

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No.9

September 2003

## CAPTAIN'S LOG

Here we are, half way through my year in Office and still enjoying the honour you bestowed upon me, with the very capable guidance of Club Officers and Harpooners.

As the last edition of "The Cachalot" was going to print, 28 of us embarked on a busy and most enjoyable weekend break in Paris, as reported elsewhere in this edition. The general consensus of opinion was that the exercise should be repeated next year and with the good "offices" of the Boatsteerer with his superb organisation, a similar successful trip will be advertised in the New Year.

Following our return from Paris on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty the Queen, we (the Boatsteerer, Storekeeper and I) were entertained at a reception on board the T.H.V. Patricia on a very wet evening but under the awning, the party went well.

The evening before the Winchester Shipping Festival Service saw Carolyn and I at H.M.S. Dryad for a reception and the Beating of Retreat by the Band of H.M. Royal Marines. It was a very impressive display on, unfortunately, an evening with low cloud.

Very fortunately, the cloud cover had dispersed for the Thursday evening when approximately 900 people attended the Shipping Festival Service and many of the congregation continued to enjoy the music of the Hampshire Youth Band in the Deanery Garden with a glass of wine and 'nibbles'. Very many thanks to the group of members' wives who organised the canapés. We were blessed with a very pleasant evening in good weather, meeting old shipmates and colleagues, some from distant shores.

The highlight of the year must be the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner held at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club on the evening of Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June. What a superb evening! Very many thanks must go to the Boatsteerer, who spent hours spinning the cords that enhanced the splendid menus printed by our Editor, Captain Terry Clark, and to the man who put it all together, our Functions Officer, Gerry Cartwright. Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Julian Oswald G.C.B., Stowaway Member of the S.M.M.C. proposed the toast to the Club in his usual humorous and entertaining manner, which was well received by one and all. The response to Sir Julian's toast was made by our Staff Captain Andrew Tinsley who was left to fill in whilst Gerry Cartwright tried to find the person with the key to extricate the bouquet of flowers which was presented to Mrs. Julie Hall on the occasion of Lionel and Julie's Ruby Wedding Anniversary. It was a memorable evening with excellent food and surroundings, enhanced by the attendance of the Cachalots' wives. Thank you Ladies.

At the end of July, my wife and I were entertained at a Cocktail Party at the Royal Southern Yacht Club by the Commodore, and afterwards to an excellent dinner hosted by one of our octogenarians and Past Captains, Captain Frank Murphy, who is a past Commodore of the Royal Southern Yacht Club.

This dry summer weather we are all enjoying/enduring (take your choice!) will no doubt break soon as the Azores High slips south, which heralds the approach of the Autumn programme of events, commencing with the Curry Lunch on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, shortly followed by the Annual Dinner and Dance on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Lists are already up and running on the Club Noticeboard for these events but for those who wish to attend and are unable to "sign in" themselves, the telephone is always available for bookings. Ring now and don't miss out on another occasion for the Ladies to don their finery!

Owing to the uncertainty of our continued use of our present club facilities, due to re-development of the area in the foreseeable future, you should note the new venues for future events. Whilst on this subject, as many of you know, the Officers of the Club have for some considerable time been looking for suitable licensed premises with catering facilities within an area adjacent to the Port of Southampton, to continue our convivial lunchtime meetings. If any of you have any ideas of a suitable venue, please let us, the Officers of the Club, know. However, be assured, with your assistance, the objects of the Club to maintain, foster locally, social and professional comradeship amongst Cachalots and to provide a convenient meeting place for Members at all times, will be maintained.

I would like to offer my own personal congratulations to an "old" shipmate and Past Captain of the Club, Captain Peter Love on his appointment as a Knight of the Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory the Great. I was very fortunate to have sailed with Peter in Oronsay and the old Oriana many moons ago, and his kindness and understanding of the trials and tribulations of everyone in his ship's company was always an example to each and everyone of us. Congratulations "Sir".

As a final thought, only 115 shopping days left to Christmas, or as someone else suggested, only 3 more monthly pay days!!

Geoffrey G. Lee

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### From the Editor

With this edition we enter the third year of "The Cachalot" and although we have now expanded to 8 pages I still find that I am short of space. In the following columns you can read Alistair Cant's report on the Paris trip. Alistair also gave me access to over 100 photographs that he took on the trip but to be able reproduce any of them to the required standard, in black and white, they would need to take up around a third of a page and in all honesty I don't have the space. I am indebted to Roy Martin for the article about Risdon Beazley. I found it so interesting that I didn't want to edit it any, or present it over two editions, so I have had to reduce the print size as much as possible. Perhaps we should supply a magnifying glass with each copy! I shall hold over the next episode of the *Kinfauns Castle* saga until the next edition, by which time I think I *will* be needing some more input, or *copy*, from your good selves.

