to thank Captain Robin Plumley MBE, for his guidance over the past year and specifically my sincere appreciation of his well written hand over notes, which I am grateful for. It has been a pleasure exchanging information about his time in the Antarctic along with my own past experience from the Arctic (Greenland) and I now wish him well in his year as post Captain.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Captain Rachel Dunn as our Staff Captain for the year. Rachel was born in Gosport and at an early age had the desire for a career as sea and joined Shell Tankers as a cadet. After 10 years left as a 2nd Officer when she meet fellow seafarer Neil Dunn who is now a Southampton pilot. She joined Wightlink as their first female officer and then became their Senior Master until she left Wightlink in 2010 to join the Admiralty in Portsmouth as their first Female Pilot. In 2012 she became an all ships 1st class pilot for the Admiralty and in recognition was awarded the Victoria Drummond Award for boosting the profile of women at sea. She is also an Admiralty Compass Adjuster and a younger brother of Trinity House.

The Sea Pie supper this year was well attended by some 476 in total. Considering all the positive comments I have had verbally and by correspondence the evening must have been a success. Perhaps a little more discipline among younger generations could be implemented, as there was an incident with a young lady falling over but fortunately she was unharmed. It is my opinion that this is a specific seafarers event normally enjoyed by everyone with an interest in the Maritime Industry and it should be an enjoyable evening for everyone attending without the unwanted nature of a nightclub.

It was an honour to introduce Captain Reg Kelso MBE at this year's Sea Pie Supper when he was elected President of our club and presented with a Presidents bar. Reg has also recently received the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Services, which was presented at Trinity House by her Royal Highness Princess Anne.

In our club room on Friday the 9th February my wife Susanne and I, together with Reg's wife June and many other club members, had the pleasure of celebrating the 90th birthday of Captain Kelso. There was a special birthday cake and delightful buffet. It was a memorable day and it has been a great honour for us all to know such a gentleman. Congratulations to Reg for his contribution to the Master Mariners club for so many years. Our 250-club draw, which

was selected by my wife, was an unexpected surprise as the winner was ... Captain Reg Kelso!

Our curry lunch the 17th of February was, as always, a success; due to holidays there were not as many attending on this occasion but we all had an enjoyable afternoon with excellent food and service.

March started with the pleasure of being invited to the Honourable Company Of Master Mariners on the 7th March for their Court Luncheon. Captain Martin Reed and Commodore Angus Menzies RN greeted me on my arrival and I was introduced to several other members. I also had the pleasure of speaking to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Phillip Jones, who was the guest speaker and Deputy Master of Trinity House, Captain Ian McNaught. I also had the pleasure being seated next to our member and friend Captain Richard Olden. It was an excellent event with good food and service.

Our annual Skittles evening the 23rd March was well attended and Captain Ian Thompson was the winner for the gentlemen and Lesley Odd for the ladies. Captain Reg Kelso was the winner of the wooden spoon and it was an honour to present him with it. I am sure he is finding it useful in their new kitchen.

On the 24th of March my wife and I attended the SRNOA annual dinner and it was a pleasure to see several members from the SMMC also at this event. I was introduced to their secretary who would like us to consider a joint Trafalgar Dinner.

21st April: My wife Susanne and I had an official invitation from Commodore Gail Foster and Flag Officers of the Royal Air force Yacht Club in Hamble to attend their annual reception, followed by dinner. It was a pleasure to meet several of their members and to be seated at a table with a retired Typhoon Fighter Pilot and a Royal Air force helicopter pilot and instructor. It made the evening very enjoyable. The club had my name down from last year when I attended as the Staff Captain and as a result Captain Rachel Dunn and her husband Neil were also invited to attend, which they did.

Captain Dunn and myself had an invitation from the RINA & IMARESST to attend the President's reception at the Cargo Restaurant in Oxford Street the 9th of May, Ken Dagnell extending that invitation.

On the 10th of May I attended a Mayor's reception at the Civic offices, which was an invitation to those who had supported the expansion project for the Sea Cadets in Southampton. Approximately 22 attended the reception.

On the 11th May I attended a meeting with Canon Sue Wallace at Winchester Cathedral. The meeting, which was relating to the forthcoming Shipping Festival on the 14th of June, was also attended by Ken Dagnell, Paul Leece and Ian Thompson.

The 16th May saw the Mayor Making Ceremony of the City of Southampton and I had great pleasure in

attending this well organised Ceremony which was followed by a well presented and healthy lunch. It was the 796th Mayor Making Ceremony. The New Mayor elected is Councillor Stephen Barnes-Andrews who's first act was to sign the declaration of acceptance of office as required by law.

The New Sheriff elected for Southampton was Councillor Peter Baillie who also had to sign the declaration of acceptance.

The new Mayor then presented the outgoing Mayor, Les Harris, with his badge and thanks for his excellent service to the City of Southampton.

Music during the Ceremony was provided by the Southampton Youth Band, conducted by Paul Hart, and Southampton University Officers Training Corps provided the Guard of Honour.

Presentation of the Southampton Business Success award for 2018 was also made.

Overall an excellent event that I was very pleased to have attended.

40 people attended the Club Supper on Wednesday the 23rd of May - which was a pleasure to see at this special evening. Past Captain Robin Plumley said grace and the Loyal Toast was given by Staff Captain Rachel Dunn.

I had the great honour in addressing Captain Reg Kelso and requesting he give us a short speech which he executed with precision, giving us an excellent outlining of the club history. This was followed by a presentation to him of an engraved glass plaque on behalf of Southampton Master Mariners Club for his service and dedication to this great club for so many years. Captain Robin Plumley had it designed by the same people who they use for his MG club - it was an attractive design with the crest of Southampton Master Mariners Club.

On behalf of our members attending this event I would like to thank our Editor and everyone on the committees who were involved in arranging this memorable evening.

My Captains Charities for the year:

1. 50% to be donated to Southampton Sunday Lunch Project who provide approximately 100 lunches every Sunday for people sleeping rough, live in poor accommodation or otherwise in need including very lonely people who appreciate the chance to eat in company.

"One can not think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well"

2. The other 50% I wish to have donated to SSAFA in Gosport / Fareham which is the biggest charity in UK for the Armed Forces with over 7000 volunteers and who in 2017 assisted over 62,000 service personnel.

Brain Booster: The first e-mail that I receive with the correct answer will be able to collect a bottle of Red or White wine when you are next in the Club and I will leave it with Richard for you to collect, please specify preference.

All At Sixes: Painter has to paint numbers on the doorway of each of one hundred houses.

The question is, exactly how many 6s will he have to paint?

Finally, I would like to thank every member on our committees who give so much of their time to keep the club going - without you the club would stall. It would be appreciated if some of our members who we sadly do not see very often would come forward and offer some much needed assistance. I would also like to invite more of our members to invest an affordable sum in our 250 club as we do need more funding to enable us to continue running our club without increasing our annual membership fee.

Captain Flemming Pedersen, Club Captain

Boatsteerer's Locker

Fellow Cachalots

Spring has finally sprung after a very miserable start, once again man's unequal fight against nature has begun and out of hibernation comes the lawn mower, garden shears, gloves, my old clothes and shoes, burra mem-sahib's job list etc. We must girdle our loins and fight the good fight as we visit many Garden Centres. (If it wasn't for Garden Centres I would be driving a Rolls Royce instead of a Honda Jazz).

At the moment throughout the land there is great excitement at the Royal Wedding which unfortunately is also Cup Final Day. I well remember another wedding which took place last century on Cup Final Day and at which I had a star part. At our recent anniversary the mem-sahib received a large bouquet of flowers and I received a packet of socks (not even Tesco's finest !)

