

# ***The CACHALOT***

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

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## Captain's Log

With little by way of Club news, I thought I would report in my alter ego as chairman of trustees for Southampton Sea Cadets, which also is close to the hearts of the Cachalots and so benefits from the Peter Marriot bursary (it is also this year's Captain's charity!).

As you will imagine, back in March COVID brought all activities to a grinding halt. The Unit was closed, and no-one was allowed on site except to deal with emergencies. Fortunately, we were able to recover all the Unit's boats from the water before lock-down hit, but achieved little more. Consequently, when we were able to visit the site in June we found things in a very sorry state. Dirt and dust had settled everywhere, the slipway was clogged with rubbish, and the weeds were waist high. I'm not sure that helping with the clearing up *kept me sane during lockdown*, but it certainly kept me busy.

Despite the lack of physical gatherings, the Unit was not idle and, assisted by the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC), a flurry of online / virtual training was taking place, with some impressive results. The cadets completed some 270 training modules, obtaining 107 qualifications, and 53 promotions. The adult staff were not idle either, obtaining 39 qualifications and two staff promotions. Despite this activity, it was clear that some of the cadets were finding lockdown a grind, so the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Lindsay Bassett, and Petty Officer Charlie Lloyd packed, and then delivered welfare bags to every cadet. It took them a mammoth 9 hours and 100 miles of driving to visit every cadet, but the gesture was very much appreciated by cadets and parents alike.

The summer saw some easing of restrictions, and after a lot of cleaning, measuring and marking out, at the start of September the MSSC gave permission for the Unit to re-commence face-to-face training. As I write this, the Unit has 50 cadets regularly attending, in nine 'bubbles' across three nights each week, and just last week permission was received to resume afloat training. How much training will be achieved over the winter we cannot say, but our ambitions remain high. The Unit already has Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Recognised Training Centre (RTC) status for powerboat training, and we hope to extend this so we can also teach the RYA dinghy sailing scheme. Now we have more cadets, we hope for increased participation in Area and District courses and competitions. And, we are aiming to double the number of cadets participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

For me, with a foot in both camps, the strong links between the Cachalots and the Sea Cadets are very special, and I cannot thank the Cachalots enough for supporting the cadets' expansion project 4 years ago with the first of the Trafalgar dinners. Despite COVID, numbers are up and morale is high, and while I never make predictions (especially about the future) I very much hope we will see the cadets again supporting the Cachalots in 2021.

Keep safe  
Andrew  
Andrew Moll, Club Captain



## From the Editor

This is the seventh digital edition of *The Cachalot*, now produced monthly and sent by email to members on our Cachalote distribution list and to other interested parties. The list is compiled from addresses supplied by members or 'harvested' from correspondence elsewhere. If you wish to have your name removed from the distribution list please advise the editor.

The newsletter is also produced in a printer friendly version for those who prefer to read it that way and distributed the same way. Past copies of edition 76 onwards are available on request.



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Each Kindle has its own registered e-mail address and to find yours go to Settings → My account. It will look like *your name* @kindle.com

Send this to me at [editor@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:editor@cachalots.org.uk) and I will add you to the Kindle distribution list.

## Boatsteerer's Locker

Here we are again still in lockdown (almost) and not venturing very far.

We were scheduled to attend our eldest Grandson's wedding in Wiltshire but although it was 2 days before the latest number of attendees was reduced from 30 to 15 the venue advised that we were too old to attend. I did suggest to the burra-memsahib that we retained our hotel booking for a romantic weekend. (I dare not relate her reply which was not at all favourable). However we attended the ceremony via Zoom suitably dressed in our finery and drinking champagne to drown our sorrow.

Checking our documentation for the time when travel restrictions are raised I noticed that her Passport was nearly due for renewal and that her driving licence had expired which caused great consternation as she had been driving a month on her expired licence and hadn't received a renewal reminder from the DVLA.

Checking on the web for Driving Licence Renewal I found the following which we knew nothing about :-

### **"If your licence expires before 31 December 2020**

Your driving licence or entitlement to drive will be automatically extended for 11 months if it is due to expire between 1 February and 31 December 2020. This is because of coronavirus (COVID-19). The extension will start from the date your licence is due to expire. You will not get a new licence as part of the automatic extension. You'll only get a new licence when you renew it. You can renew your licence online at any time before the extension ends."

Sighs all round.

We did venture out for 'she who will be obeyed' Birthday when our eldest son and daughter-in-law took us to the 5\* 'Limewood Hotel and Restaurant', Lyndhurst, New Forest for lunch. It was very upmarket with a Michelin chef, we had difficulty parking and the place was full to bursting with social distancing etc. being observed, if we were staying the night the cheapest room was £395 !! We enjoyed the meal.

### **Finally, an alert system I understand:**



Keep testing your sense of smell and taste and remain sane.

Ken Dagnall



Regarding the closing exhortation above, our Boatsteerer recently had occasion to visit Lymington Hospital and while there he read, on one of the many posters displayed, that one of the symptoms of Covid-19 is a loss of the senses of smell and taste.

He has now devised his own coronavirus test which he demonstrated to us on a recent Friday Zoom meeting.

Taking a bottle of red wine he poured a 'healthy' measure into a large wine glass and in his best Oz Clarke manner, swirled, sniffed and sipped. Declaring that he could indeed detect both the bouquet and the flavour he was satisfied that he was covid free but just to make sure he repeated the exercise. This time it was more of a slurp than a sip. And the next time a plug...and....

The test should work with any style of wine or other alcoholic drink and Ken is hoping that he might be able to get replacement testing supplies on prescription. Chateau Ehnaichesse perhaps?



Boatsteerer's  
Covid-19 Test Kits

Left: Basic starter kit

Right: Advanced kit  
(Max 6 persons)



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## What's the answer?

The Friday lunchtime Zoom meetings attract around a dozen regulars, more than at the RBL on occasions, and around 20 members have shown their faces so far. We have learned that conversation is necessarily a bit stilted at times with only one person able to speak at a time, whereas in a more natural setting three or four conversations would be going on at once.

It was suggested that we hold a quiz, something that Robin Plumley has successfully achieved with another group he is involved with.  
Robin writes:

If those who wish to join can enter the Zoom meeting by 1100 so we can start at 1115. *(Robin will open the site at 1045. Have a pen/pencil and paper handy to record your answers and scores)*

There will be 3 rounds of 15 questions plus a round of about 20 pictures.

The picture round will be circulated first using the Chat facility where attendees can either download and view it or where possible print if they wish.

The verbal questions will be asked by me to all present and I will go through the answers at the end of each round. Attendees will use the Chat facility to send in the number of answers they have got correct.

After completion of the 3rd round I will go through the answers for the picture round and attendees will use the Chat facility to send me the number of answers they have got correct.

I will keep a tally of all correct answers and in the event of a tie there will be a tie-breaker question.

Although we may not be able to meet up soon, I will put up a bottle of wine for the winner. It will be delivered at the soonest opportunity, whenever that is.

Of course, I would expect an honourable contest so no cheating with mobile phones or unseen partners looking things up etc!!! A wife or partner are welcome to join in on screen. *(Bystanders [non-participants] are welcome but no barracking from the sidelines. The Quizmaster's decision is final.)*

It would be useful if those who wish to join us can let me know by the day before so I can compile my record sheet for keeping tabs on scores.