Judith has asked me to remind any members whose address or contact details may have changed to advise her of any such changes or inaccuracies.

Due to the uncertainty of our tenure, as the Captain indicated, it has been necessary to book alternative venues for the Christmas functions which will both now be held at the Chandlers Ford Masonic Hall on the new dates as shown on the back page.

### **AUTUMN BALL**

This year we shall be returning to the Brook House Masonic Hall at Botley for our Dinner Dance on **Friday 3rd October.**

--00--

Half a Melon filled with Prawns Marie Rose

--00--

Fillet of Pork with a Ginger & Orange Sauce  
Saute Potatoes in Paprika & Onions  
Seasonal Vegetables

--00--

Lemon Torte

--00--

Cheese & Biscuits

--00--

Coffee & Mints

*We have changed the sweet course from Tiramisu to Lemon Torte because we gave you Tiramisu last year.*

Music will be by a Trio, "Harmony House".

It is intended that we have a non-alcoholic fruit drink on arrival (it can be adulterated to taste!) and the house wine starts at just £5.60 a bottle.

**ALL THIS FOR JUST £25 PER TICKET.**

(And no numbers restrictions, so bring along your guests). The list is now up on the notice-board or contact the office as usual.

*The hall is in Brook Lane which is on the west side of Botley, between the car dealers and the community centre. On entering the Lane, turn immediately left into Brook House and left again for the car park.*

## *Paris Adventure*

Clad in warm casual gear, some more suited to Henley, 26 pairs of eyes more accustomed to scanning the horizon, on 30<sup>th</sup> May peered down the road at various times from their appointed rendezvous for a sight of the pink hued coach bearing the legend "Paul Chivers". The coach when it appeared bore a double bonus for we were delighted to find it was the Owner himself that was to be our chauffeur, tourist guide and jack of all trades for The Master Mariners' Club outing to Paris for "Le Weekend".

By 2100 hours Paul had collected the full party of twenty six souls and conveyed us to the Portsmouth Terminal where, after a short wait during which we were given our cabin keys, we were embarked on the good ship "Pride of Portsmouth" for the overnight passage to Le Havre.

With no watches to keep, all the old salts and spouses were soon tucked up in their bunks which proved most comfortable. Just as well for, after an early rise and a quick coffee, we disembarked to join our coach again at the shore terminal. We then hit the French road system bound for Gay Paree with a stop at Rouen half way. Gerry Cartwright was first in the queue and was soon seen tucking into a hot croissant with such gusto and delight that he inspired many more of us to follow his example. We applaud his good taste!

Back on the road we were soon approaching the city. We found out why the French roads were so good and so quiet, it was not the hours of day but the hefty tolls to be paid at the booths or "Peages" as they were known. We were further astonished by our Boatsteerer's generosity and indeed agility when he leaped out at each "Peage" with the necessary Euros to hand. It was subsequently revealed by Paul that Lionel was not using his own money which accounted for the seeming paradox.

Approaching Paris, we entered a series of tunnels which Paul advised was the shape of things to come in the UK. They were certainly very effective in getting us into the city centre quickly and while we were left bereft of scenery, Paul explained how Paris was divided into 20 arondissements and how drivers were expected to know where they were going so they could leave at the correct "Pont" or junction for their destination. Soon we were rounding the Arc de Triomphe which lies at one end of the Champs Elysees. Commissioned in 1806 by Napoleon shortly after his victory at Austerlitz it was finally finished in 1836. The four pillars contain at their base, the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior inspired by Rudyard Kipling and on which the Eternal Flame burns. We were unable to stop because of some military ceremony about to take place. Paul was not unduly worried as he knew we would pass round this famous monument many times during our weekend tour. After several circumnavigations we then proceeded to the Tour Eiffel where we marveled at all 300 metres height of this impressive structure, symbolizing innovative technique at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were large queues forming to ride the elevators to the various levels according to how many euros one could afford. The most expensive fare was to the very top but although magnificent views could be had from level

2, it was time that we could not afford and we had to press on to the next sight the magnificent Place de la Concorde. This was a magnificent 8 hectares square in between the Champs Elysees and the Tuileries garden and alongside the Seine.

Built by Jaques-Ange Gabriel in 1763 it had a bloody history but now all was peaceful with beautiful fountains and a 3,200 year old obelisk covered with hieroglyphics.

