

# ***The CACHALOT***

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

---

**No 89**

**Digital Edition**

**June 2021**

---

## Captain's Log

As I am sitting down to write this month's Captain's column, the country seems to be holding its breath, waiting to see whether Step 4, the final easing of COVID restrictions, will happen as anticipated on 21 June, or not. On the one hand are those desperate to return to 'normal', with retailers in the hospitality sector asking for an early decision so they can start hiring the extra staff needed for the surge of customers the great Unlock will bring. On the other hand, are those scientists cautioning that the up-tick in COVID cases over the last two weeks is clear evidence that we are at the start of a third wave. Whichever camp they are in, and as the pictures from the country's beaches show, many postponed judgment and simply made the most of the Bank Holiday weekend and the fine weather.

After 16 months watching the COVID lockdown pendulum swing from one extreme to the other I have learned not to make predictions, especially about the future. However, I was reminded this morning that some people have other things to worry about, and that the hazards of the global shipping industry remain ever present. Depressingly, the following accidents, drawn from the shipping press, have all occurred in the last three weeks:

May 19 – Cyclone Tauktae hit the west coast of India, breaking the accommodation barge *Papaa 305* from its moorings and driving it into an offshore platform. Of the 261 people on board, 186 have been rescued with the remainder either confirmed dead or missing.

May 20 – the container vessel *X-Press Pearl* caught fire off Colombo. While the 25 crew were successfully evacuated, despite extensive fire-fighting efforts the blaze could not be brought under control and as of 31 May the vessel was almost burned out.

May 28 – the chemical carrier *Ulsan Pioneer* and the car / vehicle carrier *Byakka* collided in the Kurushima Strait, Japan. *Byakka* capsized following the collision: nine of the 12 crew were rescued, but three remain missing.

Despite being an island nation, dependent upon the sea for 95% of its imports (by volume), I am always surprised at how little coverage shipping receives and how, as a nation, we have become sea-blind. As members of the Master Mariners Club we understand the importance of shipping. That said, as we wait for news of Step 4 and whether we can get back to our Club Rooms, I would ask that we keep in mind the seafarers who, even in 2021, still face significant hazards plying their trade.

Keep safe

Andrew Moll, Club Captain

## Plans to return to the RBL Club Room

At the present time, the government intends to remove all restrictions from social gatherings with effect from Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021. It is therefore hoped we will be able to resume use of the Club room from the latter end of that week.

The first use will be for a meeting of the management committee, for those who are able and wish to attend, on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June at 1115. Provision will be made for a Zoom option as well.

**It is hoped to have our first social gathering of those members who wish to attend the club room the following day, Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June.**

I have spoken with the Archie, RBL Secretary. The RBL will be undertaking a deep clean of the whole club, including our room.

I have also spoken with Liz, our bar-lady and made her day by providing news of our return.

Although it is the intent that all restrictions will be removed from 21<sup>st</sup> June, I consider it will remain prudent to adopt a careful strategy for our return, at least for the first four weeks to gain confidence.

As a guide I intend that our protocol will include the following:

RBL will be completing a deep clean of the room prior to our return,

Liquid sanitizer will be provided by RBL and available at the main door and at the entrance to our club room for use by all,

Members proceed directly from entrance to our club room,

Some windows will be open to enhance air circulation,

Members may wear a facemask if they wish to,

Option for bar person (Liz) to wear mask,

Limited access to the office area for Club Officers only until Archie and ourselves are comfortable in members doing so.

Normal arrangements for use of toilet facilities will be available,

Take account of any additional measures HMG may provide.

## Contents

- 01 Captain's Log**
- 02 Plans to return to the RBL Club room**
- 03 Contents**
- 04 Boatsteerer's Locker**
- 05 Letters to the Editor**
- 07 Stuff happens**  
Comment from Michael Grey, Sea-Trade Maritime, May 2021
- 09 Travels with AH**  
A new book, and an offer, from Colin Crimp
- 12 Operation Pedestal**  
Details of a Zoom webinar
- 14 Losing Patience**  
More comment from Michael Grey, The Maritime Advocate, Issue 778 21st May
- 16 A new lease of life for the Calshot?**  
Latest news from Richard Hellyer
- 20 Size matters**  
More comment from Michael Grey, Ship & Offshore Repair Journal, Apr/May 2021
- 22 Captain Ken**  
Column by Ken Owen
- 24 Keeping pilots safe**  
More comment from Michael Grey, The Maritime Advocate, Issue 777 7th May
- 26 Cachalots & Messmates**  
Chapter 3 of the 1973 history of the Club
- 32 Farming today**  
More comment from Michael Grey, Baird Maritime, Workboat World, 24th May
- 34 250 Club**



## Boatsteerers' Locker

The changes in weather between April and May, last year and this just show what a diverse and wonderful place 'Old Blighty' is to live. With good timing for the current rain I laid weed and feed on the lawns on Friday so no doubt the mower will be pressed into full service once the sun comes out again in the following week.

