

# ***The CACHALOT***

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

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## Captain's Log

The breaking news this month is that the Prime Minister has announced a road map out of lockdown. During his announcement he heavily caveated his timeline, saying that each new phase would be contingent on the last, but the media has quickly cemented the plan in stone. So, what are we to make of this?

In case you missed it, the road map went something like this with a few additions ...

8 March: Phase 1, part 1 – School pupils return to the classroom and care home visits re-start. Management Committee considers re-branding the Club Room as either a school or a residential home.

29 March: Phase 1, part 2 – Stay at Home ends, and Stay Local starts. Social distancing outdoors is allowed, for up to 6 people, or two households. Outdoor sports venues open, and golfers get their golf courses back. Management Committee are disappointed when the Royal British Legion refuse a proposal to remove the roof and rebrand as a sports venue.

12 April: Phase 2 – Retail opens, including Hairdressers and Beauty Salons, so no excuse for continuing with the Man Friday look. Outdoor hospitality allowed to open, and holidays permitted to self-catering accommodation. However, Kuti's make it clear that BBQs are not allowed on the premises!

17 May: Phase 3 – Indoor hospitality re-opens, with restrictions - Kuti's opens, but there is rationing of Cobra Beer, poppadoms and lime pickle.

21 June: Phase 4 – Final restrictions lifted. Reg takes his seat on his usual stool at the Club Room bar.

Somewhat tongue in cheek but, as a glass half-full sort of person, I feel this gives us something to chew on, and I am very much looking

forward to the next Management Committee meeting when we can start to unpack it all. Better still, as I write this the sun is shining and the daffodils and crocuses (croci?) are starting to flower. Maybe the light at the end of the tunnel is not an express coming the other way after all.

Raise a glass to the vaccinators!

Andrew Moll, Club Captain

*Another light at the end of another tunnel?*

## Neptune Declaration

Recognizing that they have a shared responsibility to resolve the humanitarian crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 650 (689 on 22/02/21) companies and organizations have signed the [Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change](#).

The Neptune Declaration urges the implementation of four main actions to address the crisis:

- Recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to Covid-19 vaccines
- Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice
- Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes
- Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers

The STAR Protocols have been developed to supplement the Neptune Declaration. The protocols are based on the SG-STAR protocols, which have been developed for use in Singapore by stakeholders from government, industry and trade unions in accordance with the IMO recognized “Recommended Framework of Protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic”.

*It remains to be seen whether these expressed good intentions will result in any meaningful actions.*

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## Boatsteerers' Locker

At our Friday Zoom gatherings, it is great to hear of members receiving the vaccination for Covid-19. And as I write this, I received my first jab on Thursday 18th February at the AFC Totton ground. The injection site came up like a football!!!! Apologies.

One of our male members, posted on a social media site that he had been asked a number of questions, including 'Are you pregnant?' How many others have received the same question I wonder? The mind boggles!! I can confirm the question is on the generic list but my inquisitor skipped that question.

Let us hope the vaccine roll-out leads to the easing of restrictions and controls to a level which allow us to meet again, hopefully at the RBL. We should hopefully hear further from our Dear Leader the Prime Minister as to opening up after the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, which is after I have to submit this to the erstwhile editor!

The **250 Club** draw has been re-instated for 2021 taking place at mid-day at the last Zoom gathering of the month. The draw results for January and February are included in this edition of the Digital Cachalot. The draw is being made by our independent Office Administrator Richard and his wife Jill at their home with a live phone call for attendees to listen to.

The next 250 Club draw will be made at midday during the Zoom gathering on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February and then Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March.

**Shipping Festival Service 2021** - On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February, Paul Leece, Ian Thomson and I joined a Zoom meeting with Winchester Cathedral to discuss the annual Shipping Festival Service. They have indicated that a service can go ahead but due to Covid-19 and a different approach by the Cathedral Ministry, will be held on **Saturday 12th June 2021 commencing at 1730**. This will be part of the Evensong service. Details will be provided at the soonest opportunity although it has been confirmed that the post service reception will not be allowed on this occasion. However, we are working with Winchester to ensure the Flag parade, which may be restricted in number and procession of flags and

VIP visitors goes ahead. Seating will be different and we will follow the strict Covid-19 protocols for mask wearing and safe distancing. Only spouse/partners within a social bubble will be allowed together.

**Sea Pie Supper 2022** – Following a couple of emails to St. Mary’s in early February, we have now had a positive response and are assessing the contract to hold the Sea Pie Supper on **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022**.

I was pleased to receive some more photos for the LinkedIn page and header from recently joined members. We now have 32 members on the Cachalot LinkedIn Group. Please keep them coming.

Our Friday Zoom gatherings continue to attract a good audience, often up to twenty members resulting in a good interchange, or is that lamp-swinging, of news, old and new and memories of days past.

In the meantime, keep well.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer



The 13,100 teu *Maersk Eindhoven* became the latest boxship casualty on the Pacific on Feb.17th, suffering a blackout while en route to California and a subsequent loss of 260 containers overboard.

Her sister ship *Maersk Essen*, shown below on a routine arrival at Los Angeles, similarly lost 750 boxes in the North Pacific on Jan. 16th.



## Questions for the carriers

**Baird Maritime Workboat World, 23rd February 2021**

**Grey Power**

What is going on in the North Pacific, as scarcely a week goes by without stacks of containers hurling themselves into the sea as ships roll extravagantly in the heavy weather they seem to be encountering? Is the weather any worse than might be expected during the winter season in this notoriously fickle route between Asia and North America?

It doesn't take much for those who incline to climate activism to attribute the current spate of accidents to what they believe is increasingly violent weather, but it might be that there are more prosaic causes. Could there be something of an "operational" reason, in that there is increased pressure for masters to maintain their schedules, with diversions well clear of threatening weather disapproved of by management? In such a climate, masters will maintain their course and speed and press on, when prudence might suggest otherwise. It could be that external weather routing agencies hired to give advice to ships also feel pressure upon them not to be "too cautious" in their recommendations.