On now and anxious not to miss a single thing, we passed the Palace containing La Louvre and saw the famous glass pyramid. It appeared dwarfed by the splendour around it and is actually very practical acting as a lens to bring light to the galleries below. Next stop for a well earned beer or a glass of wine for the ladies. This was close by Notre Dame Cathedral where the more energetic among us forsook refreshment for a chance to see the interior and the famous Rose Windows. Proceeding just a little further by foot brought us to a bridge over the Seine from where we glimpsed the flying balustrades which are so distinctive.

A further circuit of La Louvre and then to the Opera House of phantom fame where we parked up and made our separate ways to feed the inner man. After lunch, the coach wended its way back up the Champs Elysees and to La Defense which is the modern area of Paris to our Hotel Mercure, a bath and some well earned rest before girding our loins for the evenings entertainment.

Duly refreshed we again passed through many of the sights on our way to the River Steamer for an evening trip on La Seine. We embarked early and secured excellent seats on the upper deck. We were given excellent maps showing in profile the buildings we were to pass. These were supplemented by an excellent commentary in three languages and a computerized sign board at the aft end of the bridge. We saw all the sights from the water and it is said that in making this trip, Our noble Boatsteerer Lionel Hall was fulfilling a promise made to his lovely wife Julie when she was a blushing bride on their honeymoon. Unfortunately the coffers were empty at that time but no longer! (Lionel, however now appeared to have forsaken romance for photography!)

We then disembarked and boarded our coach en route for a special restaurant. It turned out to be very enjoyable. The restaurant had uniquely dispensed with the services of a Chef and required its clientele to cook their own meal on top of a piping hot brick of lava rock (supplied). Master Mariners being adaptable souls who can turn their hand to anything, soon were performing their own barbeque chef acts to the satisfaction of their better halves. The Club bell which had been toted around Paris by Julie, now became functional and was rung by Lionel. Our Master Captain Geoff Lee then made a short welcoming speech to all before proposing the royal toast. Meanwhile outside there was a thunderstorm and it was bucketing down. How lucky we had been to miss this on our Seine Cruise!

After the meal we coached back to our Hotel. One brave soul tried to raise enthusiasm for a party to visit the "Crazy Horse" Saloon near the Moulin Rouge for a bit of late night entertainment but there were no takers. Anno Domini had

taken over and bed seemed a better option after a very busy, interesting and tiring day.

We arose to a sumptuous breakfast at the Hotel. We then coached via the Arc de Triomphe to the Sacre Coeur Cathedral at Montmartres. (Hill of the Martyrs). A good hour was spent wandering among artists or drinking coffee in the atmospheric sidewalk cafes before setting off again to the Palace of Versailles of World War 1 Treaty fame. There were lots to see here, the gardens, The Hall of Mirrors and the Apartments. Again there were the tree lined roads with cafes where one could have a light meal and sink a beer or two. Our tour was drawing to a close now and it was time to head West towards Honfleur and Le Havre where our overnight ferry awaited.

With an hour to go, the heavens opened up. We were dry inside the coach but driving was difficult for Paul. By the time we reached Honfleur, it had all but abated and we then explored this quaint town of fishermen, artists and excellent restaurants for our final taste of mouth watering French cooking.

After crossing the impressive bridge we found diversions in place for which reason soon became apparent. Le Havre had been devastated by flooding from the thunderstorm we had passed through. We passed the unhappy yet not unfamiliar sight of people standing outside their flooded homes with their salvaged possessions piled high outside.

At the Ferry Terminal they were pleased to see us having half expected us to miss the sailing because of traffic congestion caused by the flooding. Perhaps our diversion to Honfleur had been fortunate in more ways than one!

A night of comfort P & O style saw us disembarking at Portsmouth at six am filled with memories of another wonderful Cachalot Weekend Excursion.

A vote of thanks is due to the Master and Boatsteerer who planned it so well and to Paul Chivers for his excellent coach, driving and commentary.

Alistair Cant.

### **Sussex Master Mariners' Association**

A letter has been received from this "purely social" group, who meet on the first Friday of each month at the Preston Park hotel, Preston Park, Brighton (on the A23) at midday for lunch at 1300. Retired or active shipmasters, pilots, harbour masters and surveyors are cordially invited to join them. For further information contact Captain I. Shearer, 01323 423150, or Captain J. Westley, 01903 244584.

### **Curry Lunch**

The last curry lunch for this year will be on  
**Saturday 20 September at 1200.**

The usual Chicken Tikka, Beef Madras and Vegetable curries will be on offer, plus poppadums, chutney and condiments, followed by Vanilla ice-cream. Alternative available if ordered in advance. **£5.50** per person, cheques, payable to **B&ISS**, to the usual recipients.