Thanks to some doubtful dithering and decisions by our Dear Leader in relation to a 'variant of concern', it seems there may be a possibility of amendment to our aspirations of a return to the club room in June. I had hoped to issue an update on how we intend to manage the return to the club room on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June but I will wait for further announcements and will update all members once we know for sure what is allowed. (*But see page 2*)

The **250 Club** draw continues to be made by our independent Office Administrator Richard and his wife Jill at their home with a live phone call for Zoom attendees to listen to at our Friday Zoom gathering. The draw results for April and May are included in this edition of the Digital Cachalot.

The next draw was made at midday during the Zoom gathering on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May with the next draw being made on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June, hopefully at the club room, if not then by Zoom again on the same day at midday.

**Sea Pie Supper 2022** – Following discussion and negotiation with SaintsEvents, we have concluded a contract for the Sea Pie Supper, to be held at St. Mary's Stadium on **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022**.

At current costings we intend to keep the ticket prices at 2020 levels (£53 members, £65 guests). Tickets will go on sale in mid-November and information will be available on the Cachalots website and through the digital Cachalot.

We provided an update to corporate groups who have joined us in the past and we have been pleased with the positive responses of support in returning to the Sea Pie Supper in 2022.

I hope June comes with some 'flaming' warmth for you all rather

than the rain and winds we have experienced through May.

In the meantime, keep well.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

## Letters to the Editor

### It's not a war

In Cachalot 88, May 2021 there was an article by Michael Grey about prudence and caution these days being overtaken by management demands for speed and profit. His third paragraph discussed the fact that years ago masters were expected by their managements to show that prudence and caution in the passage and operation of their vessels, and would not question his decisions in that regard. This reminded me of an interesting incident when I was second mate on a general cargo ship.

It was in October 1968 that we arrived in Montreal with a cargo of bulk sugar from Mauritius. We already had a further charter to load grain in Quebec for the UK, so it was vital that as each hold was empty it was washed out and, in the cold temperature at the time, to dry the holds out with industrial fan heaters, which took some time. Because of this the grain charterers asked the master to do the passage down to Quebec without ballasting the deep tank to avoid loss of time loading the grain.

The master was not happy with this request, but did not wish to be obstructive to the charterers. He therefore discussed this with the Chief Officer and myself, and after finding that the weather forecast was calm we jointly agreed to do it so long as the charterers provided two tugs to escort us on the passage, which they were happy to do, and the passage went without incident.

On arrival in the UK we all went on leave and all three of us re-joined for the next voyage. During a social discussion one day the master recounted to us that when he went for the routine end of voyage briefing at head office he was asked about this decision. He explained the situation, and the management reaction was that safety remained the paramount consideration and if this arose again to ballast the deep tank and if the charterer didn't like it to refer him to them and they would sort him out.

It was occasions like this that made us all realise what a good company we worked for.

Barry Peck

### A cry for help

Will you be so kind as to publish the attached photograph in *The Cachalot* together with a request to Members as to whether they recognise this Cap Badge and hence the name of the Shipping Company for which it formed part of their livery?



As opposed to the Cross of Lorraine a feature of the Free French Navy in World War 11, I believe this to be a Christian Cross which serves as an emblem for the Office of the Pope in ecclesiastical heraldry.....but I do not know of a Pope with a Shipping Company !!

With very many thanks

Stuart

Captain S J Lawrence MBE RD\* RNR

*It certainly looks like a Papal Cross and perhaps the crossed canons indicate a military affiliation.....Ed*

## New Member

**Simon John Parker** is a Southampton Pilot who started his marine career on coasters and sailed as master on coasters, self-dischargers and pure car carriers. He is a qualified Class 1 Master Unlimited.

He spent seven years as a marine pilot in Great Yarmouth before moving to Southampton where he is currently 2nd Class, having now completed two years of the typically 4 to 5 year training programme.

Before moving to Southampton he was much involve with Karate and working towards blue belt but unfortunately the opportunity to take it back up has so far been stalled by Covid. His other hobby is snooker and pool and he has played premier league pool for some years.

He joins the Club to hopefully spend some time with like minded professionals.

## Stuff happens

### **Seatrade Maritime Opinion and Analysis May 2021**

As negotiations continue between the Suez Canal administration and the various parties which represent the owners of the giant containership *Ever Given*, the ship and her cargo continue to broil in the growing summer heat of the waterway. While the amount demanded by the waterway authority has been reduced by about one third, indicating some movement, it might be suggested that there is some distance to go, and one must hope that the crew of the arrested vessel don't end up as the newest members of the Great Bitter Lakes' Association. This it may be recalled is the society formed by the crews of the ships which spent many years in that location, when the canal was closed in the 1970s.