We know, for instance, that the general reduction of speed on passage, designed to save fuel (and the environment), has increased the pressure to speed up the processes elsewhere, such as in port waters and at terminals, to make up what has been lost. This, of course has not been helped by the advent of the latest very large ships, with their huge container exchange demands, upon the terminals. Operators and charterers "squeeze where they can" and no master can be unaware of such pressure.

It would be a very bold commentator who would suggest that the pressure to get a ship off the berth and away to sea in the shortest possible time, accommodating late deliveries of urgent boxes, does not contribute to short cuts in the lashing regime. Masters who know what they are talking about have commented on the pressures in final load ports playing fast and loose with cargo plans, with heavier boxes ending up higher than they ought to be.

It also seems obvious that with ships carrying far more on deck than under deck, with stack heights ever higher, the stresses upon the lashing arrangements are going to be far greater. It might be suggested that lashing arrangements have been properly verified by class and the authorities, but do these really take into account the sorts of forces that will arise, should there be an almost instantaneous loss of stability in the event of a parametric

rolling event? And has there ever been a proper investigation of the forces acting upon the container stack of such extreme heights in a seaway – in real terms - rather than those estimated in a computer program?

It might be asked that if a certain arrangement is deemed safe and practical when containers are six high on deck, what additional arrangements are put in place when the stack is ten high? Are the lashing rods and turnbuckles suitably strengthened for such increased forces that may act on a stack? The answer, one might suggest, is that the equipment is already as heavy as a well-muscled lashing operative can reasonably lift and cannot, at a reasonable cost, be made any stronger. It is, fundamentally, the same sort of equipment that was fashioned half a century ago to deal with far smaller deck loads. It is also worth noting that ships' crews, who might have been available to check on the lashing tensions during the passage have halved in number, while the ships have quadrupled and more in capacity.

It is notable that there is something of a dichotomy in the attitudes of different carriers to the use of lashing bridges, which, of course are part of the ship structure. Some carriers now carry lashing bridges on their largest and newest ships, to enable containers six high to be secured in this fashion, leaving only three or four to be fastened on top with twistlocks. Others make do with bridges that are considerably lower, several of the ships that have experienced serious losses being of this type.

It may not be a coincidence that the period in which we have seen the most spectacular stack collapses has been one in which the carriers have been struggling to meet demand for eastbound trans-Pacific slots. Following the onset of the Pandemic, trade fell away and sailings were cancelled, but for the last several months, it has sharply rebounded and loadings have been arguably heavier than ever. If a stack is going to collapse for whatever reasons (and there are many of them) it is more likely to happen if the boxes are heavier, than if they are more lightly loaded.

The suggestion that ships ought to be less heavily laden in areas of expected heavy weather on a seasonal basis might seem to be common sense, but is unlikely to commend itself to those who operate these monsters. They will continue to point out the statistical likelihood of such incidents when compared with the numbers of boxes carried. It is an argument that may well resonate rather less if the accidents continue, or, in the worst possible case, a ship is lost.

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

We all stand in awe at Michael Grey's ability to analyse and summarise any maritime matter. His every contribution is a masterpiece. It is inadequate on my part to suggest that Michael's articles as published in *The Cachalot* are deserving of a wider audience. When looking over a stack of containers it is all too easy to overlook the bleeding obvious; which every mariner knows that he should not.

Barrie Youde

## ON CONTAINERISATION.

Observe and you shall see; and if you don't, you won't.

And if you do not see, then dreadful damage you'll confront.

There is a clear need for care, when bringing home the gammon.

Let none be unaware he cannot serve both God and Mammon.

The stoutest ship which goes to sea is placed in human hands,

For voyage of diversity to many different lands,

Whose laws and mores are different, each, though many are the same.

To see a ship upon the beach, for each one sees but shame.

And of the passage in between one harbour and the next,

The God and Mammon issue stands out prominently. Vexed.

The lashings on containers need be adequate, at least;

And otherwise the carrier becomes nought but a beast,

A menace, serving nobody, creating untold harm:

A matter of pure harassment, distress and much alarm,

Where obvious is bleeding and the Devil blinds the best;

And those who will not see become the subject of arrest;

Which none would wish to see, not even salvors nor the lawyers.

Who sends such ships to sea? Which guilty owners? Which employers?

Observe and you shall see; and if you don't, you won't.

And if you do not see, then dreadful damage you'll confront.

## The British Apprentices Club.

During World War 1, two American ladies were working with the YMCA in Great Britain and were greatly impressed with the hospitality extended towards visiting American servicemen .

The ladies -Moyca Newell and Katherine Mayo -returned to the United States when the war ended and decided to repay that hospitality to visiting British seafarers. Thus, it was that, in 1921, the British Apprentices Club was founded, with the express purpose of providing hospitality for the Cadets and Apprentices serving in UK flag ships berthed in the ports of New York City.

The club was founded at the Chelsea Hotel ( West 23<sup>rd</sup>. Street) in New York City and Mrs. Lucile Spaulding was appointed Manager and Social Director - a post she held for some thirty years.

In 1923, the BAG gained greater recognition when it was incorporated as a memorial to Walter H. Page who had served as UK Ambassador of The United States throughout WW1.

The Club was open 7 days a week between the hours of 1700 and 2200 and it was "staffed" by a bevy of very attractive young ladies who, under the VERY watchful eye of Mrs. Spaulding, ensured that the visiting seafarers were made welcome and entertained - and nothing else !

No alcohol was allowed but the two large fridges were well stocked with freshly made sandwiches, fresh orange juice, milk and other goodies including a variety of cakes and ice cream. Darts, table tennis (at which the ladies excelled) jigsaw puzzles and a small television ensured that the visiting seafarers were kept entertained - and that they did not become too "familiar" with their hostesses.