# Risdon Beazley

"RAB was a superb entrepreneur who inspired great loyalty & hard work from his staff. He provided in return a very interesting working life for us all with a very high element of satisfaction which lasts even to the present.

The story you are thinking of presenting ... is certainly a part of the maritime history of Southampton - but - knowing him as we both did - had he still been alive, we feel sure, he would not have approved of this or any publication of what he considered his private achievements. He was a very private man & to us a friend we sadly miss.

Anyway, neither the firm nor he exists anymore and there is no reason at all why the story should not be told."

*Part of a letter from Captain and Mrs D E Brackenbury November 2002*

Risdon Archibald Beazley formed the Risdon Beazley Marine Trading Company Ltd. in 1926, when he was 22 years old. The company was listed in Lloyds Register of Yachts by 1933. In the Kelly's Directory of 1939 the company was described as "Yacht Builders". Throughout the 55-year life of the company and its successors the base remained at Clausentum Yard on the site of the Roman town that preceded Southampton. Before the war they worked from Nos. 36 and 38 Hawkeswood Road, during the war they acquired most of the property in that road & Lloyds Albert Yard at Woolston? They retained nos. 32 to 38 and all of the buildings on the West Side of the road after the war.

By the mid thirties Risdon Beazley Ltd was doing demolition work on piers and small-scale wreck removal. In 1936 Peter Kleyn van Willigen who later became Chairman of Smit Internationale, was convinced by RAB that Risdon Beazley Ltd., was a suitable partner for the salvage of the square rigger *Hertzen Cecillie*? Back in Rotterdam KvW's family was less than happy that he had been hoodwinked. When the wreck broke up outside of Salcombe, because the harbour authority there would not allow the vessel to enter port after she had been re-floated, a team from Risdon Beazley cut it down and took the steel scrap into the Dart.

In 1937 the *Kantoeng*, then the largest tin dredge in the world, capsized whilst under tow of Smit tugs whilst bound for Bintang, the wreck threatened to block the port of Fowey. Risdon Beazley removed the part of the hull, using their ship *Recovery of Leith* and scrapped it on Par Sands. By this time RB also owned the tug *Aid*.

At the outbreak of war the Admiralty, having disposed of the salvage vessels from World War 1, formulated a plan to cover their requirements during this new conflict. Admiral Dewar, the Director of Admiralty Salvage and his Deputy, Commander Doust, formulated a salvage plan. It envisaged the area from Lands End to Cape Wrath being covered by the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association, Cape Wrath to Harwich by Metal Industries Ltd, Harwich to North Foreland by the Port of London Authority, with North Foreland to Lands End marked "Commander Doust to co-ordinate". T Rounds from Scarborough were added later to cover the North East Coast and Leith Towage and Salvage in the Forth.

Having satisfied themselves that they had all but the South Coast covered, Captain Doust and his team made a series of visits to Risdon Beazley's Clausentum yard at Southampton. Judging by the reports they made Doust and his team seemed to have been pleasantly surprised by what they found at Southampton. Here was an operator with 18 vessels, albeit some of them rather small, and an impressive array of equipment. It may well be that in the six months following the outbreak of war RB; ever the man to see an opportunity had laid his hands on all the vessels he could. When RB's Company Secretary Mr S W Giddings listed the vessels in a letter he wrote in July 1940, he even included Risdon's brother Henry's sludge vessel *Bargate*. Admiralty inspectors listed all of the salvage equipment the company possessed.

Whilst the other managers felt able to take only a handful of vessels each Doust says that RB said, as far as I'm concerned the sky is the limit - he ended up with 34 vessels. Understandably Admiral Dewar was concerned that they might be overloading Beazley. As the allied forces advanced RB added the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the West Coast of India to their sphere of operations. After June 1944 they were also given responsibility for salvage work on the North European coast as well. By the end of the war RB was operating well over 60 vessels. The other three managers operated a total of thirteen vessels. Whilst the P L A seems to have used their own fleet. The managers were all required to sign the Official Secrets Act, which could explain why RB was so coy!

In his book "The Ocean on a Plank" Captain Doust credits RB with salvaging "over 3,500 ships and 3.5 million tons of cargo - a contribution of vital importance to the war effort beyond the reach of any other of the managers. He got no official recognition for it". Whilst these figures appear to be an exaggeration they give an indication of how successful RBs appeared to be in the eyes of a man in a senior position who was directly responsible for RB operations. . He also says that RB had, by 1944, grown into " the biggest salvage organisation in the world - managing 77 salvage vessels, tugs and lifting craft".