The Shipping Festival Service will soon be upon us and I take this opportunity to thank in advance all the sidesmen and the ladies who are providing the canapés and not forgetting those members, wives and friends who support this event. The Address will given by the new Dean, The Very Rev Catherine Ogle and, weather permitting, we shall have our 'After Service' reception in her garden which gives everyone a good excuse to socialise.

As we did last year two days after the Service we are escaping to the Continent to recuperate and this time by staying at an Italian Lake.

Looking further ahead to the Sea Pie Supper next February, we shall once again hold it at St. Marys Stadium Banqueting Suites and have booked the brass band, shantymen and Principal Guest Captain Ian McNaught, Deputy Master Trinity House and the last Master of 'QE2'.

Glancing through various marine publications the main theme is on plastic waste and the pollution of the seas, a walk along any shoreline highlights this problem which our generation does not appear to be able to solve, perhaps Mr Trump has a solution.

Well must close now as the editor is waiting patiently for my Blog and we are invited to see the Royal Wedding, no not at Windsor but in a friend's garden.

Ken Dagnall
Boatsteerer

Curry Lunches

Our favourite curry haunt, Kuti's in Oxford Street, experienced a fire in their galley in April and our last lunch, on 21st April, was rapidly transferred to their Thai restaurant at the Royal Pier, where we enjoyed a different oriental meal and great service.

Initially, it was expected to take 4 weeks for repairs and we understood that Mr.Kuti might move his curry house to the Pier and the Thai one to Oxford St. It was anticipated that we would have a Curry Lunch at the Pier on 9th June but it now transpires that Oxford St will not reopen until the 19th June and they cannot accommodate us at the Pier on the 9th.

It is too late at this stage to negotiate an alternative venue so this event is now **cancelled**. We are assured that the August one can go ahead as planned:

CURRY LUNCH KUTI'S ROYAL PIER

Sat 11th AUGUST 1200 for 1230 £14.50

THE CACHALOTS



SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL THURSDAY 14th JUNE 2018

Every year in June, a Shipping Festival Service is held in Winchester Cathedral, by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester, as a tribute to those who have served, and those who continue to serve, in the UK's vital shipping industry.

The Cachalots (The Southampton Master Mariners' Club) have organised this service each year since 1930, apart from a break during the Second World War.

Everybody is welcome. You don't have to be connected to seafaring or shipping to attend the Service which this year will take place in Winchester Cathedral at 1930 on Thursday 14th June. (7.15 pm for 7.30 pm)

This year the service will again be attended by the Lord- Lieutenant of Hampshire, the Mayors of Winchester and Southampton and other dignitaries.

The preacher will be

**The Very Rev'd Catherine Ogle
Dean of Winchester Cathedral**

The Southampton Albion Band will take part in the Service.

Proceeds from the collection taken during the service will be divided equally between Southampton Seafarers Charities and Winchester Cathedral.

After the Service members of the Congregation are then invited to walk to the Deanery Garden where refreshments will be available.

Everyone is welcome to attend this historic service



40 members and guests attended the Club Supper at the Royal British Legion on 23rd May and enjoyed what was on offer. The main course turned out to be 'Chicken Surprise' and the surprise was that it was roast beef ! But very nice anyway.

Our President gave us a potted history of the Club in his inimitable way which was also enjoyed by all. The club photographer could have chosen a better angle to prove that they weren't all asleep.

Captain Kelso, seen here with his wife June, was then presented with an engraved glass plaque which read,
(in case the photographer slipped up again)

Captain C R (Reg) Kelso MBE MNM FNI
In recognition of his service to
The Cachalots
23rd May 2018



The longer the ship, the longer the name

Better photography this time, from Cachalot Bryan Chipperfield who captured this shot in Southampton on 16th March. At 400m x 59m she is 199,000 grt and 199,855 dwt and lead ship of her class, flagship of the CMA CGM fleet and the largest container ship to sail under the French flag.

That extra 1m in length and 5m in beam over the CMA CGM Benjamin Franklin, mentioned in *Cachalot 67*, equates to an extra 20,772 grt and 14,785 dwt and at 20776 teu, another 2776 standard 20' boxes. More proof of the economies of scale.

Her AIS signature is abbreviated to CMA CGM St Exupéry to help avoid blotting out the displays on other vessels and you may wonder if they managed to get her name across the stern see page 14.

Smells, bells and noisy ships

Lloyd's List Viewpoint 22 March 2018

with permission of LL and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey

One of the sad features of modern life might be seen in the reprehensible attitude of people who have moved into the neighbourhood, and then wish to change the habits and customs of centuries. You see it with the “incomers” who move from cities into the country and are then appalled by farmyard smells and the noise of roosters at daybreak. You get the same sort of attitude exhibited by those moving into ancient villages and, being godless urbanites, then immediately petitioning the local council to silence the church bells on account of their “human rights” being infringed by campanology every Tuesday evening, let alone Sundays, when they want to lie in.

And of course people who have operated ports, once assumed to be wholly beneficial to the community find that the folk who dwell in the shiny new apartments overlooking the river or harbour, positively hate ships and anything to do with them. You might think that they would have thought of the marine aspects of this location before moving there, but this seems to have eluded them. Perhaps the shiny brochures provided by the estate agents failed to mention that the view might include the occasional ship. Mind you, once when your address included the words “wharf” or “quay”, a person of even limited intelligence might assume that ships could possibly moor in such a location. Today, it only adds a hefty few thousands to the purchase price and the new occupants will move heaven and earth to force the closure of the nearby commercial berths.

I thought of this sad circumstance of modern life when I read about the problems faced by the US Navy, with their splendid newly-built littoral combat ship USS *Little Rock*, the latest in the considerable Freedom Class of “do-anything” warships. Commissioned in Buffalo on Lake Erie, just before Christmas, the shiny new ship, which can do 45 knots at full throttle, set off bound for its home port in Florida, but only managed to get as far as Montreal, before the ice set in. Here the ship has stayed since the beginning of January, tied up in the old port and sustained by all sorts of additional heaters and ice-melting equipment.

You might think that the residents of the nearby apartments overlooking the harbour, would be delighted to have something to look at to break the monotony of all that ice and snow. Sadly, as might be expected, they have done nothing but whinge about the noise coming from the little warship, from its generators and all that ancillary heating equipment that is quite essential, if millions of dollars of new ship are ever to make it to the blue waters, for which the ship was designed.

I suppose if you were one of these entitled people who complain about ships being in a port, you might suggest that the port authority, or the US Navy, could have arranged to take the ship elsewhere, or even kept it safely in Lake Erie until the ice melted. But the ship, which is designed for pretty well everything except ice and low temperatures, could hardly be lugged overland, dismantled like the old Clyde-built steamers designed for the African Lakes. You might wish that these people who complain might be a little more tolerant.

I'm not making excuses for all these people who seem to hate ships and shipping, but I would doubt that those who live in Montreal are any different to those whose dwellings overlook any other body of water, or portside premises, in any developed country. People who lived on the waterfront in earlier generations probably made their living from what went on in a port, whereas today they are “incomers” who are completely unaware of what ports do, and why ships contribute to their quality of their lives.

This situation was perfectly encapsulated last month at the celebrated Sea Pie Supper in Southampton by the principal speaker Captain Richard Woodman, who is, of course a distinguished maritime historian (and former columnist in this newspaper). Speaking about the way that the Merchant Navy seems to have been excised from the UK's collective memory, he suggested that “the level of ignorance about maritime affairs, even among the supposedly informed intelligentsia in this country, is, to my mind, staggering”. This ignorance, he pointed out, was more serious than might be first apparent and amounts to “a profound weakness in our national thinking and exposes us to exploitation at best, and perhaps something rather worse...” We probably ought not to look to governments to help the maritime industry, as they are as ill-informed as anyone else.