My first voyage -in April 1946 - started on joining the Empire Victory ship "Good Hope Castle" in Glasgow whence we sailed to St John's (New Brunswick), New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Trinidad before heading South to South and East Africa, the Suez Canal, Genoa. Barcelona and the United Kingdom - a voyage of some five months which could extend to seven if we returned to the USA from the Cape. My fellow first trip Cadet (and lifelong friend until his death a few years ago)

was Rodney ("Rocky") McNeill ..an old "Worcester". We arrived in New York — or Brooklyn to be precise -in early May and I was surprised when the boarding Pilot handed me a letter (with a copy to the Captain) -my introduction and invitation to the British Apprentices Club - with clear instructions how to get there.

Next day, with cargo working finishing at 1630, Rocky and I donned our best uniforms and, following the instructions, boarded the "Cross Town Car" (a tram car - free to anyone in uniform and which dropped us off almost outside the Chelsea Hotel) and were greeted by Mrs. Spaulding. A younger lady ..known as "Toots" plied us with milk, sandwiches and cake and introduced three or four very attractive young women who expressed a great interest in our work and domicile. Their friendship was infectious and warm and we immediately felt "at home". They were the daughters of very wealthy parents hailing from "upstate" and took it in turns to come to the Club and entertain visiting seafarers. They told us that three others - from a T&J. Harrison ship - had been in the Club earlier but had left just before our arrival to go to the movies. Time passed quickly and with "closing time" approaching "Toots" told us that the girls were picked-up by their "drivers" who would drop us back to the ship.

During our weeks stay in New York we visited the Club at some time each day to enjoy the abundant food - and the friendship of other young ladies - in company with other young men from other ships - Harrisons, Ellerman & Bucknall, Blue Funnel and others - and when we sailed we really felt that we had left good friends. Rocky and I stayed in the ship for some three years (almost our full qualifying time for Second Mates) and the Club was always the first place we visited when we were in New York. The ship was employed in the "Conference Line" with Harrisons, Ellermans and others and although our itineraries varied New York was always a port-of-call. I kept in touch with one young lady for about five years and was even invited to her wedding !! Unhappily, during die 1950s the attendance started to drop away and the British Apprentices Club ceased operations early in 1961.

CRK 26.1.21

*Reg Kelso, and ourselves of course, will be pleased to hear if there are any other Cachalots out there who remember the BAC.*

## Getting all ethical

**Ship and Offshore Repair Journal, Dockgate Column Dec–Jan 2020/21**

It is important, in a corporate sense, to signal your virtue these days, when sustainability, diversity and inclusion are words being currently employed in some hitherto unlikely places, by people who would barely have recognised the vocabulary, a couple of years ago. Charterers, for instance, recognised for their hearts of adamantite, when an owner asked for a small variation in the charter party terms, are giving an increasing impression that their main aim in life is the protection of the environment, rather than their profits.

Ethics are no longer the county to the East of London, but something that can be worn on the sleeve. Charterers' brokers scratch their heads over new demands that suggest they seek out not the very lowest rates, but a ship that is the very greenest in its CO2 emissions, which they can offer to their clients. And if the ship uses bio-fuel extracted from the products of fish and chip shops, or some other natural, non-petro-chemical ingredient, so much the better. They still won't pay any extra for this super-sustainability, but all concerned, it is inferred, will have a far warmer feeling as the voyage is completed. LNG may be still a bunker fuel for the minority, but the number of users is sharply increasing, even though it may be a "bridge" to something cleaner. And you proudly announce the fact that you are using it, in large letters on the side of your ship. It shows you are greener than your competitors driving on dirty old diesel.

This is no longer some fringe behaviour, but some massive users of ships are now fully engaged in the quest for ever-greener credentials. Oil companies are gearing up to become increasingly strict about the energy efficiency of tonnage they take on, while demanding ever higher environmental standards in terms of ballast management or fuel treatment. BP, we are asked to believe, stands for "Beyond Petroleum".

If there is any choice, giants like Amazon, make it clear that they are looking for cleaner, greener transport by both land and sea. And it is an attitude that emanates right from the top of these multi-billion organisations – the chief "influencers" themselves. By nailing their green credentials to the mast, so as to speak, they will get the credit in terms of those they sell to, at very little or no cost to themselves. Ethics is something somebody else pays for. The mighty Volkswagen, anxious to purge their collective memories of past emission scandals, has stated that their future preference will be biofuels for all their transport modes, pragmatism suggesting that

batteries won't power the biggest car carriers for a while yet.

And ship operators are reading these runes and coming to the conclusion that this is no fashionable fad, but a seismic shift to which they must react, almost regardless of what the regulators will decide. The eccentric, represented by the shouting nose-ringed mobs may still be demonstrating outside the International Maritime Organisation, when environmental meetings are on the agenda, but what they are demanding has already become mainstream,

Like it or not, whether it is sincere or cynical, the green-minded shippers are driving change. Because of their pressure and their considerable ability to gain publicity, the biggest ship operators are falling into line, putting increasing amounts of money into research into new fuels that will reduce the ship's environmental footprint. Like their powerful customers, the lines themselves want to be on the side of the angels, whether it is in the development of hydrogen fuel cells or methanol, ethanol or ammonia, better, bigger batteries or even sail assistance.

The "concept" car carrier designed to carry several thousand vehicles and propelled by enormous aerofoils on the garage top might never be built, but it is designed to show that the industry is not all about pleasing petrolheads, and has a conscience. Considering the number of car carriers that end up on their beam ends it appeared to be a strange type of ship for sail assistance, but it was a demonstration of ethical ideas which will be fully approved of by people who like to plug in their personal transport. And surprising numbers and types of ships have already been fitted with rotors, fixed sails or apparatus to fly kites over the bow. The savings in CO2 emissions, or fuel consumed, might be struggling to reach double figures of the total percentage, but it is what these improbable devices say to green-minded people, who might want to carry their goods in these ships.