Rather than interfere with the usual Friday meeting it has been decided to try the inaugural quiz meeting at **1100 on Tuesday 17th November**. If you wish to know more then why not join us on one of the regular Friday meetings. The codes remain the same for all of the meetings: Meeting ID 421 735 0675, passcode 5Zj7mh. Or use the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4217350675?pwd=ZGJocmFSNXVPZ2F3NTFmSVNLWDVoUT09>

Robin Plumley is at [plumleyrobin@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:plumleyrobin@yahoo.co.uk)

## Cachalots on LinkedIn

The groups aim is to provide a central forum for Cachalot members to stay in touch, especially during the current coronavirus epidemic.

We have now attracted twenty-nine members with four Cachalots who are registered on LinkedIn and who have been invited but have not completed the final action of accepting the invitation.

The group is marked by the Cachalot emblem in place of the usual 'mugshot' and a banner photo which is changed on a weekly basis, normally on a Tuesday. I will always be grateful for 'new' images of ships you have been on or associated with or marine activities you are involved in.

Hopefully, as a Cachalot member, you are reading this article in the digital edition of the Cachalot and I hope if you have not done so already you will be moved to come and join us. The instructions are included below.

To join the group:

1. Register with LinkedIn if you are not already a member.
2. Search for Captain Robin Plumley MBE
3. Send him a Connect request. There should be a box on his page or you might find it under 'More'.
4. Once he accepts your request, he will send you an Invitation to join the Group.

This is all very new to many of us so please be patient in the event of unforeseen wrinkles.

Important Club news will still be circulated using the *Cachalite* e-bulletin system.

If in any doubt or require assistance please email at [plumleyrobin@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:plumleyrobin@yahoo.co.uk)



*In September, this image of an early American container Ship appeared on the site.*

*Capt Robin Plumley reports:*

### S.S. American Liberty

In early September, Gordon Thornton sent me an image of an American containership saying, "just thinking that when I took this picture, I had no idea that I was looking at the future"!!

Gordon added, "the picture was taken from the *"Orna"* sometime in 1966\*, and what I now find strange is that I cannot find the "American Liberty" in any of the fleet lists!! Could have been a trial trip as it was around the Japanese coast, I think".

I posted the picture on the Cachalot LinkedIn page to ask if anyone could provide any background to the vessel.

Of course, I was not disappointed by the research capabilities of one of our members. Our Boatsteerer, Ken Dagnall, he of Lloyd's Registry fame, provided the following information.

SS 'American Liberty'

Built 1968 by Sun Shipbuilding Co., Chester, PA., USA

Type C7 Lancer Class Steam Turbine powered Container Ship with fixed guides

Owner; United States Lines Inc.,

Sold to Sea-land and renamed 'Sea-land Discovery'

Sold to Horizon Inc., USA and renamed 'Horizon Discovery'

2014 scrapped.

The third ship off the ways was the AMERICAN LIBERTY which was eventually named HORIZON DISCOVERY after an earlier incarnation as the SEA-LAND DISCOVERY.

"The last of 8 ships in the C-7 class, the Lancers revolutionized shipping as being the first true large (at that time) containerships. [They were] built for U.S. Lines and ran on the East Coast to Far East run for many years. Five ended up with Navieras de Puerto Rico and three to Sea-Land after the demise of U.S. Lines in the late 1980s. Sea-Land & Horizon ran them on the Puerto Rican and Hawaiian service for many years. The DISCOVERY also served in Desert Storm.

Her keel was laid exactly 47 years ago on 26 October 1967, launched on 9 June 1968, and delivered as the AMERICAN LIBERTY on 17 September 1968 at Sun Shipyard, Chester, PA.

I am assuming this last paragraph was written by the last master of the vessel. "It has been an honour taking this grand ole girl to her final resting place. She sure had a good run for many years. Instead of going down kicking and screaming she ran proud and well right to the very end and went down easy".

Many thanks to Gordon for the image and request and to Ken for his efforts in finding further information which, I hope, has been fully realised.

It may be useful here to remind members that I run a Cachalot Group on LinkedIn. Members are encouraged to send me an image of a vessel they have served with or other image of their own industry in the marine sector for use as a header, usually for a week. Your contributions will be very welcome.

RP

*\*It must have been after Sept. 1968 that Gordon took his photograph, but as he has pointed out, most of the focsle heads of that class of BI ships looked much the same.*



## Someone to blame

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 762 October 9th 2020

If there is one good reason (and I cannot think of many others) for the development of the autonomous ship, it is that when a ship has nobody aboard her, the authorities will not be able to prosecute the master, if she comes to grief. This thought suddenly came to mind reading about the plight of the master of the *VLCC New Diamond*, who has been prevented from leaving Sri Lanka, where he was landed with his surviving crew, after the fire that devastated his ship in the Indian Ocean last month. It is suggested that the tanker's master could be prosecuted, charged with offences under environmental protection legislation, after a certain amount of bunker fuel escaped from the severely fire-damaged ship before the salvors were able to patch the hole.

It is important, in such cases, to have someone to blame and the master of a casualty is the obvious choice. The improbability that he might have been in some way involved in the boiler explosion that killed one of the engine-room staff and initiated the conflagration in the machinery space that gutted the whole after end of the ship, or the subsequent bunker tank leak is quite irrelevant. If somebody is to face what passes for justice in such cases and is able to bear the blame, so much the better that it is the most senior officer.

It is probable that the 2000 built VLCC will be declared a constructive total loss, but worth pointing out that the action of the salvors and the Sri Lankan Navy managed to save the vessel's full cargo of crude which, in some respects is a good-news story. The bunker spill itself, could have been a lot worse.

But there is something grimly predictable about the attitude of the authorities to the master of the ship. It is not that the sheer illogicality of any charges is any more ridiculous in Sri Lanka than anywhere else, because all around the world, what used to be described as a regrettable "accident" is now the excuse for prosecutors to home in on the ship's master. It is the master of the ship who is now dragged into court if heavy weather carries containers overboard, as if he was personally responsible for the stowage of the cargo inside the boxes or failed to minutely examine every one of 10,000 lashing points. It is the master who will face the music if narcotics are found attached to the bilge keel of his ship, or some wandering aircraft photographs a slick in the vicinity of his vessel. There is no shortage of possible charges.

Nothing new in any of this, of course. The master has always been the fall guy, the man who carries the can. I can remember a master I sailed with telling me that if he ever lost a ship, he would make sure he went down in her. He wasn't joking. And that was when casualties were investigated by marine professionals, or expert assessors, before criminal prosecutions became "normal" in so many of these incidents.

Isn't there a case for more common sense following marine accidents, rather than simply unleashing the criminal prosecutors with a menu of possible charges that can be "marinised" to fit the bill? Throwing the book at the senior survivor, because he or she is available cannot surely be described as justice, or indeed, encouragement to aspire to become a shipmaster.

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[rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk](mailto:rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk)

The  
**Maritime Advocate online**  
www.avoarchive.com

and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey

## Letters to the Editor

Sir

I would like to thank Barrie for his kind remarks in his latest poem. However I am never certain as to whether pursers are considered to be mariners, and in my case not a qualified master mariner. Having spent thirty plus years at sea I think that I can certainly consider myself to have been a seafarer and I am very proud to have been the first non master mariner to be appointed as club captain. As the poem, quite naturally, concentrates on the many responsibilities of the master I felt that I ought to clarify matters before many of my fellow Cachalots grabbed their pens to do the job for me.