His speech, well-seasoned with historical allusions, concluded that “we should not lose sight of the great highway that surrounds us” of our maritime traditions. But if every port is infested with inhabitants who complain every time they see a ship and whinge about every conceivable aspect of maritime commerce that intrudes into their comfortable lives, it is quite difficult to see any light at the end of this particular tunnel. You won't change these mindsets with their inbuilt sense of entitlement. It's what we have become.

STRICK LINE - THE STORY OF A CARGO SHIP COMPANY AND ITS TRADE

(Article written for the Warsash Association magazine All Hands by Barry Peck)

Frank Clarke Strick was born in Swansea in October 1849. His father was a Lloyds agent and shipper of coal from Swansea. Frank Strick initially joined the family business before becoming a partner in a ship broking company. In 1885 he moved to London and formed Frank C Strick & Company Ltd. In time he owned or had interests in many enterprises, notably the iron ore trade from North Africa, coal bunkering depots, Suez Canal facilities, and interests in the Persian Gulf including a lighterage service from the Shatt-al-Arab bar up to Basra and Khorramshahr.

However, it became obvious to him that owning the ships required for these businesses would maximise the profits. In 1887 he therefore bought his first ship, the *Normand*, which he sold the following year to finance a bigger ship, the *Alphonse Perran*. These early ships were for the Mediterranean trade, and in 1893 he built the first Persian Gulf trade ship, *Arabistan*. From these beginnings grew what became two separate fleets, one trading from South Wales to France and other Mediterranean ports with coal and general cargo outwards and iron ore and other cargoes homewards, and the second one carrying bunker coal and general cargo to the Persian Gulf and local produce homewards, although until 1912 the ships interchanged between the two trades. Strick had business associates in Paris and the Mediterranean trade was a partnership between them, however the Persian Gulf trade was Strick's own business. The Mediterranean trade ships were under several different companies and funnel designs, while the Gulf ships were owned by Strick and sailed under the famous chevrons on the funnel and house flag.



The Mediterranean trade ships (the "Medi" boats as they were usually known) lasted until after World War II. By that time the trade was dying and by 1952 the surviving ships were sold, leaving the Gulf trade, which was growing with the oil industry and those countries' development, to continue the Strick name. Because of this early demise, very little remains recorded of their history or trade.

Although inevitably over the lifetime of the two fleets some ships were built in other shipyards, Strick and his succeeding company directors had two preferred shipbuilders who supplied the majority of the two fleets. William Gray & Co Ltd of West Hartlepool built 39 ships between 1893 and 1927, and John Readhead & Sons Ltd of South Shields built 46 ships between 1926 and 1970, the final two after the yard had been taken over by Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd.

Strick Line Ltd was formed in 1913 by merging two of the earlier companies owned by Strick and his associates. It should be noted that the parent company, Frank C Strick and Co Ltd, remained throughout wholly owned by Strick and following his death the directors of the company who owned the shares. The company shares were never traded publically. In 1919 Strick Line Ltd was sold to the P&O SN Company to raise money to replace war losses, but Strick remained as ship and trade operator. In 1923 restructuring within P&O created Strick Line (1923) Ltd, and then in 1928 Strick acquired 49% interest in this company which continued to operate as a separate shipping line until finally in 1972 P&O re-acquired the 49% interest and integrated the fleet and the Gulf trade into the P&O General Cargo Division which had been formed the previous year. In 1946 the company was again renamed as Strick Line Ltd.



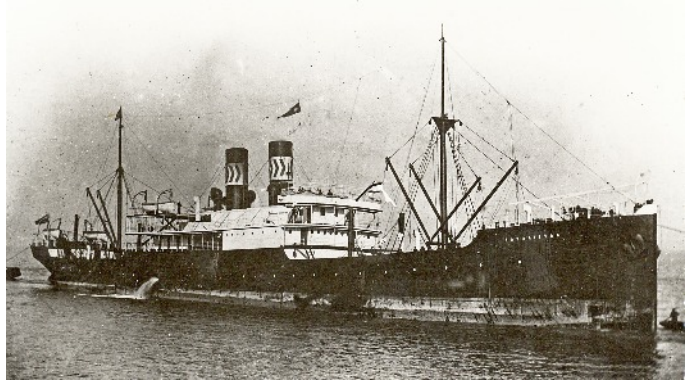
Right from 1893 the Gulf trade ships, the "Stan" boats as they were known to every stevedore in the UK, with one exception always carried a name ending in "istan", which were place names in Persia and the surrounding Arab countries. This comes from the Persian and Arabic meaning land of or place of, and a careful search of old maps of the area will discover most of the names. The only exception was the 1927 built *Arabistan*, (pictured left) which in 1929 had its name changed to *Bandar Shahpour* at the request of the Shah of Persia to commemorate the opening of the port of that name in the Khor Musa.

The Strick Line management was notably in two stages. Frank Strick personally managed the ships and trade into the middle 1920s when he was approaching his eightieth year. While he then continued to take an active interest, finally retiring in 1939, his board of directors became the controlling influence. This showed in the change of preferred shipbuilders, but also notably in the retaining of the ships. Strick himself would build or purchase ships, make a quick profit, then sell them on and use the money to buy more ships. Sometimes he would order a class of ships and sell some of them on while they were still building. However, from 1927 onwards the company purpose built ships for the trade and kept them for their economic working lives.

The manning of the ships also reflected this trend. Strick Line ships throughout had British deck and engine officers. Initially British sailors and stewards and Arab firemen were carried, then later it was all British crew and for the period 1920 – 1925 there were Chinese catering staff. From 1925 onwards the crews were Indian deck and engine with Goanese catering. The carpenter was normally Chinese.

From 1909 to the amalgamation of the ships into P&O GCD in 1972 there was a working arrangement with Ellerman Line, called the Strick and Ellerman Line. This was purely a trading and marketing arrangement between the two companies with Strick as the freight manager for the Persian Gulf trade, and there was never any other connection between them.

With some variations the appearance of the ships from the beginning until World War II was fairly standard, usually with three islands, one funnel, two masts and four or five hatches. Notable exceptions were the *Tabaristan* of 1907, (pictured right) which had two funnels and after World War I a class built in the early 1920s that had king posts fore and aft instead of masts. It was only after World War II when the ships were being designed specifically for the Gulf trade that the ships had their own characteristics and were immediately identifiable as Strick Line.



During World War I six Gulf ships were lost, four by enemy action, one wrecked and one disappeared fate unknown. Strick managed nine captured German ships for the Government. Five war standard ships were purchased to replace the losses.

Up until 1926 the bar at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab river could not be dredged deeper than 20 feet, and lighters were used to partially discharge the inward bound ships. However, there were never enough lighters, and the ships, when fully discharged, would often do a lightening trip before leaving the Gulf. In 1923 and 1924 the *Serbistan* and *Muristan* each spent 18 months acting as lighters. As this was not planned before the ships left the UK and crew changes were not practicable this was not a popular task on board!

In the mid-1920s Strick Line began to seriously build ships designed for the trade, and from 1927 to 1930 a class of seven ships were built, *Arabistan* (renamed *Bandar Shahpour* in 1929), *Baharistan* (re-named *Selvistan* in 1958), *Floristan*, *Arabistan*, *Gorjistan*, *Kohistan* and *Registan*. This was the first time that ships were built for long term service, and the three that survived World War II lasted into the early 1960s.

During the 1930s the major world problem was the Depression. This had a huge impact on the British merchant navy and the shipbuilding industry, and Strick, as with most shipping companies, did not invest in new tonnage during that period.

Following the Depression a further class of six ships were built between 1937 and 1940, *Armanistan*, *Baltistan*, *Shahrستان*, *Turkistan*, *Afghanistan* and *Baluchistan*, the last two completed after the start of World War II. Two of these survived and also lasted into the early 1960s. An advance for this class was the addition of a low pressure exhaust turbine to boost the service speed.