You might suggest that we are all environmentalists now – the activists no longer have a monopoly of such attitudes, no matter how much they protest. More to the point, people who design, build and operate ships may not be gluing themselves to oil company front doors, or yelling outside IMO, but they are getting on and doing something more positive; changing the maritime world. You can argue whether these changes are driven by the pressure of regulators, the green minded users of ships, or even the activists, but the reason doesn't really matter.

## The moving Pivot Point

When I was piloting some thirty years ago it became obligatory to complete a Master/Pilot information exchange form for all ships. One day I boarded a small Wonsild tanker inbound for Fawley and the old Faroese skipper was obviously a bit miffed at yet more paperwork being imposed upon him. In the section 'Right or Left handed propeller', which would inform the pilot which way the stern would cant when going astern, he had written 'Vessel is right handed but she go which way she want'.

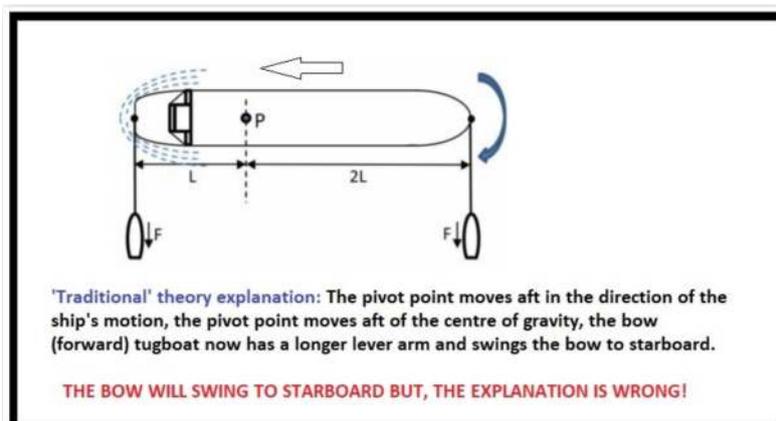
And that was my experience of many ships. The difference between the theory and the counter-intuitive behaviour of some vessels was at times quite alarming. One ploy would be to suck it and see, remain poised and then pretend that was what you wanted to happen all along, but such a seat of the pants approach would not survive any scrutiny in the event of writing off a multi-million pound portainer crane or sticking a shore-side bollard through the hull. Any unexpected sheer of either end of the vessel towards the berth could have just those disastrous consequences, given the size and momentum of some ships today.

I might have piloted a particular ship a dozen or more times but I bet not twice with exactly the same draught, under keel clearance, tide, current and wind conditions, all of which parameters affect the ship's behaviour, not to mention with different tugs and tug skippers.

Another factor in that behaviour is the pivot point, which is not the same as the ship's longitudinal centre of gravity. Studies have been made on this pivot point in the past twenty or so years, both in theory and in practice, and with some unexpected results.

Cachalot Tim Cummins, who is Assistant Harbour Master and Harbour Pilot at Portsmouth, has written an article, '[A review of the ship's pivot point: Science, Maths and Observation](#)' Where is the centre of a ship's rotation? which appeared in [Marine-Pilots.com](#) and is essential reading for pilots, shiphandlers and those interested in the behaviour of ships in confined waters.

The article is too long to include here but can be found at the aforementioned site, or [here](#).



## Captain Ken



*Another contribution from Ken Owen which appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" of February 2021.*

Following my recent article about the Blue Funnel cargo/passenger liner 'Pyrrhus' and how difficult it was for signallers to recognise the name when signalling with flashing Morse code, I am reminded of a particular incident with the same ship.

I was the Second Mate of her in the mid sixties, and we arrived home from the Far east, on schedule and into Liverpool.

For some reason, our usual berth Gladstone dock was not available and we were berthed in Huskisson dock, further south.

William Huskisson, had been a great financier and MP for Liverpool, but most famous of all, for being the first ever fatal casualty on a railway. He was run over by Stevenson's Rocket, on the first passenger Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

When the deep sea officers and crew arrived home, a relief coastal crew took over while the ship called at Glasgow, Swansea, Dublin, and Birkenhead., before taking on the passengers and returning to the Far East.

So there I was, happily home again, sitting by a lovely fire, when the television news announcer said ' The fire on the ship in Huskisson Dock, Liverpool, is still raging'.

Immediately, partly from a sense of duty, and partly as many of my personal effects were still on board, Allwyn and I got in the car and drove straight to Liverpool.

When we arrived, the ship's holds were on fire, and several fire engines frantically fighting it.

The ship had to be abandoned, as she was in danger of capsizing, but fortunately the engineers were able to keep the pumps running, and pump out all the water the fire brigade were pumping in. They managed to control it.

The following day, I was recalled from leave and appointed with two other second mates to assist the Fire brigade C.I.D, try and establish the cause of the fire.

The fire had been in the holds and going through the remains was a real eye opener to me.

Part of the training of a Merchant navy officer is the care of all types of cargo. Tea, coffee, timber, rubber, palm oil etc.; so imagine my disappointment, to discover that the bulk of our cartooned cargo from Hong Kong, was novelty plastic Squeaky oranges, Corgi the cat, key rings, and lady's Day of the week , panties.( Mon Tues Wed etc )

The container revolution of course has prevented anyone on board knowing what the bulk of the cargo is, these days.

'Pyrrhus' was saved and continued in service for many years, until replaced by container ships. The Ministry of Transport Surveyor stated that the standard of the Company's management, saved the ship.

He had noted that even the Chairman of the Company (Sir John Nicholson ) went down the engine room to give encouragement.