Sincerely,

Gerry Cartwright

Sir I was surprised to see the answer to Bill Hargreaves' little two flag teaser last month. (*Edition 80, September '20*).

It shows me that I am more than a little out of date!

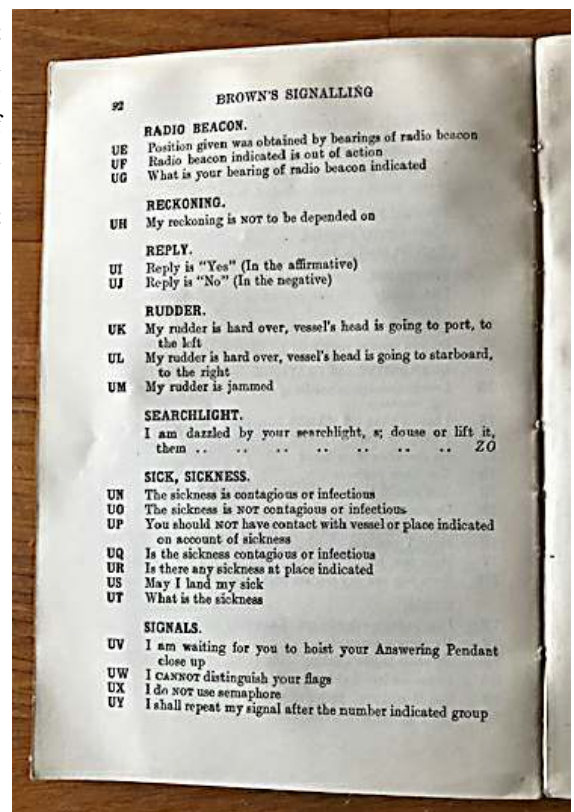
My book of Brown's signalling dated 1953 indicates a different answer. See right.

However, another alteration I noticed a few years ago in the 'regulations for preventing collisions at sea'.

The old Rule 14 stated 'A vessel proceeding under sail, when also being propelled by machinery, shall carry in the daytime forward, where it can best be seen, one black conical shape, POINT UPWARDS, not less than 2 feet in diameter at its base.

I am unsure for the reason to change it to POINT DOWNWARDS which is the present practice.

Ian Thomson



## "How I kept myself sane during the Covid-19 scare"

*Here are the final two entries in the writing competition:*

### MALT WHISKY COMPETITION

In my Chambers dictionary BOREDOM was simply defined as tedium. Roget's thesaurus gave exactly the same definition, and I have to say that I am in complete agreement. Because of the various government restrictions I find that I am unable to go to the Club on Fridays and bandy insults with the President or any other member who happens to be present. The RAF Yacht Club has shut up shop and I can't go out on the water, or even do some maintenance work on board as the marina is closed.

Similar conditions apply at all the other organisations who enjoy the privilege of my pleasant and charming company from time to time, such as the RAF Association, the Anchorites, and the Seven Seas Club. Other than watching television and sailing, my usual forms of exercise were swimming and walking, but the Fleming Park leisure centre is closed, and I fear that the water in the river Itchen, my nearest river is too cold, at this time of the year. Eastleigh Borough Council has seen fit to cease it's programme of health walks.

So, how can an ancient mariner manage to keep reasonably fit and healthy. I think that I have found the perfect solution, although it has been necessary to slightly bend the government recommendations. I borrow my neighbour's wife for two or three hours and we go walking in the nearby woods. Her husband is okay with this arrangement, always providing that I return her in good time to cook his next meal, plus it gives him a few hours of peace and quiet. Within walking distance of our homes there's Ramalley Copse, Hocombe Mead, Hook Wood, Knightwood, Tregould Copse, Great Covert, Clothiers Copse, Sky's Wood and Zionshill Copse. Most days we manage somewhere between three and five miles, listening to the birdsong and admiring the bluebells, which are prolific at the time of writing, also the primroses, the marsh marigolds, the ramsons, and various other wild flowers.

Naturally we obey the government instructions regarding social distance, and make certain that there is always two metres between us when the path is wide enough. Otherwise in line astern.

The more astute readers, if indeed there are any who have had the patience to read this far may be thinking that it doesn't take all day to walk five miles, so what does he do for the rest of the day. First of all there needs to be time for a short recuperation after the walk. I have been led to believe that it is important to keep mentally alert, and in order to do so, I battle with the crossword and the sudoku every day. I do understand, of course, that many readers will be thinking that it needs more than that to keep me mentally alert, but then our beloved NHS has more than enough to do at present without me asking them for a brain transplant. Then there are jobs like vacuuming and dusting, as the cleaning lady doesn't call any more because of the lockdown.

All the restaurants, pubs and cafes are closed for the duration. Therefore, I am now a self-taught boiler of eggs, etc., in order to keep body and soul together. Actually it's not too difficult. Just google "how to boil an egg" and you will be astonished at how many different ways there are. The hard part is choosing which method to use. I have also discovered how to work the washing machine, so that I will have a clean shirt for the Harpooners' Dinner providing that the restrictions have been eased by November. Fortunately the gardening lady still arrives regularly, as I am certain that I would never find time to fit the garden into my daily routine.

Finally, every night, before retiring, I have a wee dram, so in the unlikely event that I should win a bottle of malt whisky I can assure you that it will be used very wisely, as the current bottle is almost finished.

Gerry Cartwright

*And this “waylaid” one from Bill Hargreaves:*

How could I possibly keep myself sane with a houseful – wife, daughter, son, and son’s girlfriend? All of them beautiful, articulate, talented - and incredibly opinionated. The conversations round the dinner table range from politics to capitalism to the environment, nearly always with me in the role of “Chief Reactionary and Desecrator of the Planet”.

Firstly, by keeping busy. One of the less well-known symptoms of the pandemic is Obsessive D-I-Y Disorder (ODD). All those little, and not so little jobs that have been put off for years by the perfectly healthy (usually male) adult are suddenly very important to the person infected with ODD. In my case it was imperative that I construct the raised vegetable beds and log cabin that I’d been thinking about. This compulsion had the added advantage that literally hours were spent in the preparation. Hours researching the products, hours waiting in a virtual queue to get onto the B&Q website, and even more hours sitting in the car in a physical queue outside the store waiting to ‘click and collect’.

Secondly, by exercise. We are fortunate to live on the edge of the Forest of Bere. In accordance with government guidelines, I have my one period of exercise away from the house in the forest, walking for miles, seldom seeing another soul. Often, I am accompanied by my wife and sometimes by other members of the household, but always by the long- suffering dog. Poor mutt doesn’t understand what’s going on. On the plus side he has a houseful of humans to give him constant attention. On the negative side, his legs must now be considerably shorter than before lockdown. With five in the house, there is always somebody wanting to use the excuse of taking the dog for a walk to stretch their own legs.

And finally, I have kept myself sane by being inspired by the young, their positivity and optimism. My oldest daughter, a frontline doctor in Leeds; my middle daughter, a student in a flat in Glasgow, (no long walks in the forest for her); my son, a key worker just getting on with it; my youngest daughter at home having cut short her travels on the Indian sub-continent; and son’s girlfriend furloughed from her company. All of them have remained positive and thank goodness for technology. Watching the same quiz on YouTube while communicating via one of the video chat apps has - in a most peculiar way - brought the family closer together while never being further apart.