A second *Tabaristan*, 1925 - 1941

During World War II Strick Line ships served in all theatres, and in addition to the losses there were many incidences of daring and heroism, including the evacuations of France and Crete and various landings. Hazardous cargos were carried in dangerous waters. As in the previous war, the Gulf ships suffered heavily in proportion to the fleet size, losing eight to enemy action, one by fire and one wrecked. Six ships based on utility designs were built, *Avristan*, *Bardistan*, *Arabistan*, *Floristan*, *Registan* (sold to Hain 1945), and *Shahrستان*. Strick operated nine war standard ships for the Government, while after the war the Liberty ship *Samglory* was subsequently purchased in 1947, becoming *Serbistan*. The six

survivors served in the fleet into the early 1960s.

At the end of the war the fleet consisted of five pre-war ships and five wartime built ships. However, a number of these were not immediately available for trading. Four ships were on Government contract in the Far East, with the *Kohistan* not finally returning home until August 1946. Strick therefore needed new ships and commenced ordering new tonnage.

After World War II the only outward trade was UK and Northern Europe (normally Antwerp) to the Arabian Gulf, marketed as Strick & Ellerman Line. The agreement with Ellermans was that one ship per month came from them under Strick cargo management. If no Ellerman ship was available other ships were chartered in. Main loading ports were Antwerp, Grangemouth, Middlesbrough and London on the East Coast and Glasgow, Cardiff (occasionally), Manchester and Liverpool on the West Coast, normally four ships per month. This volume of trade continued right through to the P&O amalgamation in 1972.

Continued over

The fleet during this period was affected by two canals. The Manchester Ship Canal had a considerable influence on the design and size of the vessels, while the open or closed status of the Suez Canal had a major affect on passage times and homeward trading patterns.

Manchester was a very important port for exporting the industrial production of the Midlands, and therefore it was essential that a sufficient number of the fleet were able to get up the Canal. The width and depth of the locks limited the beam and maximum draft, while the height of the bridges limited the air draft. The taller funnels had to be built in sections for removal at the Eastham Crane Berth inside the canal entrance, and the masts had telescopic topmasts. These limitations meant that if one class of ship was too large to use the canal then it was usually followed by another class with reduced dimensions, even though the vessel layouts were similar.

During the period between the end of World War II and the merger of the Strick fleet into the P&O General Cargo Division the Suez Canal was closed twice. The nationalisation and British and French invasion of 1956 caused its blockage for four months, then much more serious was the Six Day war of 1967 which closed the Canal until after the P&O merger due to wrecks blocking the channel. During both periods the Strick fleet, as with many other lines, was routed via South Africa. The regular, and popular, bunkering port was Durban. This increased the outward passage from about 17 to 20 days while the Canal was open, to 30 plus days when it was closed. Depending on homeward charter ports, a proportionate increase in passage time back to the UK applied. For the company this gave the inevitable increase in fuel and running costs, although for many in the crews the improvement in weather conditions compensated for the extra passage time compared with the Suez Canal and Red Sea, and the additional passage time allowed more ship maintenance.

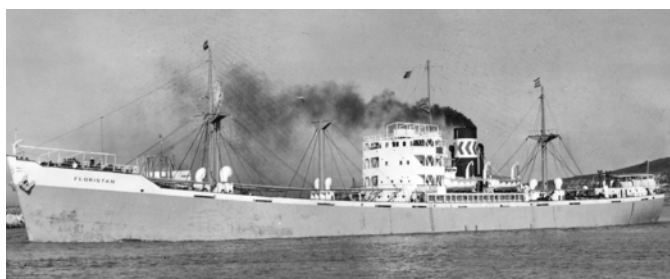
Homewards, approximately one ship per month loaded in the Arabian Gulf and, when the Suez Canal was open, occasionally Red Sea ports to UK and Northern Europe. Most others were chartered out, normally with the intention to bring ships back to UK profitably for normal trade. Occasionally ships urgently needed were brought back light ship when the Suez Canal was open. The basic aim was to have at least three ships in any month available for loading in the UK, and preferably four. Charters took the ships to many ports from Australia in the east to the East coast of the USA and Canada in the west, with occasional discharge and loading in the Great Lakes. They rarely ventured into the Pacific area, though in the final months before the P&O GCD merger five were chartered to a Far East company loading in ports in that part of the world for crossing the Pacific to the Panama Canal to discharge on the USA East Coast.

The expanding Arabian Gulf oil industry, and also the generally developing nations of the area requiring construction materials, needed increasing amounts of heavy and indivisible cargo items. With no heavy lifting equipment in the Gulf ports except Basrah the ships had to have their own equipment. Most of the new build vessels therefore had a 50 ton derrick on the foremast to work over number two hatch, which always was larger than the others, and many also had a 30 ton derrick. Two immediately post-war had much heavier derricks on the foremast, whilst in the 1960s three were built with Stulcken derricks.

Before the post-war new builds arrived, the fleet consisted of eleven ships, *Baharistan*, *Gorjistan*, *Kohistan*, *Turkistan* and *Afghanistan* from pre-war, and *Avristan*, *Bardistan*, *Arabistan*, *Floristan*, *Shahristan* and *Serbistan* wartime builds.



Afghanistan 1940 - 1962



Floristan 1944 - 1963



Serbistan 1944 - 1962



Shahristan 1945 - 1962

The post-war built ships can be summed up as follows. With the exception of two, all ships were ordered by Stricks. One ship was purchased during construction, and one was purchased when three years old. With the exception of three, all ships were built for Strick at the Readheads yard in South Shields, which became part of the Swan Hunter group in the late 1960s. All ships before the P&O merger were only sold for scrap or sold onwards due to becoming economically unsuitable to keep for the Arabian Gulf trade, the main problems being increasing fuel costs and age based maintenance costs.

This article will be concluded in the next edition

The Empire Star

*This is an excerpt from Cachalot Roy Martin's book: **Ebb and Flow: Evacuations and Landings by Merchant Ships in World War Two**, and details the evacuation of Singapore in early February, 1942.*

The *Empire Star* had arrived in Singapore on 29 January as part of convoy BM11. The ship's crew worked all day and through the night unloading guns, lorries, tanks and the 2,000 tons of ammunition that she carried. On 11 February a team of Australian nurses were chosen by their matron to board the *Empire Star*. The women objected as they did not want to leave their patients, but Matron Drummond gave them an hour to prepare. Each was allowed to take a small case. They were joined by their British colleagues from Singapore; their matron, a Miss Jones, had picked those who were to go. At the wharf their boarding was delayed by an air raid. When the 63 nurses and three physiotherapists did board they were told to go down the cargo hold, as the ship only had a few passenger cabins. Conditions in the hold would have been unpleasant, but this was the safest place to be. Miss Jones, and several other British matrons, lost their lives a few days later, while on the s.s. *Kuala*.



Blue Star Line's *Empire Star*

some of the reports they were alone, but other records say that they sailed with the *Gorgon* and the *Kedah*, and were escorted by HM ships *Durban*, *Jupiter* and *Stronghold*. The naval ships had embarked 232 evacuees between them; the other two merchant ships had over 300 each.