I am quite fascinated with coincidences in History, so quite amazed years later when I read a headline in a re-print of the Liverpool Mercury dated **June 1899**.

'Cotton fire on Blue Funnel ship 'Pyrrhus' in Toxteth dock, Liverpool.  
( She was in fact her predecessor. )

Michael Grey writes: “This kind of obituary might be of interest. Jerry was a very old friend who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in August and who died in November, with his wife unable to see him during this period in Florida. .... I felt that he deserved this, as his experiences were so similar to those others suffered for so long after the bean counters had taken over.”

*I think this could be seen as not just an obituary of Michael’s friend but of the Merchant Navy as many of us knew it. - Ed*

## Jerry and the Bean Counters

**The Maritime Advocate online Issue 770 January 29th 2021**

I heard of the death, the other day, of my old friend Captain Jerome Benyo, who had retired to Florida after many years commanding container ships. I first met him in the 1970s and he was one of my most faithful informants about the shipping industry, keeping me up to speed on the realities of contemporary seafaring.

Jerry had been trained at one of America’s finest maritime academies and had sailed with United States Lines, then the most elite of US shipping companies. He had served with the celebrated Captain Richard Cahill, author of marine safety textbooks and a fierce supporter of the highest standards and having known both of them, it was clear that they held similarly uncompromising standards about how ships ought to be run.

Jerry left US Lines to become a Panama Pilot for a few years, where his ship-handling skills were honed, although he sometimes spoke of the strange and artificial life in this curious quasi-colony of his homeland.

Returning to mainstream shipping, at a time when high-cost flags were under huge pressure and the US flag fleet shrinking fast, he was, like his contemporaries, to find life hard. He spent time commanding a rickety ro-ro, and a strange vessel on government service, about which he was unusually reticent.

In the late 80s, with virtually no opportunities in “proper” ships, he worked as a barge master on North Sea semi-submersibles, which paid decent wages but was not exactly a life-enhancing existence. A large portion of his time aboard the rigs seemed to have been spent in arguing with the drilling staff, who outranked him, were as ignorant of the sea as they were knowledgeable about drilling, and constantly wanted to do dangerous things.

They were always yelling about the cost of downtime, I recalled him telling me, but were oblivious to what the cost might be if lives were lost because of their idiotic miscalculation about the weather, hazards to supply boats, or the huge craft's stability.

It was with some relief that he returned to mainstream shipping and the command of container ships, chartered tonnage that was owned, curiously enough, by his union pension fund and working in the North Atlantic. Although his skirmishes with the drillers might have prepared him, it was in this phase of his career where he was to really meet the "bean-counters" who were taking over shipping and were to plague him (as they did every other ship master), in this mean-minded maritime era.

I used to see quite a lot of Jerry during those years and invariably there would be some tale of the latest "economies" that were imposed on his hard-worked ship. With a six or seven European port rotation, he used to take a North Sea pilot, which was a great safety boost, not least because of the uncertain skills of officers supplied by the Union hiring halls, who were never allowed to stay for long enough to be, in the masters' eyes, reliable. Then there came an edict from HQ to say the master must do his own sea pilotage, at a time, coincidentally, when the bureaucratic burden seemed to be exploding.

The cost-cutting became regular and was undertaken without any consultation. Several crew posts disappeared overnight, including that of the chief steward/purser, leaving the master to become, in his words, as the "\*\*\*\*\* Menu Engineer" and decide what the crew should eat. There were endless arguments about the ship's disbursements; if the weather required an additional tug for berthing, then the office was on the phone demanding to know why. If the ship was delayed by storms (this was the North Atlantic) there was an immediate inquisition, with the office letting the master know of their disapproval of the late arrival.

Some edicts were just ridiculous. I recall Jerry's wrath when some wretched bean-counter told him that garbage collection bills were too high in the European ports and he was to retain all his stinking bags of wastes on the afterdeck until the ship called at the final port, where the authority offered a free service (actually the cost was rolled into the general port charges).

There were terrible arguments, usually involving threats of the sack, over dock damage, necessary maintenance, repairs, cargo disputes or small costs that the ship inevitably had to pay. Jerry came back from leave on one occasion to discover that the “office”, after the visit of some smooth-talking salesman, had taken it upon themselves to exchange the entire navigational console for something new and completely unfamiliar, with the ship due to sail that evening. Nobody had thought that the two masters of the ship might have views on such matters.

The “office” bean counters eventually stopped communicating with him in writing, doubtless thinking of the trail of evidence correspondence leaves behind. Jerry, able to see the writing on the wall, went ashore and bought himself a recording device.

Clearly, it was not what might be described as a fulfilling relationship, but it was clear that Jerry’s experience was not so very different to what my other informants were telling me, in a business that increasingly seemed to have the joy squeezed out of it. And what made it so much more dispiriting, was the insinuation that the high standards which Jerry just would not compromise, made him into an enemy of those calling the shots ashore.

Eventually the ships were laid up, and Jerry retired, although he used to attend the IMO for some years as an IFSMA delegate. People who say that Americans don’t understand irony never met Jerry, whose downbeat New York humour was retained despite all that fortune and the bean counters threw at him. He was a huge credit to his chosen profession, but died, of cancer, in November. He will be missed by all who knew him.

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# Cachalots and Messmates

*In 1973, Commodore D.M.MacLean D.S.C. R.D. R.N.R., who had been Captain of the Club in 1965, wrote "A Brief History of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club". In an occasional series we shall bring you extracts from that volume to remind us of the history of our unique club. Here is Chapter 2.*

## Chapter 2

### TITLE OF CLUB AND OFFICERS: ITS OBJECTS AND AIMS



Appended below are the first two rules in the Club Rule Book:

1. The name of the Club shall be "The Southampton Master Mariners' Club", with sub-title "The Cachalots".
2. The object of the Club is to maintain and foster, locally, social and professional comradeship amongst Master Mariners and so afford the opportunity for discussion of matters of nautical and general interest, and for that purpose to meet weekly at lunch except during the months of July and August, at a place selected by the Committee. To provide, in so far as may be possible, a convenient meeting place for members at all times.