For all of us, this pandemic is a new experience. For some it has been an incredibly tough experience: loss of employment, bereavement, separated from loved ones, or just stuck indoors self-isolating. For me, it has been (hopefully) nothing more than a minor irritation. I’m still working as a Southampton pilot, the facemasks may be uncomfortable and there are no handshakes or yachts in the Solent but apart from that the job is pretty much the same. I have, also, been trying to ignore the “R” word. No, not the reproduction number associated with a disease’s ability to spread. The “R” word I have not been thinking about, which is less than six months’ away, is retirement. But for the youngsters, what sort of world will they be working in after the pandemic is over? Perhaps we shouldn’t worry. Their resilience shouldn’t surprise any of us but never ceases to amaze me.

So, to summarise, how did I keep myself sane during the COVID-19 pandemic? By being a little ODD, by exercise, and by being optimistic. But most of all the whole family has remained sane thanks to my wife who has managed to keep us all grounded and focused on the most important thing of all – each other.

William J M Hargreaves

*At a recent dinner, held in London for a select few maritime professionals, Past Captain John Noble's friend and colleague John Lillie recited his latest poem, to much acclaim from those present.*

## THE YEAR OF THE PESTILENCE

(The operation was a success, but the patient died)

'There'll be five-hundred-thousand British dead', they said.

Professors, each with shiny-brow and pointy-head.

'Just stay indoors, in bed or dead', they said.

'Or else we'll hunt you down with drones instead'.

So, we stayed indoors for many a day and week.

No grandchild hugged. No kiss on velvet cheek.

Old folks abandoned, dying in their bed.

The healthy left with broken heart instead.

'Applaud the sainted NHS each week', they said.

'Envy of the world they are!', they said and said.

But they count the corpses nightly, eyes agleam;

Foretelling Armageddon 'til we want to scream.

Then the NHS reverts to life before.

Nurses chat and text 'til thumbs are sore.

While oldies die neglected. Bedpans never brought:

'We've got degrees you know; but caring? We were never taught'.

Surgeries have closed and GPs all have fled.

Your piles they'll view online on zoom instead.

'Just hold your arse up nearer to the light'.

With wrinkled nose they tell you it's alright - such shite.

Teachers close their schools too fearful now to teach.

And unions seize their lockdown chance to preach.

No furlough for these public servant types

Paid for doing naught but carp and gripe.

And Cummings? Was he a paedo or a Russian spy?

'No, he went to Barnard Castle and he told a lie'.

Oh! Lying is nothing, but Barnard Castle?

Hanging's too good for the filthy Tory rascal.

'There'll be five-hundred-thousand British dead', they said.

Boffins, each with shiny-brow and pointy-head.

When dodgy science rules we've lost our way

And future generations are the ones who'll pay.

John Lillie 2020



## Identity parade

**Seatrade Maritime Comment & Analysis    October 2020**

Trying to operate ships in a global pandemic seems to be getting more complicated every day. Not only do owners find themselves struggling to repatriate their crews against a pretty nasty wall of ignorance and official refusal to acknowledge the problems, but charterers are starting to discriminate against various nationalities of seafarer that the owner might commonly hire.

You can see their point of view, if a ship they have hired turns out to have the plague flag flying when she reaches the loading port and crew members testing positive, causing a great deal of grief ashore. On the other hand, if every reasonable precaution was taken by the owner or crewing manager to ascertain that the crew appeared healthy and were documented accordingly when they joined the ship, it is difficult to see what more they could do. One of the most aggravating characteristics of this dreadful virus is the difficulty of identifying it in its early stages. If this had been possible, people would have been flying all over the world by now.

Is the charterer within its rights to specify that crews from country A will not be acceptable aboard a time chartered vessel? You might suggest that charterers have form in this respect, at least in historical terms, as it would be made clear to their brokers, if not made public, that ships manned by crews known for their extreme militancy should not be offered to owners worried about actually fulfilling their obligations. Chinese at the height of the Cultural Revolution were known to fall into this category. Crews from certain British ports also had a reputation for being employable only as a last resort. I will not specify the particulars, lest the Editor is forced to apologise.

Clearly, it would be nice to charter a ship aboard which the crew, or at least the senior officers, spoke a known language, but unless this was a bareboat contract, where the charterer took over almost all of the role of the owner, the charterer would largely leave this to the owner's discretion. And the owner, these days, will increasingly leave the crewing of their ships to professional managers. But if charterers are to get all heavy handed about the nationality of the crew, or present the owner with a list of "medically safer" crew supplying nations, those responsible for manning ships will be tearing their hair out. Chaos could result.

On the principle that "the customer is always right", charterers have been extending their operational remits for many years, intruding into areas previously within the owner's sole competence. Think of the way in which they like to specify that the officers aboard a ship have a certain level of experience in their particular rank, something that provides a major problem for companies wishing to develop and promote their employees, with their own arrangements for training. There was considerable angst when the oil companies initiated this policy some years ago, but if an owner wanted the business, the charterer's demands would prevail. And in a market which tends to favour the charter rather than the owner, it is the latter who must bend to the wind.

One might, of course, ask whether this effective boycotting of crews from certain nationalities contravenes the burgeoning body of law covering discrimination of all kinds. The charterers, you might surmise, would suggest that their banning of certain seafarers, or even their insistence that crew come from parts of the world where health is more closely documented, is a temporary reaction to a current crisis and that their antipathy to seafarers from country A is in no way malicious. But it would be interesting to see them in court.

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*Simon Daniels is currently involved in some work on international maritime treaties, in which a very important case was decided in the United States in 1962, between the Bowater Steamship Company and the International Woodworkers of America. The case concerned the Gladys Bowater, arising out of an incident in August 1959. It is interesting that, in 2020, the Gladys Bowater case is still one of the most important in this area of the law!*

*Past Captain Larry Corner (1977), who Went Aloft in July 2019, was the first master of the Gladys Bowater, in April 1959, and in 2009 he extended the rights to his memoirs of that time to Simon. He was very proud of the fact that he was the one of the first to transit the Seaway after it opened.*

*Simon wrote:*

## Fifty years of the St Lawrence:

### Captain Corner's recollections

#### Simon Daniels

Eric Bowater once said, that every great man wishes either to own a newspaper or to own ships. Well, the mighty Bowater newspaper empire would get to do both. In 1954, the Bowater Empire decided to build a brand new fleet of dedicated newsprint carriers, and to manage the risk they formed a subsidiary company, the Bowater Steamship Company, which was announced by an Office memorandum on 21 January 1955. The Company ordered three specialist cargo ships, powered by steam turbines, that could lift 7,000 tons of newsprint in one voyage, to be followed by a fleet of six, streamlined motorships, among them the *Gladys Bowater*. The business of shipping requires skill and experience and the Company appointed Furness Withy, one of the most experienced UK shipowners to be its ship manager.