The *Empire Star* was attacked repeatedly and as many as fifty seven enemy aircraft were counted. On the first day she received three direct hits. Thirteen men were killed and thirty-seven others were badly wounded. The nurses set up a camp hospital, and, though they had little equipment, they tended the wounded as best they could. The Second Officer, Mr J. D. Golightly, sustained a severe injury to his left arm and Able Seaman Charles P. Barber was wounded in the right thigh. The vessel, to use Captain Capon's own words, 'miraculously escaped with a series of extremely near misses on both sides.' Captain Capon took violent evasive action. He mentioned the 'invaluable assistance' rendered by the Singapore Pilot, Captain G. Wright and his Third Officer, Mr J. P. Smith:

both of whom all through coolly kept the attacking aircraft under close observation . . . throughout this long and sustained attack the ship's company, one and all, behaved magnificently, each going about his allocated duty with a coolness and spirit of courage unquestionably deserving of the highest praise. It was fortunate that the three direct hits did not seriously damage the ship's fire service, and prompt action and yeoman service by the fire parties under the direction of the Chief Officer, Mr J. L. Dawson, prevented any serious fire developing in the initial critical stage of the attack.

Sister Margaret Hamilton recalled:

During the bombing there was absolutely no sense of panic or anything. In fact we sang, and sang, and sang, and sang. A lot of wartime songs but mostly "Waltzing Matilda" which is more or less an Australian national song.

When they said goodbye to Captain Capon and thanked him, he told the nurses that his ship had been in the evacuation of Crete and Greece, but that he had never been in such a tight spot as coming from Singapore. Captain Capon asked us to do two things every day of our lives: 'we were to thank God we were alive, and never to forget the Merchant Navy – as if we could!' Margaret Hamilton said 'We knew that it was only by the mercy of God and the good seamanship of the ship's master that we managed to get home'. Captain Capon, who had been made an OBE in World War I, was made a CBE. Others among his crew received two OBEs, three MBEs; two BEMs and nine Commendations.

Several Holt ships were in Singapore when it fell. Their *Gorgon* had arrived with convoy MS1. From 1 February the ship was continuously bombed as her crew attempted to discharge her cargo. By 11 February it became obvious that there was no point in continuing and Captain Marriott was ordered to sail. He then had 358 passengers on board and the Asian crew had deserted. The remaining crew got their vessel to sea, and, though they were attacked by Japanese bombers six times on 12 February and hit three times, they reached Fremantle safely in early March. Two of the bombs caused serious fires, one adjacent to the ammunition store. These were brought under control by the ship's fire parties. The third bomb did not explode and the ship's Chief Officer, J. Bruce, and two soldiers, manhandled it onto the deck and dumped it over the side. In his 'brief, even laconic report' the Master said 'only the extreme manoeuvrability of the vessel saved her.' Captain Roskill RN, says 'she was saved by the skill and coolness of the man who handled her.'



Troops on the deck of the *Empire Star*

Continued on page 11

The following account of the subsequent fate of the Empire Star can be found on Wikipedia.

Empire Star spent 23–27 February in Fremantle and then 4–23 March in Sydney. She crossed the Tasman Sea to New Zealand, reached New Plymouth on South Island on 27 March and Wellington on North Island on 2 April. She headed east across the Pacific, traversed the Panama Canal on 26–28 August and reached Liverpool on 11 September.

In October 1942 Empire Star loaded a mixed cargo including some ammunition and a deck cargo of aircraft. She embarked 12 British, five South African and two Polish passengers and on 20 October left Liverpool independently and unescorted, bound for Cape Town and East London.

On 23 October Empire Star was making 14 knots (26 km/h) in bad weather and had stopped zig-zagging in order to avoid damage to her deck cargo. About 1500 hrs the Type VIIC German submarine U-615 started following her, and about 40 minutes later fired a spread of four torpedoes at her. At 1543 hrs two of the torpedoes struck the ship's starboard side. The first was a dud but the second detonated amidships, flooding her engine room, killing four crew and stopping her engines and generators. Two men on the engine room control platform were wounded, one of her two starboard lifeboats was destroyed and the ship listed heavily to starboard.

Empire Star transmitted a distress signal and the order was given to abandon ship. The crew launched the remaining three lifeboats and five liferafts. The boat were fitted with skates, which enabled the port ones to be launched despite the heavy list. Despite a heavy sea, all passengers and crew were evacuated except the four killed in the engine room. The three boats then stood off as the ship righted herself and settled low in the water. The First Officer, Leslie Vernon, considered whether to reboard the ship to see if she could be saved.

About 25 minutes after the first explosion U-615 attempted a coup de grâce by firing a torpedo from one of her stern tubes. This missed, so the submarine reloaded her bow tubes and turned to fire again. The next torpedo struck Empire Star between her No. 4 and No. 5 holds about an hour and a half after the first explosion. The ship remained afloat, so U-615 hit her with another coup de grâce. Empire Star's bow rose from the sea and she sank by the stern, and about five minutes later a strong underwater explosion shook the lifeboats. The submarine did not surface to question the survivors.

One lifeboat contained 38 people and was commanded by Captain Capon. Chief Officer Vernon commanded a second, which with difficulty in the heavy sea collected nine survivors from five liferafts. Mr Vernon's boat transferred the Third Officer, Roland Moscrop-Young, to command the third boat, leaving Mr Vernon's boat with 34 people. Mr Moscrop-Young's boat contained 27 people and was the least crowded boat. Mr Moscrop-Young tried to get it alongside to take some people off Captain Capon's, but was prevented by the heavy sea. Capon ordered the three boats to keep together overnight and then sail for the Azores, which were about 570 miles to the south.



Captain Capon

Overnight there was a strong northwest wind and heavy sea, drenching everyone in the boats. At first light on 24 October the boats could not see each other. Mr Vernon's boat hoisted its sail and set off before the wind, until at 1010 hrs his crew sighted the Third Officer's boat several miles to the southwest. They tried to steer towards it, but the heavy weather prevented them. At 1230 hrs Vernon abandoned the attempt and altered course to the southeast. At 1700 hrs he ordered the sail lowered and the boat to heave to with her sea anchor. At 2300 hrs the rudder broke off at the top pintle, so two of Vernon's men used an oar as an improvised and unsatisfactory steering oar. On 25 October the weather was still wild so Mr Vernon's boat drifted before the wind with her sea anchor and sail.

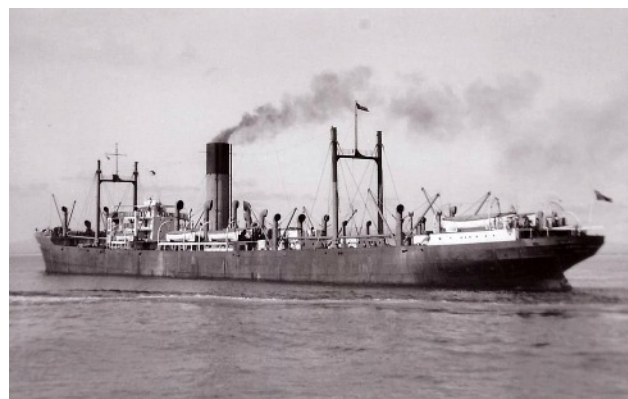
On the afternoon of 25 October the Black Swan-class sloop HMS Black Swan found an upturned lifeboat surrounded by wreckage. Then at 1815 hrs the sloop found Mr Vernon's boat and rescued her 34 occupants. Black Swan then searched for 120 miles, and on the morning of 26 October discovered Mr Moscrop-Young's boat and rescued its 27 occupants. Captain Capon and his party were never found. His may have been the upturned boat that the sloop had seen on the afternoon of 25 October. Capon's boat included the Chief Engineer, all three radio officers and six passengers. Five of the passengers were South African: 63-year-old Julie Martiessen with her 27-year-old daughter Gisela, and 46-year-old Annie Philpott with her two boys Kenneth (12) and John (nine).