The Club titles and duties are as follows:

"The Captain of the Club", is the Chairman.

"Cachalots" are the fully-qualified Master Mariners (Foreign-going) certificated members.

"The Shore Staff Captain", is the Captain's Deputy. "The Sea Staff Captain", is the Captain's Deputy afloat.

"The Boatsteerer", is the Honorary Secretary. He always wears a miniature silver oar in his coat lapel.

"The Storekeeper", is the Honorary Treasurer.

"The Harpooners" are the members voted on to the various sub-committees of the Club.

"Associate Members" are members holding valid Board of Trade Certificates of Competency inferior to that of Foreign-going Master Mariner at the time of their application.

"Messmates" are persons who, in the opinion of the Selection Committee, are suitable to become members of the Club by virtue of their connection with the sea and ships.

"Honorary Shanteyman." This is no sinecure. He is the one who leads the Mariners and Messmates in singing their time-honoured sea-shanties at their breezy Annual "Seapie" Suppers. Dependant on his musical talents, the Shanteyman comes in for a considerable amount of ribald, if friendly, comments!

"Stowaways" are persons whose national status or service to the Country is, in the opinion of the Club Committee, such as to render it desirable that they should be made honorary life members of that special section of the Club. This exalted rank is sparingly conferred - only on a select few, and those few do not necessarily have to have direct connection with the sea.



Those early Committee meetings must have been lively affairs, because in a comparatively short time they made many important decisions.

First among these was the Club motto: "*IN OMNI A PARATIS*". This was naturally suggested by the fact that all the Founder Members held positions in which it was their paramount duty to ensure that the ships for which they were responsible, were, in fact, "IN ALL RESPECTS READY AND PREPARED".

After this they designed the Club badge - "A Cachalot whale spouting, surmounted by a naval crown and encircled by a heraldic belt having the Club motto beneath it".

Designing the Club tie was the next decision. The tie colours were based on the dark blue of the Merchant Navy uniform, the gold of the rank stripes, and the red of the Red Ensign. It was not possible to design the tie with the gold and red stripes running diagonally across a dark blue field, as they would have much desired, since it was discovered that this combination had already been adopted by another organisation, and the Club therefore compromised by making the gold stripe, shot with thin red bars, run diagonally across a blue background.

The Messmates, who incidentally were welcomed to the Club a few years later, wear a similar tie, but with a thin white edging to the diagonal stripes.

By June 1928 the Club completed their emblematic decisions by adopting as their flag, the Union Jack with the Club badge superimposed on the centre. During the summer months of 1928 much of the Club's programme had got under way, and it soon became very evident that the "Club" idea had really caught on. By now over 300 Master Mariners had joined. Many of these were from distant parts of the world and included American, Dutch, French and German Shipmasters as well as, naturally, Masters and Officers of our own country's passenger and cargo vessels, yachts and even ferry-boats. Many old Master Mariners, "long hauled ashore", and now in "landlubberly" jobs, eagerly joined the young Club.

Southampton pilots have been very enthusiastic members of the Club from the start, and have worked hard in its interests, several of them becoming Captains of the Club. In fact, one pilot, Arthur Gadd, a former Cunard choice pilot, served as Captain of the Club for three successive years during the late war.

During the first year Club membership increased rapidly. The weekly luncheon meetings were well attended, with excellent speakers, some of whom were Club members, but most were from the neighbouring Royal Naval establishments. The lectures were principally on such subjects as Merchant Navy Convoys; Naval Control of Ports; Anti-submarine and Navigational Tactics; the Training of Young Officers, etc.

As the Club's activities expanded it was found desirable to invite friends of members, as well as their womenfolk to come into the picture by organising Whist Drives, Dinner Dances and other social functions, all of which proved to be happy and successful occasions. In fact these early Cachalots' social events before long became the most popular of their kind in the port, and served, incidentally, the important function of bringing together cordially the Port and Town for the first time.

Advancing further socially, it was decided to hold an Annual Banquet to which eminent shipping and national personalities from all walks would be invited, as well as local notabilities.

For many years these pleasant functions have been held principally on board one of the large liners by courtesy of the shipping companies, who by the way, have invariably been good friends of the Club throughout its history. These Banquets, as they were called, proved to be sounding-boards for the expression of nautical opinion on matters of real interest and concern to the Merchant Navy, and not infrequently to the country

itself. The well-informed views expressed the policy to be adopted in the event of another war- unhappily soon to break out. (These were the years immediately prior to 1939.)

Many of the views expressed, so far as the Merchant Shipping was concerned, were evidently taken to heart in high quarters and before long a well-organised liaison between the Royal and Merchant Navies became part of the scheme of things-and it is pleasant to report here that this link continues to thrive happily in major British seaports today.

It was felt desirable to invite the association of national figures with the Club, and thus with the Merchant Navy in general; and so the exalted rank of "Stowaway" was instituted, to be only sparingly conferred on a highly select few whose fame was of national status, but were not qualified to become members as they were not holders of Certificates of Competency as Masters of Foreign-going ships (always a sine qua non) of full Club Membership. Steps to this end were taken and a formidable list of "Stowaways", of which the Club is justly proud, now graces the Club's Membership Book.

As the Club became more solidly established it grew increasingly clear that some more permanent premises as headquarters were necessary where members could meet at any time in a place of their own, and receive and fully entertain visiting shipmasters and other members of the seagoing fraternity.