The *Gladys Bowater* was named after Sir Noel Bowater's daughter and launched at the Leven shipyard of Denny's of Dumbarton on 27 August 1958. She was built of part welded, part riveted construction and had a Denny-Sulzer marine diesel engine which powered a single screw at an economical 12 knots. Some ambitious marine engineer designed an innovative Pleuger Activ rudder, a small device mounted on the rudder which assisted propulsion in confined waters such as the St Lawrence Seaway; but they had their problems, and many ended up on the floor of the Seaway.

These ships were known as the 'Lakers' as most of their work involved runs to the St Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes. These six sisters were all-but identical, the *Gladys* grossing some 4,045 tons and 325 feet long, with a deadweight lifting capacity in the region of 5,500 tons of cargo, carried in four cargo holds that were served by eight, 6-ton derricks which were powered by electric winches, essential where she had to visit ports without adequate cargo handling facilities. Even more importantly, they were all built to the high specification of Lloyds 100 A1 'strengthened for ice class 3', with sophisticated navigation equipment on board. They were beautifully built, the hulls being painted a distinctive Brunswick green with a light green boot topping and cream superstructure.

The Lakers had exceptional standards of officers' and crew accommodation, as well as owners' suites, with beautiful veneers in the Captain's and Chief Engineer's cabins, and wood panelling in the officers' accommodation alleyways. In fact, Bowater officers and crew were reputedly the highest paid in the British Merchant Navy, earning wages some 37 per cent higher than those of any other shipping company at the time. A berth on one of Bowater's ships was very much sought after and their crew members signed on time and time again. Many of the Bowater crews came from the Highlands and Islands and took their traditional cultures with them on board, when they were most noticeable in recreation. In fact, there was a sound reason for this, which had been identified generations before by the Hudson's Bay Company, operating in Northern Canada, which recruited British officers for service in their small fleet. Some years ago the Company regularly placed advertisements in some of the local Highland newspapers for vacancies as trainees in the Company's service to Canada. Presumably this was because they had discovered over the years that boys from areas in the Highlands and Islands were best suited to adapt to life in the more remote regions of Canada. (That being said it is a fact that most of the Masters and crews of the extreme clippers in the China tea races hailed from the Scottish Islands – surely the finest seafarers, then, in the world.)

Captain Larry Corner was a distinguished figure in the maritime world, who was one of those rare Master Mariners who would gain his Extra Master's Certificate. He joined Bowater from Furness Withy in 1956 and was appointed Chief Officer on the *Margaret Bowater*. After two voyages on the American east coast, between Corner Brook and a number of ports, he took some leave before he was appointed Master to the *Sarah Bowater*, (reputedly the youngest person to command a Bowaters vessel) and he spent some more time on the American east coast before being ordered to Holmsund in Sweden, in the Northern Baltic. Then in late 1958 he was given leave to await his appointment to the *Gladys Bowater*.



Margaret Bowater

Larry Joined *Gladys Bowater* at Denny's yard, the builders, in Dumbarton, in January 1959, as she was completing fitting-out and was ordered to Holmsund. Once into the Gulf of Bothnia they



Sarah Bowater: His first command

ran into ice, and needed the assistance of an ice breaker to get through. After a few runs in those seas, they discharged their final cargo of woodpulp before being ordered to Corner Brook, and the trip through the St Lawrence Seaway.

Here are Larry's recollections of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959:

The opening of the Seaway in 1959 was an important event in the shipping world. I had asked my employers, the Bowater Steamship Company, for the chance to be involved, and my wish had been granted. In consequence, I took my ship mv *Gladys Bowater* up the St Lawrence in late April of that year, with a cargo of newsprint, loaded in Newfoundland. We berthed in Montreal, and the local agent came on board, and told us that there would be some delay. There was still some

ice about, also pilots were in very short supply.

Such was the interest in our experience by management that a photographer and a writer were put on board for the return voyage. Whilst their presence was a novelty at first, I fear that we came to regard them as a bit of a nuisance. They did not seem to produce anything very memorable.

One of our first pilots was a short and stocky French-Canadian, and it was soon obvious that he was very tired. I recall that he had been on two or three ships before mine, without a proper break. Some of the manoeuvres were conducted in an unfamiliar manner, possibly due to fatigue, but we did not have any accidents. I recall being very impressed by the first of the locks, St Lambert Lock. The subsequent passage through the Thousand Islands section was an eye opener. The beautiful mansions on some of the islands were very impressive, and passed through in perfect weather.

We crossed Lake Ontario to anchor off the Welland Canal, awaiting our turn to proceed, and after probably a couple of days a pilot boarded, and we entered the canal. There is a series of locks in this canal, I think seven. The shore labour handling our moorings in the locks were not the most co-operative. Once a line had been put on a bollard, to check the headway, they usually refused to move it along, which was normal practice elsewhere. But we became used to their little ways. Sometimes we had to go alongside a berth between locks, waiting for other traffic to clear. On these occasions we had to land a couple of crew members, by means of small booms which had been fitted forward in Newfoundland. The seamen seemed to enjoy the novelty.

After dropping the canal pilot we entered Lake Erie and headed for Cleveland, Ohio, to discharge part of our cargo, which took only a few hours. Thence course was set for Detroit. A pilot was picked up at the approach to the Detroit River. Two or three locks in fairly quick succession followed, and we were clear for Detroit to discharge the rest of our newsprint. This river is claimed to be the busiest waterway in the world, a claim I am not in a position to dispute, and we saw certainly a constant flow of traffic. From Detroit we were ordered to proceed to Chicago, so with a pilot still on board we headed north. The pilot was dropped off at the southern end of Lake Huron, and course set up the lake. By this time I had become used to the absence of a pilot in the open waters of the lakes.

We were naturally using the excellent charts produced by the US Army Corps of Engineers, but as we approached the Mackinac Narrows at night, I was surprised to see that the buoyage lights were not as shown on the chart, the colours being reversed, red for green. After some thought, I decided that the channel could not have been moved, and decided to carry on. (It was some weeks later that I read the Notice to Mariners about the change to the buoyage lighting). The massive bridge connecting Upper and Lower Michigan was passed under, an impressive sight, and we set course down Lake Michigan.

Arriving off Chicago around dawn, I dropped anchor and waited for the pilot and tug I had requested. Presently a tug came alongside, but when I asked if he had the pilot on board the reply came "There ain't any pilots here skipper". Luckily we had the excellent guide to the Lakes, published, I believe, by the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the chart of the Calumet River. With tug made fast, we proceeded up river. There are many bridges over this river, carrying road and rail traffic to Chicago, and they have different whistle signals to request the operators to open them. Because of the heavy road and rail traffic, the operators are keen not to open them until the last minute. Some of the bridges swing away, some lift up, some pivot up, and many are close together. I recall one section of the river with 5 bridges in close succession, and where all 5 had to be open before proceeding.

We made the passage of several miles upriver without mishap, and turned round and berthed alongside a grain silo. Our Montreal agents had made a contract for the carriage of a cargo of grain, but I had reservations. I ordered my officers to take soundings around the ship, and the Mate and I agreed that we could not load nearly the amount of cargo stipulated. I told the local agent and shippers this, to which I got the reply "We can load the grain, skipper, it is up to you how you get your ship away". Clearly, they were not well informed. I prepared a note to tell them that they would be obliged to pay for loss of freight, under the terms of the charter. They became more subdued after that. We sailed at dusk, back through all the bridges, and into open water.