In an article about the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association Dr. John Bevan writes During WW2 the salvagers worked in gales, they were bombed and machine-gunned, shelled and torpedoed. A number were killed --- British salvage services saved 2,735,700 tons in home waters. This represented £108,000,000 tons of shipping and £34,000,000 tons of cargo at contemporary prices". He

goes on to say that L&GSA undertook some 1,500 major salvage cases including over 700 merchant ships and that "The effort deserves better recognition".

Despite the dangerous work they did the company's losses were mercifully few. On the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1940 three German destroyers attacked the tugs *Aid* [Risdon Beazley] and *Abeille XIV* [Mgrs. Overseas Towage & Salvage] whilst they were towing the barge *BHC No 10* [Risdon Beazley] from Southampton to Falmouth. In all eight RB crew lost their lives when their ships were sunk. The pilot cutter *Pilot Boat No 4* which was also sunk.



On the 129<sup>th</sup> March 1945 the salvage vessel *Boston Salvor* [Mgrs. Risdon Beazley] was wrecked by a flying bomb whilst in dock at Antwerp - no casualties are recorded. *Boston Salvor* was one of four large US wooden salvage vessels supplied to Britain under the Lease Lend programme. These were built under the supervision of Risdon Beazley's representative in the USA and brought over by RB crews. That representative, Captain Don Brackenbury, a Cachalot, was to play a key role in the post-war development of the company.

Other Admiralty vessels in the fleet included five King Salvor class and seven Coastal Salvage class vessels. The last of the King Salvor class was completed after the war - as the diving vessel *HMS Reclaim*. The King Salvor class vessels and some of the Coastal Class vessels were employed in North Africa and the Mediterranean, whilst most of the rest of the fleet worked along the UK south coast and, after D-Day, along the coast of Northern Europe.

The value of the company's slip-ways and boat building skills were recognised when they were given contracts to build nine Fairmile B MLs; they then built a C type MGB and 12 D type MGBs and MTBs. They were the fastest UK yard to turn out the D types and fourth fastest in the UK for all Fairmiles. They also built ten Harbour Service launches.

At the end of the war Mr Beazley had a large organisation to find work for, at a time when everyone else was similarly engaged. He retained the self-propelled hoppers *Foremost 17 and 18* and chartered the Coastal Salvage vessels *Lifeline and Help* on a bare-boat basis. Beazley later bought the *Lifeline* and converted her to a motor ship.

They continued removing wrecks that obstructed fairways, the increasing size and draught of new ships meant that this work continued to the sixties. Another decade of work was caused by the many collisions that occurred prior to the introduction of Traffic Separation Schemes.

They chartered the almost new 4,000 bhp ocean going Admiralty salvage tug *Warden* and renamed her *Twyford* and spent several successful years in the rescue towage industry before the continentals returned to UK waters where they were again given free reign, despite operating a cabotage policy in their own waters.

But RB found his niche in cargo recovery [the recovery of non-ferrous metal cargoes from sunken ships - mostly war casualties]. Before the war this had been the preserve of the Italian Company SORIMA. Shortly after the war Risdon Beazley and SORIMA co-operated on several operations. RB blended the SORIMA skills with those they had learned in the war and came to dominate this branch of salvage. They went on to work almost three times as many wrecks as SORIMA had.

After several years of using existing vessels for the work the purpose designed recovery vessel "Twyford" was built for them in 1952. The design of the *Twyford* incorporated elements of the King Salvor class salvage vessels and the sea-keeping characteristics of the Arctic trawlers that her builders specialised in. The deck layout was the result of experience gained in recovery. To ensure reliability the *Twyford* was propelled by a steam engine and had ten winch drums all steam driven. After a disappointing first season when the target wrecks were not found *Twyford* spent three successful years working on the South African coast.

In 1956 Risdon Beazley ordered a new recovery vessel, again from the John Lewis yard at Aberdeen, incorporating the lessons learnt from operating the *Twyford*, and to make recoveries from the wrecks that *Twyford* had located but could not reach. Two Galeazzi observation chambers were ordered with a working depth of 1,600 feet. Not until the 1980s did other commercial salvors go deeper.

But by the time the *Droxford* was delivered, in 1958, the price of copper had plummeted to under £200 per ton; the new ship was uneconomic with prices at these depressed levels. In a typically bold gesture Mr Beazley put his expensive new ship on location work, sadly this gamble did not pay off as none of the 41 wrecks the *Droxford* located were the three copper wrecks she sought.

In the autumn of 1959 *Twyford* became the lead ship on a project to recover the scattered remnants of the Victor bomber prototype that had broken up over the Irish Sea. Using one of the first underwater cameras, she and a fleet of fishing trawlers swept the site. The fragments the fleet recovered were sent back to Farnborough to be reassembled to enable investigators to find the reason for the crash.