By mid-1931 the Club's membership had risen to nearly 500, and it was happily fortuitous that just about this time the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company were closing down their Officers' Residential Club which for many years had occupied the upper floors of Royal Mail House, Southampton. This had been used by Officers when their ships were in the port of Southampton. The Master Mariners' Club was therefore able to obtain tenure of some of the vacated rooms at a reasonable rent and adapt them to their own requirements.

The present Club Long Room came into full use in 1932. It is perhaps fitting to note here that after four years of luncheon-only meetings, at the now defunct South Western Hotel and Committee meetings held at different venues, including some meetings at the Board of Trade offices, the Club as such finally settled down permanently in the building which was its birthplace - Royal Mail House-and the Mariners' Long Room has thus, in fact,

been an Officers' Club for well over half a century now. During that time its ships'-crested walls must have listened privately, and publicly, to many a strange tale of the sea and of escapades in distant lands!

In furnishing the new quarters the Club was given a very generous hand by the Cunard Company through whose courtesy they were enabled to purchase a good number of chairs, tables and carpets, etc. (ex Cunard liners) at a nominal cost, and thus the Club launched its new venture with well-appointed accommodation.

With more elbow-room now at their disposal they welcomed the opportunity to invite friends and colleagues who, though not eligible as "Cachalots", to become "Messmates". This very happy association with colleagues in the wide-ranging activities of the world of shipping has proved not only pleasant, but very valuable. Ever since their inception our Messmates have proved staunch supporters of the Club and its social activities as well as generous contributors to its funds.

In a letter dated May 1957, from Founder Member the late Captain W. V. J. Clarke (a former Captain, and Boatsteerer of the Club, 1930-35) to Captain Guy Farniloe (present Storekeeper), he mentioned, inter alia, that, "During the dark days (1939-45) when most of the Club members were away on Active Service or 'otherwise engaged', it was largely the Messmates who kept the Club flag flying". In this respect it is only fitting, before their memory becomes too remote to pay grateful tribute here to such stalwarts as Colonel Dawe, Reg. Parrott, Postmaster Bell, and Rex Stranger (former Mayor of Southampton), all alas! with the exception of the latter, now no longer with us.

It was the cheerful and unstinting help of those and other Messmates in those dark and anxious days when the Club was almost on its beam-ends that saved it from foundering altogether.

The author has it from an unimpeachable source, that on a certain bleak morning during this grim period one of the above-mentioned Messmates, on hearing from a fellow member of the parlous state of the Club's finances, walked straight into the Boat-steerer's office and wrote out a personal cheque on the spot, sufficient to clear all the Club's rental arrears up to that moment!



## What I've been reading

An old colleague and fellow Cachalot lent me a volume, “**I think I'll go to sea**” by Bob Jackson.

Bob, who was born in 1941, went to sea as an apprentice with Port Line and on obtaining his 2<sup>nd</sup> Mates ticket decided to venture further afield than the Australasian run. He went tramping out of the Newcastle pool, working with many different companies on a variety of ships, large and small, carrying multifarious cargoes to and from some ports that I have never even heard of. With a staunch predilection for a cold beer or three and a good run ashore he enjoyed a life at sea that will resonate with many. A bit repetitive in parts, but as Bob himself states, that is the nature of seafaring. With no rhapsodising or sentimentalising about his chosen career, I enjoyed this read, perhaps because it reflects some of my own experiences tramping in the 60's and a world which no longer exists.



When the book disappointingly came to an abrupt end in 1977, I went online and found that Bob had written a follow up book, “**Worse things happen**” which details his subsequent career as master until retirement. He was never a ‘company’s man’ as such, the nearest he got was a twelve year stretch with the Kuwait Shipping Co., (later United Arab Shipping Company). Some of their ships were registered in Saudi Arabia and were alcohol free which threatened to take away his pleasure of a cold beer but like all true British sailors he found ‘ways and means’. This employment ended abruptly in ‘86 when UASC decided to replace all their British officers with cheaper, and probably teetotal, Indian and Pakistani ones. By then the writing was writ large on the wall, with containerisation, standardisation, and increasing micromanagement of the seafaring life by those ashore. He returned to tramping, then dredging in the North Sea before realising that his prudently amassed pension pot would allow for early retirement. During which retirement he attained the dizzy heights of skipper on an Ullswater steam launch, but not before obtaining a Boatsman’s licence, a Foreign Going Masters ticket not being recognised by the local bureaucracy. That took him through to 2010 when he wrote the two books, both of which are published and printed by Amazon, £7.99 for the paperbacks or around £2.30 for the Kindle versions.

Terry Clark

# Mask of Cassandra

**The Maritime *Advocate* online Issue 771 February 12th 2021**

By Michael Grey

Nearly a year into the wretched pandemic and it is difficult to determine any real cheer amid the winter snow. Some fifty odd flag states have queued up to declare their allegiance to the Neptune concordat that defines seafarers as “key workers” but it is clearly a lot easier to sign the bit of paper than to implement its provisions and let these essential folk freely come and go. We perhaps should feel a bit happier that we now live in a PDT (post Donald Trump) era, but as I read President Biden’s prescription for mandatory mask wearing aboard all commercial vessels, it didn’t seem that an age of sweetness and light had dawned.

It seemed an odd thing to be decreeing, so very early in his presidency, beset with so many national and international problems, with the US Coast Guard now tasked to ensure compliance. But then, fear of disease being imported from over the seas has pretty well become internationally entrenched and largely accounts for the less than charitable treatment of seafarers during this past miserable year. So we shouldn’t necessarily suggest that the US is being any more prescriptive, now that mask refusnik Trump is out of the way, than any other country.

From the accounts of pilots and others who board ships regularly, seafarers have been disciplined wearers of Covid-protective clothing when they are encountered. At the same time one should not forget that for a seafarer a ship is his or her home away from home and the authorities maybe ought not to be too intrusive about the wearing of masks, once the ship is free from the land. That is especially the case when they find it so hard to get to their real homes and have to overstay their contracts by weeks or months. You would like to think that they could remove them to eat or drink, and sleep unencumbered. I would hope this might be made clear in the small print of the President’s requirements and the Coast Guard’s more detailed prescriptions.