On a later trip from Newfoundland we were ordered to Detroit and Muskegon, Michigan. From there, I was ordered to Saginaw, Michigan. Again, no pilots were available, but we had a tug. Our berth was about 25 miles up the Saginaw River. There appeared to be no sort of port authority, but the river was wide, and the chart and sailing directions were very informative. I instructed the third mate to record the time of every bridge and buoy as we passed. The weather was fine, and it was a pleasant

enough experience. But the river narrowed, and we came to an old wooden bridge with a central span that opened. By hand signals, and shouting between the mate forrard and the bridge, I gathered we had to go through this bridge and turn around. This was accomplished by dropping the port anchor and putting the stem up to the bank by a yellow painted tree stump, with the tug pulling the stern around. There was a ship already alongside the loading berth, so we then had to come back through the bridge to a waiting berth. There were a number of spectators on the berth, and I gathered that they were hoping to get a new bridge out of our visit.

The next day we loaded and proceeded downriver. This was not totally uneventful, as I had to go faster than I would have liked, for ship-handling reasons. The radio in the wheelhouse was on at all times, and we must have caused the moorings of a ship alongside to stretch. Over the radio came a call from one master to a friend "Look out George, there's one of them foreign maniacs coming down". This caused some amusement among the crew.

The weather was mostly very good, but on a later voyage there was a strong wind blowing. We were lying in a waiting berth in the Welland Canal, waiting for permission to proceed, listening to the traffic controller over the radio. We heard a ship, *Santa Katarina*, was having difficulty in berthing, and had sustained some minor damage. The Master had refused to move until the wind eased, blocking traffic through the canal. He was ordered several times to clear the lock, and the controller was getting more and frustrated, and started calling the troublesome ship "*Katarina*", ordering her to move. Presently another voice came in, with a Scandinavian accent, asking "Where do I go now". This was the Finnish Master of the *Santa Katarina*, who had been waiting at the lower end of the canal. He had hove up anchor and approached the canal. That problem was solved without further mishap.

After the first few weeks the whole operation of the Seaway seemed to be going much more smoothly, but it never became easy. The Master, officers and seamen were putting in very long hours, and little could be done for the officers. We reduced the number of seamen required for mooring, etc., but could only do so much. We watched admiringly the big Upper Lakers with their self-tensioning winches and bow thrusters, who moored in the locks with only a couple of deckhands on duty.



Gladys Bowater

There was some antagonism shown to our ship when we carried cargo between lake ports, cargo which had previously been carried by Canadian and American ships. I do not know if this persists. I made my objections known to entering ports which required local knowledge, something our Montreal agents did not appreciate. But we were all on a steep learning curve. We overseas ships were given the name of 'Salties', as opposed to 'Lakers' and we were used to some different navigational procedures.

I look back on those months in the Seaway with much pleasure, some of the best of my seagoing career. In my report to my employers I pointed out some of the difficulties, and I believe some changes were made, but that first season was my only experience of the Seaway.



The essence of life is change, of course and, in 1970, the strength of the floating Canadian dollar added to the woes of the now-ailing Bowater Corporation, which was already enduring a world surplus of newsprint, while the American decision in 1971 to 'freeze' prices, including newsprint prices, meant that the profitability of the Canadian enterprise simply withered. A conspiracy of economic misfortunes combined to confront them with the stark reality that the shipowning company would best serve the shareholders by realising the value of its trading assets.

As a result, 1972 saw the sale of *Gladys Bowater*, sold to Oil Enterprises Ltd and registered in Monrovia, when she was renamed *Gigi*. In February 1976 she was sold to a single ship company, the Aginor Shipping Corporation, and renamed *Aginor*, under the Liberia registry. In January 1977 she suffered a fire off North Africa and was abandoned; the fire was then extinguished, though and she was salvaged, and sold to Landami Compania Naviera SA under Greek ship management, who put her back into service and renamed her *Alexandra*. It was 1985 before her trading life finally came to an end, and she was sold to Likaab Trading Company of Honduras, and in October of that year arrived at Gadani Beach for breaking up.

*Simon Daniels has written three books about the Club and its members: We Sail The Ocean Blue (in 1988 for our 60th Jubilee) The Wake of the Cachalots (1992) and The Master Mariners of Southampton (2003).*

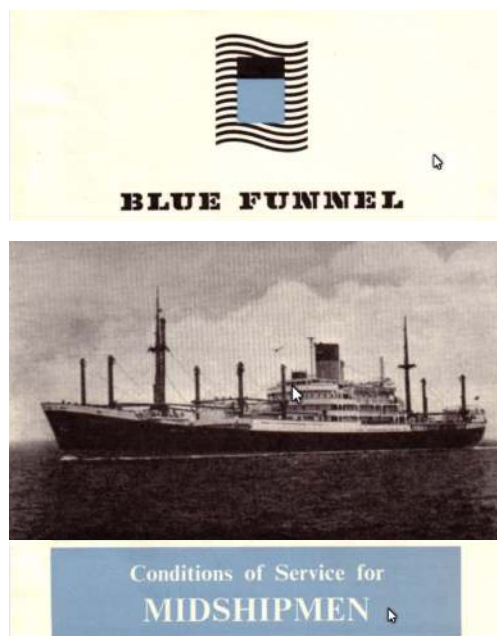
*In the middle book is an account by Reg Kelso of his career in which he reveals that his first command, in September 1967, was of the Gladys Bowater, the company at that time being part of British & Commonwealth group. We hope to bring this to you in a future edition.*





*On one of our recent Zoom meetings Ian Thomson remarked on the number of ex Blue Funnel men present. In fact, four of the regulars were Middies, Thomson, Noble, Grant and Leece and three of those are Past Captains.*

*They will all have joined under the following regime, circa 1950's.*



### **Alfred Holt & Co.**

At sea under the Blue Funnel and Glen Line House-flags are seventy-four ships, most of them large, fast cargo liners. They are engaged on regular sailings from the United Kingdom and Continental ports to Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, North Borneo, Sarawak, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Australia. Also from Australia to Indonesia, Singapore, Malaya and Far East: and from the United States of America to Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia and from Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan to Kingston and Atlantic Coast ports of America.

**Direct Entry.** Applications for apprenticeship are considered from young men anxious to make a career at sea as Navigating Officers in the Blue Funnel and Glen Line Fleets. They should be between 16 and 18 years of age, of British parentage, and preferably still at school. They should have had a good Secondary or Public School education of not less than four years' duration and have attained the educational standard of the 'O' Level General Certificate of Education in at least Mathematics (including Trigonometry), English and a Science subject, preferably Physics.

They will be indentured for four years. The first year is to be regarded by both parties as probationary, and either party is at liberty during that period to cancel the Indenture without reason assigned. No premium is required.

Applications will also be considered from young men who have obtained, or who are likely to obtain, passes at the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education. If a candidate holds two such passes, one of which is Mathematics or Physics, in addition to three other Ordinary Level passes, then he will be entitled to a remission of sea service of nine months, and the apprenticeship period will, therefore, be three years and three months only.

**Entry from Nautical Colleges.** Applications will also be considered from cadets attending Nautical Colleges. If they have not obtained passes at the Ordinary Level of the G.C.E. in Mathematics, English and a Science subject, they may have to sit for an entrance examination at the Company's Head Office. They will be granted the appropriate remission of sea service from their period of Indenture. Such applications will only be considered if they have first been approved by the Principal of the College.