Surviving passengers wrote to Blue Star Line commending the ship's officers and men. One credited Leslie Vernon and Second Officer JP Smith with "unflinching courage" and tirelessness. Another commended Vernon for "seamanship, courage and tact". Seaman James Donaldson was called "outstanding" for his "energy and zeal". Roland Moscrop-Young was credited with "remarkable coolness, ability and seamanship" and Junior Engineer Hickman was thanked for "continuous and unending" help. Vernon and Moscrop-Young were awarded the MBE and Donaldson was awarded the BEM.



Though he was known to have sailed overloaded with refugees (which he safely delivered), Captain J. H. Hendriks-Jansen of Holt's Dutch '*Blauw Pijper*' *Phrontis*, did not even submit a report! *Phrontis* had arrived on 4 February with a cargo of war materiel, and four Fairy Fulmar aircraft on deck. Her Master requested permission to go to Batavia to unload the balance of the cargo, but this was refused. On Monday the ninth the Master was given permission to leave, but 'without hesitation', he berthed and reloaded part of the cargo, including the four aircraft – plus one more – and (another?) 80 passengers. The ship was camouflaged with nets, and, after a stressful and exciting voyage, arrived safely at Tanjong Priok.

The third Blue Funnel liner, the *Talthebius* was less fortunate. Her European crew, helped by members of the New Zealand Air Force, discharged her cargo of tanks and lorries. On 3 February, as the last lorry was going over the side, the ship was hit by two bombs. The Chinese crew left, leaving the Europeans to fight the fires. As they were brought under control another salvo punctured the ship's hull in many places. The Master, Captain Kent, wrote 'The European crew worked together cheerfully, and with a will, and I have nothing but praise for their endeavours.' They were helped by members of the Observer Corps. With the help of two harbour tugs, crewed by Europeans, the vessel was moved back alongside, but the ship was not repairable and was abandoned.



It was not the end of the *Talthebius* however. Although scuttled and abandoned on the 12 February, she was raised by the Japanese forces and renamed *Taruyaso Maru*. In June '45 she exploded a mine off Sado Island, Japan, sank and was abandoned but subsequently salvaged once more. After repair she was returned to Holts again, under the name *Empire Evenlode*. She was finally broken up in the UK in 1949.



HMAS Ping Wo

On 11 or 12 February Captain Kent and his crew were allocated the *Ping Wo*, an ex-Yangtze river steamer, to make their escape. Again the crew were supplemented by Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy sailors. They set about coaling and storing ship, using what they could find in the burning godowns. When this was completed, they sailed, picking up about 195 refugees, of several nationalities, from the water. After surviving several bombing attacks and arrived safely at Batavia on 14 February.

At Batavia they again fuelled and stored, before setting off for Fremantle in convoy, with the disabled Australian destroyer HMAS *Vendetta* in tow. The other ships in the convoy were the *Darvel* (+ *Kinta*?) and the *Giang Ann* (built in 1888, and almost certainly the oldest ship involved in the evacuation). The HMAS *Yarra* (under the command of Lieutenant Commodore R. W. Rankin) escorted the convoy part of the way. Because of the *Ping Wo*'s tow, the convoy's speed was limited to four to five knots, at best. HMAS *Adelaide* took over the escort south of Christmas Island. When the ships encountered bad weather, the tow line parted, but they nonetheless

arrived safely at Fremantle on 4 March. There 'without any fanfare Captain Kent handed over 10,635 troy ounces of gold that he had carried from Singapore.'

The Nurses Story

On Tuesday 10 February 1942 six Australian nurses were told to be ready within fifteen minutes to board the *Wah Sui*, a small Yangtze river steamer, in Singapore harbour. Captain A. C. Benfield, who had recently retired from the Sarawak Steamship Company, was called up in the Royal Naval Reserve and given command. Their matron told them to take as many wounded men as they could and get them to safety. Matron Paschke was destined to die at sea only a few days later, one of the victims of the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*, but those of her nurses who survived continued to obey her orders. There were about twenty nurses altogether on the *Wah Sui*, British (and Indian?) civilian nurses and nurses from Queen Alexandria's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), as well as the six from Australia.

The ship stayed alongside for two days, waiting for civilians who boarded with their personal belongings. The civilians occupied the accommodation and as a result there was no room to take on any more nurses or any more of the wounded. This memory still angered the Australian nurses, years later. The recollections of the Australian and the British nurses differ, but between them they got over 400 wounded servicemen on to this small vessel; which had never been designed for a sea voyage, much less the long trip she was to undertake. They sailed at sunset on 12 February.

Reporting to the Principal Matron of the QAIMNS, Sister Catherine Maudsley said of a voyage on an unnamed rescue vessel:

The ship that we boarded had many hundreds on board, including Air Force, Australians, some civilians, even babies twelve days' old. We were allocated one of the holds and shared it with Australian sisters. We slept on bare boards, using gas capes, tin hats or gas masks as pillows. We only possessed what we stood up in and could carry. The Australian Sisters who had been on board for a day or so before we arrived, had all their kit and food enough for a week, but at no time did they offer us anything, not even food; it was our men who shared their rations with us. . . . The ship itself received four direct hits and had a fire in the stern, but it still sailed on; had it not been for the Captain and staff of that Merchant ship, we should never have reached Batavia.

The ship was displaying the Red Cross and, when a Japanese plane flew over; the pilot waved and then ignored them, respecting the insignia. On the night of Friday 13 February they saw two burning ships and stopped in the hope of picking up survivors. Next day the *Wah Sui* docked in Batavia. The Australian nurses got their patients ready to transfer to another hospital ship bound for Colombo. They packed their own gear and waited aboard the *Wah Sui* to be transferred. 'Gradually they realized that they had been abandoned.' The Straits Steamship website says:

after arriving there (Tg. Priok) he (Captain Benfield) was ordered to load 400 wounded and make for Colombo; he sailed in late February arriving in Ceylon early March, a brilliant feat of seamanship.

On Friday 20 February, when the Japanese had already landed on Java, the Australian nurses boarded the Orient Liner, the *Orcades*, bound for Colombo. On the voyage they continued to do their duty, nursing both soldiers and civilians. The *Orcades* was the only ship in convoy SJ6, she carried a total of 3,768 troops and evacuees.

Another ship that had been hastily pressed into naval service was the Sarawak Steamship's *Vyner Brooke*, still commanded by her peacetime Master Captain R. E. 'Tubby' Borton. The *Vyner Brooke* sailed on 'Black Friday' 13 February, with 200 aboard, mainly civilians, including 65 Australian nurses. The ship had insufficient food and water, but the Australian nurses shared what they had. While heading for the Banka Strait the vessel was attacked and three of the lifeboats were holed.

One of the nurses, Jessie Blanche, (Blanchie) recalled that the Captain:

was good. He zigzagged. They came over and bombed us, and missed... They came back and it is said that they dropped 27 bombs. And eventually one hit us. Right down the funnel. The boys down in the engine room were very badly burned. We were given orders to abandon ship.

Another bomb hit the bridge and the third hit the after part, injuring scores of civilians. The ship sank in 15 minutes, capsizing towards many of the survivors. More were lost when the enemy pilots strafed those in the water. With the remaining lifeboat overcrowded, many survivors, including the nurses, had to stay in the water hanging on the side of the boat. They were guided towards Muntok beach by a fire lit by earlier survivors, who included Matron Drummond.

Her colleague Matron Paschke, who was on one of the rafts, was presumed lost at sea, as were eleven of the Sisters.

Captain Burton and others were swept in a different direction and were captured. While in the water, Sister Jenny Greer was heard singing 'We're off to see the Wizard.' Sister Greer was among those who survived the horrors of imprisonment; in Picture Australia there is a photograph of her and Sister Jeffrey, showing them in hospital in 1945

In all 22 Australian nurses, plus women and children, ship's crew, naval ratings and about forty British soldiers – some badly wounded – gathered together on the beach.