Mind you, as the pandemic progresses and the variants become more various, the protocols become more bizarre. Just today I was reading some scientist was suggesting to counter a new especially virulent strain, we should wear two masks at once. Even if this prevents the bugs either coming

or going, surely it would gradually bend one's ears forward, so that after another year of this nonsense, the whole population would be bat-winged. And would two masks be enough, as the fast-mutating virus procreates?

There was an article by a working pilot describing how the pleasure of his working day was diminished by all this mask-wearing and lack of human contact. A smile and a handshake on boarding and leaving a ship, along with an offer of a cup of coffee – all things of the past, but how much to be regretted. It's the same for everyone, but mumbling through a mask and trying to transmit expression with one's eyes is a measure of our misery, as we obey our governments' dictats and recall our lost freedoms.

Perhaps most depressing is the way that the slightest prospect of better things ahead is so immediately and firmly sat on by the scientists who have been grotesquely empowered by the pandemic to rule our lives. Some cheerful news about the "roll-out" of vaccines is instantly refuted by some laboratory rat who bustles forward in his white coat to tell us that our misery must continue regardless, probably for years ahead, according to some gloom relishing scientific Cassandra on the radio the other day.

You must take your amusement where you can find it. Mine is in observing the degree of "social distancing" that is observed on our pavements when taking our permitted dose of daily exercise. Of an age, and carrying a stick, I find that there are those who will leap into the gutter or even cross the road rather than invade my two metre "separation zone". One exceptionally zealous mask-wearer jumped into the road with such alacrity that he was nearly flattened by a truck. Had the driver been less alert, he would have been able to comfort himself, with his dying breath, that his Covid precautions had been obeyed to the last.

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## Gone Aloft

### Cdr Rupert Thomas Nicholas Best DL RN

Rupert Best, who went aloft on 3rd February, aged 77, served in the submarine service from Lieutenant (1966) to Commander (1989) and was Captain of HMS COURAGEOUS during the Falklands War. He was a Younger Brother of Trinity House and later became a Director of Portland Port and Deputy Lieutenant of Dorset.

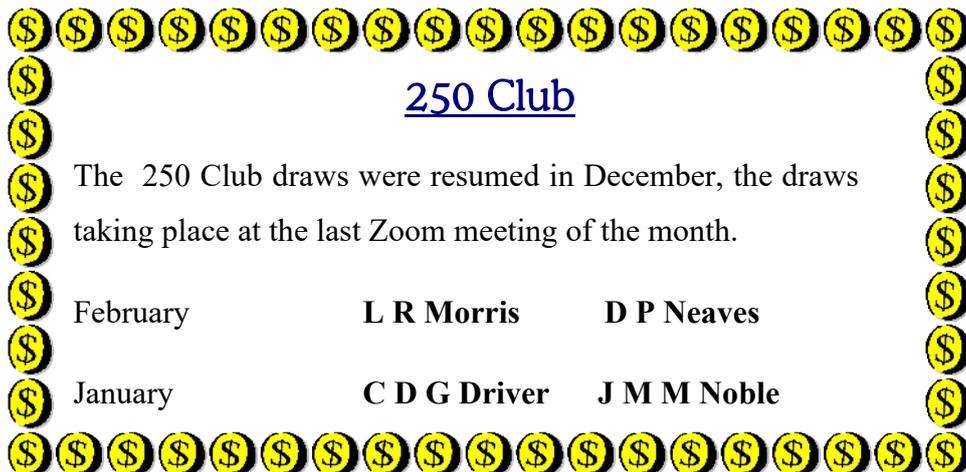
### Robert D Seago

Bob Seago, who went aloft on Christmas Day last, served his time as an apprentice draughtsman at Swan Hunter's shipyard at Wallsend on Tyneside before being called up for National Service in the RAF. He returned to Swan Hunter and then became a Dept of Transport Ship Surveyor based in the Newcastle upon Tyne office.

After he moved south he joined The Cachalots as a Messmate in 1986. He was then Principal Ship Surveyor at the D.O.T. He served as a Harpooner on the then Church Committee until 1999.

He was for many years an active Mason in Craft and Chapter as well as being in Rose Choir and Knights Templar. He was organist in many Lodges.

Bob developed dementia in his later years and was looked after at his home in Chandlers Ford by his two daughters, Pauline and Jillian. He will be missed, particularly by his near neighbour, fellow widower and long time friend of over 60 years, Cachalot Tommy Turner.



250 Club

The 250 Club draws were resumed in December, the draws taking place at the last Zoom meeting of the month.

February	L R Morris	D P Neaves
January	C D G Driver	J M M Noble

## 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 thirty-two members.

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)



## Read it on your Kindle too

We can also send a copy of these newsletters, (including ALL the previous ones, on request) direct to your Kindle device, as well as to your normal email address.

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.

## The CACHALOTS

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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  
19th March 2021**



**WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH**

### Zoom Meeting

Again, of the Dorset branch of the World Ship Society

**2.30pm, Saturday, March 13th 2021 ~**

**Union-Castle Purserette ~ with Ann Haynes**

**... lavender hulled ships sailed weekly from Southampton to  
South Africa ... see Transvaal Castle & more ...**

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our February event ... everyone on our circulation list will be sent a Zoom Invitation Link about a week beforehand ... but do make sure its in your diary.

If you are not yet on that list, visit their website [shipsdorset.org](http://shipsdorset.org) and follow the links.

With increasing interest in the Branch and its online initiatives and events during the pandemic, they seek to finance some of their increased costs by inviting donations from those who would support them.

Again, explained on their website. [Here](#)