In all cases the first year will be probationary.

No appointment will be made without a personal interview to be arranged after application.

**Midshipmen's Hostel.** Between voyages, while Midshipmen are under instruction in Liverpool, they are accommodated at 'Holm Lea', the Midshipmen's Hostel in South Liverpool. No charge is made for accommodation and subsistence money to cover incidental expenses is paid by the Company. The Hostel is managed by two Housekeepers and is supervised by the head of the Midshipmen's Department, who lives in a house adjoining. Facilities include a well-equipped study, library and recreation room. Midshipmen also have access to the Company's sports ground and tennis courts near which the Hostel is sited.

**Uniform.** The Company's uniform will be worn. Particulars are set out in the kit list which is forwarded on appointment.

**Leave.** Leave of absence will be granted at the discretion of the Master abroad, and the Owners at home. It is usually granted at the conclusion of each voyage.

**Outward Bound Training.** Every applicant for apprenticeship is expected, as a condition of service, to complete satisfactorily a 26-day course at one of the Outward Bound Schools. Applicants without previous nautical training will normally attend the Outward Bound Sea School, Aberdovey, Merionethshire. Others may be required to attend the Outward Bound Mountain School, Eskdale, Cumberland, the Outward Bound Mountain School, Ullswater, or the Outward Bound Sea School, at Burghhead, Moray Firth. Two-thirds of the cost of the course is borne by the Company and applicants should realize that the Outward Bound Courses are devised to develop character and not to provide vocational training for a career at sea. To be a successful Officer and ultimately a Master in the Company's fleet demands qualities of character above the average and the principles of Outward Bound training are recognized by the Company to be of the greatest value to Midshipmen.

**Royal Naval Reserve.** If desired, and subject to the exigencies of the service, Midshipmen may be allowed to do their training as Probationary Midshipmen, R.N.R., during their apprenticeship.

**Books and Instruments.** It is compulsory for Midshipmen to possess certain text-books before sailing, and after the second year, to possess a sextant. A book list will be forwarded on appointment.

**Future Service.** Every candidate will be required to give an honourable undertaking that the Company will, at their option, have first call on his services as a sea-going officer at the conclusion of his apprenticeship.

**Medical.** Applicants should be of good physique and are required to submit a doctor's certificate of fitness and freedom from organic disorder. A Ministry of Transport eyesight certificate is essential and applicants will be required to pass a Company eyesight test. They are advised also to submit to an eye specialist's examination, to ensure freedom from any latent defect of eyesight which might subsequently develop. Teeth must be in good order. Candidates should note that no seaman may sign on a foreign-going merchant ship without providing evidence of a recent vaccination against smallpox.

**Wages.** £150 will be paid for first, £180 for second, £228 for third, and £264 for fourth years.\*

On satisfactory completion of the apprenticeship, Midshipmen receive a bonus of £30 and eight weeks' Study Leave Pay at the rate of £9 per week. Tuition fees at the Technical College of their choice are also paid to Midshipmen studying for their Second Mate's Certificates.

**Accommodation.** Four midshipmen are usually appointed to each ship and are berthed together in their own quarters. Meals are taken in the saloon. All bedding, towels, etc., are found by the Company.

**Training** The Company operates its own training scheme and Midshipmen are expected to take full advantage of the opportunities placed in their way. The apprenticeship is so designed as to ensure a smooth transition from school to work. Technical training receives full attention but emphasis is placed on the development of character, and care is taken to provide the broadest possible education for a life at sea. Both at sea and in the Midshipmen's Department the training is adapted to the needs of the individual, but applicants should realize that success at sea depends on a boy's ability to stand on his own feet and make his own way, taking opportunities as they arise and adopting a positive and energetic approach to his apprenticeship.

During each voyage the Master of the vessel will give the Midshipmen such duties to perform as, in his opinion, will provide them with the best training for the profession of an Officer in the Merchant Navy. Each Midshipman is expected to complete during the voyage a set of papers in technical subjects and these are corrected on his return. Between voyages Midshipmen are expected to report at the Company's classroom for further instruction and examination. Two Master Mariners are in attendance for this purpose, and local facilities for training in seamanship are used to the full. These include the Company's Lifeboat School, Seamanship School and Radar School, the Admiralty Signal School, and the Liverpool Steamship Owners Fire-fighting School.

From the start of the apprenticeship Midshipmen are encouraged to use the facilities of the Seafarers' Education Service where they find opportunities for further education and the development of spare-time hobbies and interests. For training and recreation abroad the Company provides a number of sailing dinghies in the major ports. A Midshipmen's magazine, *The Halfdeck*, is published in the department three times a year and serves to keep all concerned in closer touch with one another.

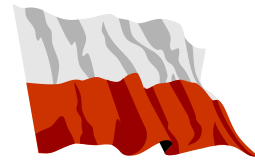
Alfred Holt & Co. have paid careful attention to Midshipmen's training over the last forty years, and the great majority of their Officers and Masters commenced their seafaring days as Midshipmen in the Company. They have found a secure and satisfying career in this service and it is towards that end that the Company directs its training policy.

*\*Ian Thomson's wages were £7-5s-0p pm (£87 pa) when he joined in 1953 so these conditions must post date then.*

*I couldn't resist including this poem from Barrie Youde, as much for the sentiments expressed regarding statutory pilotage as for the obvious connection to a Blue Funnel vessel returning home.*



## Inspiration of Youth



*"Give her the works, Sidney!" barked the Master, down the blower,  
"The Pilot wants full speed! And not one revolution slower!"*

*Our ship, a liner-steamship in UK/Australia trade  
Was powerful and graceful : All was of the highest grade.*

*A four-month trip: a dozen ports: Antipodes and back:  
We were an ocean greyhound, keeping schedule, keeping track.  
Wool: fridge-cargo, meat and butter: Passengers First Class.  
No stain was seen upon her decks, nor tarnish on her brass.*

*The Master was a martinet: a formalist: a terror.  
No slack was tolerated. Not the slightest human error.  
The Officers would stand aside through more than courtesy.  
Through iron will he ruled us all, as Neptune rules the Sea.  
And I, an humble Midshipman, an awkward, gangling youth,  
Was terrified of every bark. That is the simple truth.  
Four months I listened to this man. I heeded every warning.  
He frightened me at dead of night, at noon and in the morning.  
The only civil words I heard, throughout the voyage made  
Were spoken to the passengers: But they, of course, had paid.*

*Nearly home: Gibraltar passed and entered in the log:  
Double-watches soon for meeting European fog.  
The Master on the bridge: chain-smoking: peering through the murk.  
Radar in its infancy. Quoth he: "Does that thing work?"  
Other ships approaching were detected through the ears.  
The martinet relied upon experience of years.  
And who was at the radar, no more trusted than the set?  
'Twas I, the first-trip novice-hand. So much could go wrong, yet.*

*St George's Channel: Bardsey: what a foul and fearful night.  
Off Holyhead at last the look-out saw the Pilot-light.  
All was ready, ladder rigged, the speed reduced and dropped,  
The Master, barking, paced the bridge. The smoking never stopped.  
The Pilot came on board. The Master shook him by the hand,  
"Dear boy! How good to see you! You have all arrangements planned?  
Middy! Take the Pilot's coat and hang it up for drying!  
Middy! Make some tea! Can you do that, for want of trying?"*

