

Section 31 of the Pilotage Act 1987 defines a “pilot” as “any person not belonging to a ship who has the conduct thereof.”

## ON PILOTAGE

A pilot must a stranger be  
And he must navigate,  
To bring himself within the law  
As written by the State.

A stranger to the ship, that is,  
Upon whose bridge he stands,  
Whose Master has accepted him  
And they have shaken hands.

“She’s single screw. A motor ship,”  
The Master might admit.  
And give the draft. And where he’s bound.  
And often that is it.

“I’ll leave you with the Mate,  
Goodnight. For I am going to bed.”  
The Master then will vanish,  
For to rest his weary head,

Confident that he has got  
A bloke who knows what’s what.  
A pilot who is authorised.  
To him, it means a lot.

“Good morning, Captain,” later,  
You might hear the pilot say.  
“We’re almost there. Please warn the men.  
The wind is fresh today.”

“Be ready for the tugs, please.  
We have half an hour to run.  
One each end and one amidships.  
That’s the way it’s done.

Stop her now. The tugs are here.  
We’re turning short-round soon,  
To stem the tide before we dock,  
This blustery fore-noon.

Have the fenders ready rigged  
Along the starboard side.  
The lock, I see, is ready now.  
Soon we shall be inside.

Steady as she goes!  
She’s nicely lined up as can be.  
Hard-a-port. A kick astern.  
We’re nicely on the quay.

What was it that you wondered  
That a pilot has to do?  
The Master knows. He knows damn well:  
As also do the crew.

Why do you ask the questions  
When the answers are quite clear  
To all who take an interest  
In our shipping, year on year?

Times change, but pilotage does not.  
The law requires it still.  
It's in the public interest.  
A role which man must fill.

It's not a thing of magic:  
Nor of competence alone:  
And lesser still a sinecure  
Of mobile telephone.

The State requires a bloke  
Who knows the way into each port  
For protection 'gainst the man  
Who's not as well-informed as ought.

And so it is for pilotage:  
And fully understood,  
By every merchant mariner:-  
The pilot must be good.

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01.09.2012