As *Twyford* passed Plymouth at the conclusion of this very successful yearlong operation, the C in C sent a message of thanks to Captain Tommy Young and notified him of the immediate award of the OBE. The Navy had used RB's equipment on a previous operation to recover pieces of the Comet airliner that crashed off of the island of Elba. For his contribution to the success of the operation Mr Beazley was made a CBE.

In 1960 both recovery vessels returned to their homeport to lay up, their crews were dispersed throughout the rest of the shrinking operational fleet. *Twyford's* lay up was short lived as she was then employed on a major wreck removal operation in Falmouth. *Droxford* was re-commissioned in 1961, but in the two years that followed recoveries did not even cover her costs. *Droxford* and *Twyford* are still the only two vessels ever to be purpose built for cargo salvage. By 1964 copper prices were recovering. Sadly Captain Frank Hunter OBE the Master of the *Droxford* and before that the *Twyford*, did not live to see the new dawn of recovery; he had died on board the *Lifeline* during the previous year.

Three landing craft *Topmast 16, 18* and *20* were completely rebuilt for mooring and salvage work. After wreck removal work in Canada and refloating the *Reina del Pacifico* in Bermuda, the "*Topmast 16*" joined the "*Lifeline*" maintaining emergency moorings around the UK coast. The fleet also included two smaller vessels "*Topmast 17*" [an ex Inshore Minesweeper] and the "*Queen Mother*" [a former Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, who retained her original name].

In 1962 Ulrich Harms of Hamburg had formed a company to undertake salvage work. His company took delivery of the first of a dozen floating cranes in 1964, they were to make most existing salvage craft obsolete; much to the consternation of existing salvors, not least the Dutch firm of Smit Tak.

In the latter part of the sixties there had been a fruitful co-operation between the Risdon Beazley Ltd and Ulrich Harms GmbH and in 1969 Risdon Beazley sold the goodwill of the company to Ulrich Harms, with Mr. Allan Crothall MBE who became Managing Director and a minority partner. This company had the rather unwieldy name of Risdon Beazley Ulrich Harms. Their first joint operation was to salvage Brunel's steamer *Great Britain* from the Falklands and redeliver it to its building dock in Bristol. In the two years that followed RBUH generated sufficient funds to buy the ships and equipment from Risdon Beazley Ltd. and to buy the submersible pontoon *MULUS 4* that was being built for Harms at the Kiel yard of HDW.

Early in 1971 three merchant ships sank near the Varne Bank in the Dover Strait, the first; the "*Texaco Caribbean*" exploded and sank following a collision with the Peruvian ship "*Paracas*" in thick fog. On the following day, because of confusion over the buoyage, the German cargo liner "*Brandenburg*" hit the wreckage at full speed and sank about two miles away.

Surveys of the wreckage were made and tenders sought for the wreck removal, whilst this process was underway a third vessel the "*Niki*" hit the wreckage and sank with all hands. In all 51 people from the three vessels died. Immediately after this third accident RBUH were given the task of cutting down the wreckage and the salvage vessels "*Topmast 18*" and "*Topmast 20*" sailed for the site within 24 hours of the contract being awarded, there they joined the *Queen Mother* which was already on site. Work could only take place at slack water and slack waters were almost non-existent at spring tides; so, in all the clearance work took 18 months.

On the 1st October 1972, just three days before the removal of the Varne wrecks was completed, Mr Ulrich Harms sold his companies, including Risdon Beazley Ulrich Harms, to Smit Tak in Rotterdam. It had been obvious for a while those negotiations were going on. By now some of the RB seagoing staff were survivors of Overseas Towage and Salvage, which had been acquired and then closed by Smit; they predicted that the Southampton Company's days were numbered.

The new Smit subsidiaries were allocated particular areas. Risdon Beazley Marine, as it was now called, was deprived of its important removal work in French waters and told to confine itself to salvage and wreck removal in the UK and Ireland, plus cargo recovery. The *Mulus 4* and the *RB47* were transferred to Rotterdam. Two Harms cranes were sold to RBM and the 5,000 BHP tug/salvage vessel *Seaford* joined the fleet.

Captain Don Brackenbury retired in 1971 after more than a quarter of a century's involvement with the company. After the take-over by Harms the Southampton Company had reported to Hans Erik Boruki, who took a keen interest in RBs until he left to found Interbergung. Paul van den Berg maintained an interest in the company. But when Allan Crothall retired at the end of 1975 and Paul van den Berg fell ill, dying in 1977, interest in the company waned. Every New Year seemed to bring a new structure and a new boss in Rotterdam. No one on the UK board knew the business of cargo recovery or the history of the company.