*The tension since Gibraltar showed that it had greatly eased.  
The Pilot had the con: the Master very clearly pleased.  
"How are things, now, Mister Pilot? Tell me what you need?  
For docking-time at Liverpool, how do you rate our speed?"  
(Now, Sidney was the Engineer, the Chief of all his ilk.  
Relations with the Master, formal. Not quite smooth as silk.)  
The Pilot spoke. The Master strode unto the telephone.  
"Keep her going, Sidney, if you stoke her on your own!  
Give her the works, now, Sidney! The Pilot wants full speed!"  
The martinet a messenger. My heart began to bleed!*

*"Give her the works, Sidney!" barked the Master down the blower.  
"The Pilot wants full speed and not a revolution slower!"  
The moment thus confirmed a thought which I had long possessed:-  
To be a Pilot's son I was most fortunate and blessed.  
For I had seen a martinet most pleased to recognise  
The worth of any Pilot now, before my very eyes,  
At highest standards operating in the Merchant Fleet.  
A Pilot stands in independence. On his own two feet.  
And I would be a Pilot, if I might be good enough,  
To satisfy the martinet. If I could learn my stuff.*

*"Give her the works, Sidney!", how such simple words could mark  
The confirmation of a youth, that foggy evening dark.  
"Give her the works, Sidney!" Were there ever words so sweet?  
Or explanation given for a function more complete?  
The martinet earned his reward for sailing far and wide.  
The Pilot? He did likewise. Why? Let other men decide:  
I'd like to ask the martinet. Perhaps one day I can,  
In the knowledge that he proved he was a fellow sailorman.  
"Give her the works, Sidney!" How those magic words inspired -  
As I became a Pilot, too, - long after they retired!  
The moral being, I suppose - to smooth the end of it,  
That nothing is more proper than to see the biter bit!*

*BY  
January 2010*





## Biting the hand that feeds you

**Baird Maritime Workboat World, Grey Power, November 2020**

It's a great saying but there is a lot of it about at present. I thought of it first looking at pictures of the shrieking mobs of environmental protesters outside the International Maritime Organisation and the Japanese Embassy in London. In the case of the former location it was a bit futile as the environmental committee meeting that the unwashed mob was hoping to influence (or perhaps wreck) was being conducted on-line, with IMO being run by a skeleton staff during the pandemic. That wouldn't necessarily matter as with these people; it is the opportunity for grandstanding, as much as the message, that they regard as important.

But don't these idiots, who work themselves into such a frenzy over maritime transport ever consider what their comfortable lifestyles owe to the international shipping that brings them all the products which contribute to this wellbeing? Moreover, amid all their publicity-seeking and pontification, blasted through their loud-hailers to bemused members of the public caught up in the congestion they cause, do they ever give a thought to the three quarters of a million professional seafarers who have been working through this global pandemic to run these horrible, polluting ships? Not a chance.

Perhaps, in their zeal and self-satisfied importance, they all subsist on home-grown turnips and weave their clothes from organically sourced fibres. Most of them, I would suggest appear to be remorselessly middle class and are as dependent on any of us upon the benison of international trade and the wonderful maritime transport system that carries it all around, keeping the lights on and shelves stacked.

None of them (and that goes for some of the environmental agencies voicing their impatience at the lack of progress to the post-hydrocarbon Nirvana) give any credit to the serious work that is going on to investigate alternative fuels. Scarcely a day goes by when there isn't a report of technologists, naval architects, engineers and ship operators reporting on new ideas that are designed to combat harmful emissions. A pandemic might be raging around the world, but studies and trials are still progressing on a whole range of technologies that will contribute to the reduction of shipping's carbon footprint. There are projects to investigate the use of new fuels such as ammonia and hydrogen, others designed to reduce methane slip when LNG is used, several bio-fuel projects and plenty of progress on the electrical front. Can't the nay-sayers and activists ever recognise any of this?

There is more biting of the feeding hand in the shape of some worrying noises coming from Australia (among other countries) about what should be done when ships arrive at their ports with Covid-19 cases among the crew. There have been suggestions, from political figures, and others, that such ships should be "banned" and rejected; sent away to goodness knows where, but not here, let the dreaded virus be unleashed among the hapless population. All in all, it is a pretty miserable reaction to people who ought to expect a little gratitude for working non-stop through the plague and bringing essential products and cargo space to Australian shores.

It isn't as if the poor blighters are able to get ashore after their long voyages and roister around town spreading their infections. They remain trapped aboard ships, but it scarcely shows either humanity, or a recognition of international maritime convention, to effectively prevent crew members seeking medical aid. There is also some quite unpleasant stuff circulating in local media, which effectively demonises seafarers aboard visiting ships, and that, if they ever get to see it, can't make them feel better.

The shipping industry, by and large, has been doing its best to keep maintaining the supply chain throughout the pandemic, in the midst of constantly changing and confusing rules from governments. Trying to relieve crews, move them around the world and keep them healthy and properly complying with quarantine regulations has been a nightmare. So the situation is not exactly helped by major charterers getting on their high horses and demanding that operators charge the sourcing of their crews to minimise the risks of delay if ships arrive with seafarers testing positive to the virus.

In other times, a time charterer trying to insist on such details would have been firmly told that the nationality or source of the crew was well beyond the terms of the charter-party. But these are not normal times, and it is clear that civilised behaviour, at so many different levels, is wearing a bit thin. But despite it all, we can probably count on the ships still sailing, carrying the goods that everyone, activists and less excitable members of the public, desperately need.

**Published with the kind permission of Baird Maritime and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey. [rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk](mailto:rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk)**

## LCT 7074

Just received from Cachalot Captain S J Lawrence MBE RD\* RNR

This is just a note to advise that the Curator of the Southsea "D" Day museum, of which LCT 7074, is just the latest exhibit, is looking to all persons connected with her, so bearing in mind that she was the Clubship Landfall for the Liverpool branch of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, before becoming a night club and then sinking below the waters of the Mersey, would be delighted to receive stories of her HCMM time from present Master Mariners, to widen her story as she sits on Southsea seafront, or may have served on Red Duster LCT, such as the Norris Castle or any of the Risdon Beazley salvage vessels or Red Funnel ferries.

Call 023 2988 2555 and request to speak with the Curator re LCT 7074

With very many thanks and best wishes

Stuart

### The CACHALOTS

#### **The Southampton Master Mariners' Club**

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

Tel: 023 8022 6155

Web site: [www.cachalots.org.uk](http://www.cachalots.org.uk)

E-mail: [office@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:office@cachalots.org.uk)

[captain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:captain@cachalots.org.uk) [staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)  
[boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk) [storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk)  
[postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)  
[functions@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:functions@cachalots.org.uk)  
[membership@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:membership@cachalots.org.uk)  
[editor@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:editor@cachalots.org.uk)

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.

The cut-off date for the next edition will be

20th November 2020

### 250 Club

The 250 Club is another casualty of the coronavirus lockdown. Although we could have used an online random number generator to produce some numbers, the draw has always taken place in public so as to be seen to be above board. It has now been decided to resume the draws when we regain access to the Club room. The validity of each share will be extended to reflect the missing months, from March onwards.