Mr Sedgeman, the Chief Officer of the **VYNER BROOKE**, and five ratings from the **PRINCE OF WALES**, went to a nearby kampong to find food, but the villagers feared the Japanese and would not help. Then Mr Sedgeman and two of the Royal Naval ratings went further along the beach to contact the Japanese, so that the party could give themselves up. Matron Drummond decided that the civilian women and children should go with them, they were taken prisoner. The others sat on the beach and waited for Sedgeman's return. When he arrived he was with a Japanese officer and his troops. The Japanese separated the men from the women and then marched the men along the beach out of sight. They were lined up, facing out to sea and were machine-gunned and then bayoneted. Three who had swum out to sea were machine-gunned; only a naval stoker, Ernest Lloyd, survived, he was badly injured.

Vivian (Vivien?) Bullwinkel wrote:

The Japanese who had gone with the men came back wiping their bayonets. We just looked at each other. We didn't have any emotion about it. I think by this time we'd had shock added to everything else. The Japanese came and stood in front of us and indicated that we should go into the sea. And we walked into the sea with our backs to them. We knew what was going to happen to us.... we didn't talk among ourselves. It was quite silent. We were drained of emotion. There were no tears.the force of the bullet, together with the waves, knocked me off my feet.

An elderly civilian lady died with the nurses, her husband had been shot with the other men. It was said that only Vivian survived; Mr S.A. Anderson, Ritchie & Bisset said:

When she was brought into the 'tinwinnings' at Banka, Vivian was "unconscious and in a terrible mess from sun and sea exposure. Life was hardly there. Her chances of survival were very slim. Because of the sun, her mouth was completely closed by blisters and eventually the doctors fed her through a small opening at the corner of her mouth by means of a small glass.

However Dr B Angell, who was a friend of Vivian Bullwinkel, says that this account is totally incorrect. After the war Vivian Bullwinkel went on to have a distinguished career in the Australian Nursing Service.



Distant horizons

Lloyd's List Viewpoint May 3 2018

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

Hope, as they say, springing eternal, the UK government is looking for “evidence” on what the nation’s maritime prospects might be in 2050. In that neither a computer model, nor an educated guess, constitutes the sort of hard and fast facts upon which policies might be based 30-odd years from now, it is a big ask.

Is it a worthwhile exercise? Over the years there have been so many studies, inquiries, research papers, work by earnest committees, hundreds of manhours spent on providing evidence to politicians and ministries, and to so little effect, that it is tempting to ignore this transport minister’s earnest request for a bit of futurology. On my bookshelves, almost at eye level, I can see the substantial volume of Viscount Rochdale’s 1969 Report into the Shipping Industry. A fat lot of good that did as the UK industry went into meltdown. I have a few more from later dates, but I think I relegated them to the attic.

If the minister was really serious, he might do worse than look back a bit, before trying to summon up crystal balls for the future. If we are hoping to be anything other than a maritime bit-part player 30 years from now, it is worth looking at why UK Maritime and mainly its sizeable shipping industry vanished away. If you ask this question to elderly people like myself, you will get half a dozen answers, ranging from trade union problems to the uselessness of British shipping management, governments washing their hands of “old” industry and the short-termists taking charge and being unduly influenced by the City.

But there is no doubt that the returns on running British shipping companies in the 70s, 80s and 90s, by which time it had all disappeared, were insufficient to keep business running. There were just better ways of earning a living. Overtonnage in virtually every sector made the short to medium term prospects lack any hope of recovery. When this was added to the capital demands of new technology, with containers and giant ships, it perhaps was not surprising that the industry withered away. The shipbuilding industry was a similar story, although it was perhaps a merciful escape that it didn’t, like industries elsewhere, invest in huge new building docks and covered facilities, when demand for the products went out of the window shortly after this huge phase of capital spending.

The really big question is to ask why, even though the world fleet has increased and is busier and more productive than ever, there are no significant British survivors today. The same awful circumstances affected the markets in which Mr Moller and Captain Chang were somehow managing to survive and prosper between then and now. Is there something about today’s significant players that might explain their ability to withstand the vicissitudes of a cyclical market? You might suggest that one common factor is that the “super-survivors” are not, by and large, publicly run companies, but have a strong personal leadership and are not unduly swayed by shareholders objecting to investments and praising the chairman when something is sold.

It is probably true that those companies which have managed to grow over the past forty years have been those where there is this emphasis on strong leadership, coupled with technical expertise, rather than fancy financial finagling. Look at the real leaders and you will note their sense of timing, which is important, and their ability to take a long-term view.

If we look at the lessons of the past and the examples of excellence in the present, is there anything that a British government ought to be doing to encourage a real renaissance in UK Maritime? There will be some who will suggest that the best they could do is just to stay off the industry’s back!

What do we want in a maritime industry in 2050? Is there a more benign climate that can be provided by the state, which will encourage maritime excellence, bearing in mind that there are plenty of eager national competitors, vying for the same sort of future? Can we make it worthwhile not just to encourage the Red Ensign as a FOC, but a base under which the British themselves might want to own and operate ships?

If the answer is in the affirmative, the most important element in this maritime development must be in the provision of maritime related skills. We have got to build a workforce with the very best grasp of marine related technology, with a baseload of sea experience and, most important, an interest in the maritime world. That itself is a huge challenge, if we consider how an “awareness” of the sea has been excised from our national consciousness.

I shall be long gone miles before 2050, but my only real advice to the minister is to focus on the people. Get on and blooming well do something and forget about the endless reports that waste everybody’s time as every new politician tries to get a handle on an unfamiliar industry. Look at the value of the leadership, particularly in family-based companies and reject the corporate model with its accountant-led and mostly hopeless management as unsuitable for this industrial sector. And don’t forget about those lessons of history; the chances are that they will be repeated before the second half of the century.

Another Cause for Concern

The Daily Telegraph Business section recently published a thought-provoking article entitled “How over-reliance on GPS could signal disaster”. It opened with the little-known fact that in June 2017 more than 20 vessels on the Black Sea “noticed something unusual about their satellite-based navigation systems” resulting in their positions being shown as well inland (at a small airport) rather than some 20 miles offshore – their true positions. From experience, every Master knew that their Global Positioning System was rarely incorrect and – when it was – the margin of error was seldom more than a few metres. Eventually, it became apparent that someone, somewhere was “manipulating” GPS – the navigation and timing system on which the World depends. Many suspected that the culprit was an adjoining superpower and this suspicion was more then reinforced a few months later when Norwegian aircraft flying over eastern Finnmark, a county on Norway’s border with Russia, lost their GPS reception for a full week.

GPS satellites are vital for, inter alia, telecoms, broadcast and electricity networks, smartphones and the vast majority of shipboard and airborne navigational equipment - and the financial markets use the system to allow high-frequency trading to work correctly. Today, there are 31 satellites in the GPS constellation each carrying a synchronised clock. It is maintained by the US military, runs for 24 hours a day and is available to anyone, without charge. Russia has its own system – GLONASS, Europe’s GALILEO is still developing and the Chinese hope for worldwide coverage in two years time with BEIDOU.

Undoubtedly, the loss of GPS would be catastrophic and it is estimated that the UK would lose more than £1 billion a day in the event of a few days GPS loss. The container trade would grind to a halt and majority of the Emergency Services would be unable to operate.

Years ago the greatest threat to the system was perceived to be a freak storm in space but today there are many sophisticated manmade devices designed to render it inoperative. In addition, anyone can legally buy (but not legally USE) a cheap “jamming” device which would disrupt the weak signal (the equivalent “power” of a 20 watt light bulb) that comes from a satellite some 12,000 miles above.

Some years ago an article in a maritime publication stated that anyone standing on the Cliffs of Dover, armed with such a cheap device, could negate many of the electronic devices aboard ships navigating the Straits – and the author invited readers to visualise the consequences of doing so in reduced visibility.