A series of unconnected events signalled the end: -

- On January 8th 1979 the French Tanker *Betelgeuse* exploded whilst discharging in Ireland. Smit decided that the removal of the wreck should be undertaken by the parent company, as Risdon Beazley Marine lacked sufficient experience!
  - Mr Risdon A. Beazley C.B.E. died at his Twyford home on the 31st January 1979.
  - In June 1979 Roy Martin, RBM's General Manager, was moved to become Managing Director of Smit International South East Asia based in Singapore. He had started his salvage career in 1964 as the navigator of the *Droxford*.
  - By July 1979 when the capsized wreck *Tarpenbek* had to be removed from the Eastern Solent RBM had only the *Telford*.
- It



- was necessary to bring a crane from Rotterdam to assist the **Telford** in raising the wreck.
- The recovery of tin from Japanese wrecks in the South China Sea was given to the **Lifeline** and the **Ashford**, but they were nominally on charter to the parent company and the bulk of proceeds went to Rotterdam. Both ships were disposed of once the operations were complete; the Lifeline had been in the RB fleet for 36 years.
- In 1980 the **Seaford** towed the crane **Telford** and the barge **RB35** to Singapore where they joined the **Brunel** [now the **Smit Cyclone**] and a number of ex RBM people.
- The final blow came in 1980 when RBM's proposal for the salvage of the gold from **HMS Edinburgh** was rejected and the **Droxford** was scrapped in October that year. A subsequent court case showed that the contents of RB's bid had been disclosed to a would be competitor.

RBM closed in 1981, a sad end for an organisation that had quietly, but diligently, served the UK in war and peace and had generated employment for thousands of staff at sea and ashore. At sea the masters salvage officers and crews displayed courage and superb seamanship, successfully completing every task. Ashore, in turbulent times, labour relations were good and the work force turned out work of the highest quality. Their recovery vessels travelled the world. They recovered almost 46,000 tons of non-ferrous metal, working down to 312 meters depth. Their tally included two bullion recoveries - the first off of New Zealand and the second from the Grand Bank of Newfoundland. The bulk of the work was done under contracts with the UK government that generated substantial amounts for the UK exchequer.

### They were a credit to Britain and to their homeport of Southampton.

Roy Martin

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## **PASSING THE PORT**



In the Royal Navy another reason put forward for drinking the Loyal Toast seated is that officers who remained loyal to the dethroned James II used to take their pistols to mess and sat on them at dinner. They remained seated during the toast and thus prevented their pistols from being taken.

In the British Army some of the most picturesque customs associated with officers' messes concern the drinking of the Queen's health. The Seaforth Highlanders, for example, observed a custom on guest nights of drinking two toasts. After the Queen's health has been drunk the Pipe-major plays the Pibroch and is handed a quaich of whisky by the senior dining member, who gives the regimental Gaelic toast. All officers raise their glasses and answer "Slainte" (good Health).

The Queen's health may be said to be drunk in a negative manner in the 1st Bn The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), now sadly disbanded. The President, remaining seated, says, "Mr. Vice, the Queen", to which Mr. Vice, also seated, responds "God Bless Her". The wine is then passed round the table, but no toast is drunk. This custom is associated with the origin of the

regiment in 1689. The Covenanting days of the 17th century can never be forgotten in Scotland. In those distant times there was a strict sect of Presbyterians led by Richard Cameron, from whom the title of "The Cameronians" is derived. After the accession of William and Mary this sect agreed to raise a regiment from among their members, under certain conditions, such as that there should be no profane talk, no impurity, no drunkenness and no drinking of toasts. Throughout their vicissitudes of over 250 years no toasts were drunk ceremoniously by the regiment.

In the East Yorkshire Regiment the usual procedure was not observed in that the President both proposed and seconded the toast. When the appropriate moment arrived, he rose, rang a bell and proposed "Mr. Vice, the Queen", whereupon glasses were filled. That done, the President again struck the bell, all rose, and he said "Gentlemen, the Queen". The reason Mr. Vice did not second the President's proposal was believed in the regiment to be that in the days of "long ago", a Vice-President was not in a fit condition to carry out his accustomed duty, so the President did it for him and this custom became established.

Some regiments, which were originally Marines or have performed a good deal of sea service, usually honour the Loyal Toast seated. The East Surrey Regiment and the Border Regiment were examples.