Equally worrying is the threat of “spoofing” when the signal is hijacked or diverted and used for nefarious purposes. Russia, China and North Korea have all been accused of disrupting “Western” operations by “spoofing”. Today, with the prospects of the introduction of autonomous ships becoming a reality one can but wonder what the consequences might be if “spoofing” becomes commonplace.

Much thought has been given to the provision of a “backup system” based on an updated version of Loran. The British and Irish General Lighthouse Authority DID operate such a system until 2015 but the lack of support from other European countries led to it being discontinued although recently, a panel of experts convened to reexamine the situation with a view to “improving the resilience of our critical services to disruption”. The revelation that the Russian Navy has the means of tracing and destroying our sub-sea cables and pipes – currently an important energy source- makes this research even more vital.

Today, very few ships carry the navigational instruments or publications that would enable a competent navigator to ascertain the ship’s position and – as even fewer carry an adequate chart outfit for plotting that position – it would, in any event, be a fruitless exercise.

Today’s incessant demands for more money to strengthen and enlarge our conventional armed forces is understandable until one realises the fearful strategic potential of cyber warfare and its widespread global development. But perhaps there is NO defence against that.

CRK 2/4/18 With acknowledgement to “The Daily Telegraph”)



Of course they did!

And the extra 5m beam also accommodates 24 boxes across, out of reach to many of the world’s portainer cranes, we suspect.

Your editor is very aware that in this edition we have stepped back again to the first half of the last century but I can only work with such contributions that you provide. Someone out there must have some personal stories and accounts of happenings that are not at least 50 years old.

The pre-war and war-time accounts which dominate may seem dated but they detail the history and bravery of a proud Merchant Navy which is in danger of being forgotten. For bringing that to you I shall not apologise.

Editor

Rope Ends

Lady Mary Fagan LG DCVO JP

It was with great pleasure we learned that on the occasion of St George's Day, 23rd April, Her Majesty The Queen appointed Dame Mary Fagan to be a Lady Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

This British order of chivalry is the world's oldest national order of knighthood in continuous existence and the pinnacle of the British honours system (after the Victoria Cross and George Cross). Its membership is extremely limited, consisting of the Sovereign, the Prince of Wales—both being members ex officio and gaining membership upon acceding to one of the titles—and not more than twenty-four full members, or Companions. Male members are known as Knights Companion, whilst female members are known as Ladies Companion.

Lady Fagan becomes number 21 in the current list (there are now two vacancies) and 1010 in the wider order of appointment since the order was founded in 1348 by Edward III.

Our congratulations to Lady Mary Fagan who has been a Stowaway Member of the Club since 2000 and is a regular guest at the Sea Pie Supper.

New Members

Lt Cdr Richard Brooks is General Manager of Williams Shipping in Southampton and a Warfare Officer in the Royal Naval Reserve. He is professionally qualified as a Solicitor, Bsc (Hons), LLM and an Associate Fellow of both the Nautical Institute and the Royal Institute of Navigation. He is Secretary of the Solent Branch of the Nautical Institute and a keen yachtsman.

Working within the Port of Southampton, having a professional involvement with the Southampton Ship Owners Association and being secretary of the Solent Branch of the N.I., He joins us to continue networking and having the opportunity to meet like-minded members.

Captain Stuart Williams is a Master Mariner, MBA, Bsc, HND and is the Managing Director of Foreland Shipping Ltd - Ship-owners and Operator for the UK Strategic Sealift Service.

He is a Younger Brother of Trinity House.

Stuart started at sea as a Deck Cadet with the RFA in 1982, where he continued until gaining his Masters certificate in 1992. He then worked for P&O Cruises, Stena and Condor Ferries, his last command being the mv *Havellet* prior to her sale..

He became General Manager of the Liberian Ship and Corporate Registry in the UK where he also represented Liberia at the IMO.

As MD of Foreland Shipping he is mainly based in London but visits their ships in Marchwood on a regular basis. He lives in Winchester and would like to get to know some of the key individuals in the local maritime industry.

GDPR and us

We are not obliged to register under the new regulations but will continue to conform to the spirit of the Data Protection Acts as before.

Your details, as supplied by you on your application form, are filed on a card system. They are used purely for the administration of membership matters, subscriptions etc, as you would normally expect from such a club.

The office holds a list of email addresses of those who choose to receive this newsletter via email.

The editor harvests email addresses of members for the distribution of the *Cachalite* bulletins. These are kept on his home computer for ease of administration purposes. Members are free to opt out at any time. Subscription renewal forms will be updated to include any GDPR requirements when they go out at the end of the year.

Gone Aloft

Ian Peterson, who went aloft on 16th May, aged 82, joined the Club in 2012. He was a retired Master Mariner who spent his career with BP tankers and was master with them for nearly 20 years with a spell as their representative on the rig 'Polycastle' in the Magnus oil field.

He taught navigation and seamanship to coastal skipper level and did one voyage on the sts 'Winston Churchill' as navigator and two on the sts 'Stavros Niarchos' as navigator/instructor.

He lived in Highcliffe-on-Sea with his wife Jackie, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

Denis Gore, who has gone aloft, joined the Club in 2001, aged 73.

His was not a nautical career, other than as young man, as can be determined from the following, written by his friend Roy Martin.

Dennis' education ended abruptly at fourteen, when his school was relocated to Anglesey, because of the Liverpool blitz. He went for an interview at Alfred Holt's offices; where he was told that he had the job - as long as he turned up in long trousers. His main task was to take documents to the ships; though the female staff told him that it was more important that he joined any queue that he saw and they would buy any food that resulted. He was fascinated by the ships, particularly the high sided troopers, and resolved to go to sea. Holt's told him that he would not be accepted until he was fifteen and, because he did not have a School Certificate, they could not take him as a midshipman. However they offered to train him with the Middies. I haven't seen his discharge book, so I don't know which ship(s) he was on.

After a year there was a change; but he was offered a transfer to Port Line, on the same basis. With Port Line he made a number of trips to Australia, and was on one of the hazardous Malta convoys.

In April 1945 he was on the *Port Wyndham*, when she was attacked by a midget submarine. The badly damaged ship made Southampton, where it seems to have been under repair for the rest of the year. The war was over and the Thorneycroft workers were determined to stretch the job out. Towards the end of the refit he decided to look for a shore job; and started driving buses for Hants and Dorset, with the occasional run to London for Royal Blue. He was surprised to find that bus drivers earned more than merchant seamen, without any of the risks!

In 1946 his driving career was brought to a halt when the Shipping Office sent him a message to say that he, in common with hundreds of other merchant seamen, would be required to do two years National Service in the Army, unless he completed four years at sea. He hurriedly signed on a newly acquired Castle boat, an experience that he did not enjoy. Four years sea service entitled him to sit for a Second Mate's certificate. He studied at the School of Navigation, possibly when it was still at South Stoneham. But he failed the navigation paper, finding spherical trigonometry too much. So it was back to driving. Later he made a move into insurance. After doing well at that, he was 'head hunted' by the solicitors Lampert Bassett; where he spent the rest of his working life.

Denis and his wife Mags, who predeceased him, liked to go cruising and Denis was a regular in the club room until last year.

The CACHALOTS

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club

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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

Sat 9 June Curry Lunch, Kuti's Royal Pier

Thu 14 June Shipping Festival Service, Winchester

Sat 11 Aug Curry Lunch, Kuti's Royal Pier

Wed 5 Sept Club Buffet Supper, RBL

The cut-off date for the next edition will be

17th August 2018

250 Club

Mar	C C Coote	H Perry	
Apr	G Cartwright	R Plumley	
May	R V Martin	I B Thomson	