There are however some regiments which never honour the Loyal Toast; the usual reason given is that they have at some time obtained a dispensation from the Sovereign on the ground that their loyalty was above suspicion. This might appear to be a fallacy, because, by inference, the loyalty of those regiments which do observe the custom is in question. Some of these regiments were, or are still, the Queen's Bays, 3rd Carabiniers, 5th Royal Iniskilling Dragoon Guards, Royal Dragoons, 3rd Hussars, The Royal Fusiliers, Grenadier, Coldstream and Welsh Guards.

In the Merchant Service, in a 900 ton coaster over half a century ago, far removed from the courtly manners of the Royal Navy, P&O, Union Castle *et al*, I observed that toasting among a section of the crew was *de riguer* when relaxing in their favourite Liverpool alehouse, *The Goat*.

Two of our sailors, Gaelic speaking natives of Cape Clear Island near the Fastnet Rock, proved to be most liberal toasters who periodically raised their pint pots, assumed a solemn mien, fixed their eyes on the subject of their admiration and, in grave tones, chanted "We looks towards youse."

The most favoured recipient of this honour was the cook, Alfie, a cadaverous individual seldom seen without a disgusting trilby hat but, nevertheless, well schooled in saloon bar etiquette, who, in reply and with equal solemnity intoned "and we catches your eye, like. Cheers."

Following this expression of mutual admiration, normal drinking was resumed.

Different ships, different long splices.

*This concludes the very interesting and learned dissertation from Hamish Roberts on the drinking of toasts.*

*And we looks towards youse, Hamish.*

# AOS Trustee Given Papal Honour



Above: Captain Peter Love receiving his Papal Honour from Bishop Tom Burns

**On Sunday 27th April, Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) Trustee, Captain Peter Love was invested with the title and insignia of a Knight of the Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory the Great.** This honour is in recognition of his devoted service and the time and energy he has given to AOS as a Trustee for more than 20 years.

Captain Love started his career with P&O in 1946 and rose through the ranks to become Captain of large passenger ships such as Oriana and Victoria. It was in the early 1980's that he was approached by the Port Chaplain of AOS in Southampton and asked if he would lend his time and great experience as a seafarer to the board of AOS.

Bishop Tom Burns, Bishop of the Forces and AOS Episcopal Promoter, invested Captain Love at Mass in his local parish of Yeovil on Sunday 27th April, to the surprise both of Captain Love and his fellow parishioners.

Captain Peter Love said: "I am delighted to receive such an honour, but it came as a complete surprise to me, with only my wife knowing anything about it. Even when Bishop Tom came out with our Parish Priest to say Mass, no one knew why he was here."

Bishop Tom waited right until the end of Mass before he made a brief speech explaining the reason for his visit.

Captain Anthony Brindle, Chair of the Trustees of AOS, was also present at the Mass and ensuing ceremony. He said: "It is a much deserved honour for someone who has supported the work of AOS with seafarers through thick and thin. We are delighted for him and grateful to have him on board."

Captain Peter Love was nominated by Bishop Victor Guazzelli who stood down as Episcopal Promoter for AOS in December last year.

AOS is an agency of the Bishop's Conference with the task of reaching out to the 1 Million seafarers visiting ports in England & Wales as they deliver 95% of the goods and resources we use or consume each day.

*Copied from a newspaper cutting that found its way onto the Club notice-board. Thank you, whoever you are.*

Don't forget; your Club is routinely open four days a week at lunch time. It serves sandwiches, snacks, salads or cooked meals. There is a cooked special each day and the price has recently only been £2.75. Don't forget that, when dining, a bottle of house wine can be bought for only £5 - a far cry from the usual hotel or restaurant prices. If you are in town at lunch time, Tuesday to Friday, Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink and take your food orders.

Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this pamphlet will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.

The Club's address is:

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The Southampton Seafarers' Centre,  
2/3 Orchard Place,  
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## Dates for your Diary

Sun SEP 7 S.S. Shieldhall, Round Island Cruise

Sat SEP 20 Curry Lunch

Fri OCT 3 Autumn Dinner Dance, Botley.

Tue OCT 28 Tidworth - Last Night of the Proms

Fri NOV 7\* Harpooners' Dinner\*

Tue NOV 18 Sea Pie Supper tickets on sale.  
Limit of 3 per member.

Sat NOV 29\* Christmas Lunch\*  
Chandlers Ford Masonic Hall

Tue DEC 9\* Christmas Dinner\*  
Chandlers Ford Masonic Hall

**\* Please note change of dates**

## NEW CACHALOTS

We welcome the following new member to the Club:

Capt. N.J.G. Allen

## GONE ALOFT

The following members have gone aloft:

Mr. M.H.D. McDonnell  
Mr. Ron Read