Nobody ought to be too judgemental in the absence of any coherent report of what caused the chartered Evergreen ship to run into the bank and cause mayhem to the smooth working of global logistics. But the action of detaining the ship against the payment of what was a staggering sum, will not have made the SCA many friends. This is, after all, a major customer of the waterway, responsible for a respectable slice of its income and this is arguably not the sort of action a customer ought to expect from its service provider, if custom is to be retained.

A large ship blocking the waterway in a length of the canal that has not been "double-tracked" is surely not an altogether unforeseen accident. And if indeed it was the weather – a combination of sandstorm and fierce gusts that blew the ship ashore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the operational management of the waterway should have mitigated the risks, by postponing transits for large and vulnerable ships, or by requiring tugs to be used to aid steering. It is notable that other waterways, such as the St. Lawrence Seaway, will routinely require ships to tie up in dangerous cross-wind conditions.

The canal authorities have been at pains to point out that the master of a ship retains full responsibility for its conduct throughout the transit, the pilots merely supplying advice. But in an exceedingly dynamic situation where the pilots are directly giving helm and engine movements on a second by second basis, it is facile to suggest that there is no shared responsibility. This is difficult and demanding ship-handling, requiring judgement and

experience and not unreasonable to expect that the pilots will be suitably qualified.

But in the handling of big ships in demanding conditions, accidents occasionally happen and it is a time for being reasonable, not taking action that will make matters worse. There is a perfectly good international mechanism that would have seen the ship released, subsequent to any arguments about damages and liability. As it remains, there is the best part of a billion dollars' worth of cargo which is not getting to its destination and probably deteriorating. The consignees of all those container contents are customers too.

You struggle to discover precedents that have ended up in such a fashion. Accidents on the busy Kiel Canal are not unusual, but do not usually end up with ships being arrested, even after locks have been damaged. There was one memorable incident many years ago on the St. Lawrence Seaway, when a Manchester Liner's ship failed to stop and rammed a lock gate causing the waterway to be shut for an extended period. It was caused by a tiny bolt in the controllable pitch propeller controls shearing at the crucial moment, which you could hardly blame on the master. And while the maximum amount of inconvenience was caused to all those ships unable to use the waterway, insurers paid for the dock damage, not loss of income from tolls, or consequential losses by other frustrated customers. Everyone knew that when big ships move about in confined spaces, occasionally stuff happens.

**Published with the kind permission of the editor of Seatrade-Maritime**  
**[www.seatrade-maritime.com](http://www.seatrade-maritime.com) and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey.**  
***[rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk](mailto:rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk)***

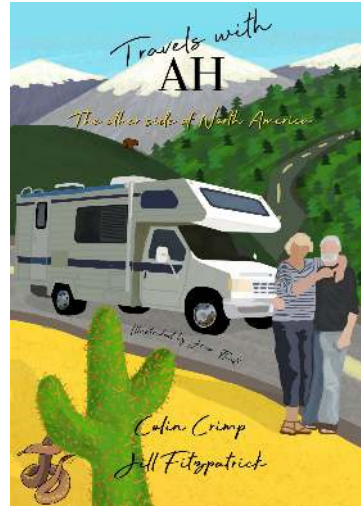




## Travels with AH

*Cachalot Colin Crimp has written a book on his and his partner Jill Fitzpatrick's travels through North America over 11 summers to 2019.*

*Here is the Foreword*



My daughter, Josephine, is a librarian and it's all her fault.

I only call her Josephine when she's clearly guilty of something, normally it's just Josie. Well, why would you forsake a perfectly reasonable library in Croydon to work in the boondocks of Central Mexico?

And spend a year working for nothing?

*Well actually, Dad, there's a big orphanage in a place called Miacatien and there's no proper library for 500 children and they really need one so I've started learning Spanish and then I'm going.*

Faced with such an ultimatum, you don't argue with Josie.

I promised to go there at some point and visit her.

Mind you, Andy has to take some of the blame. If he hadn't married Debbie from Texas then he wouldn't now be living in the town of Midlothian, near Dallas. And it wouldn't have gradually dawned on me that Texas is right next to Mexico.



I'd always fancied the idea of a road trip, but my naive and over-romantic brain hadn't really thought it through – if someone had offered me an old Chevy pick-up truck with a double mattress thrown in the back I would probably have bought it.

I'd already asked Jilly to come with me on the trip (so maybe the pick-up and mattress idea was never going to fly) and research had seemed to indicate that Mexico might be a somewhat lawless place at times. We therefore began to discuss self-defence and how easy it would be to buy a firearm in any Walmart store in Texas. But the argument that '*carrying a firearm invites someone to shoot at you*' carried the day and our attention turned to procuring a baseball bat instead. No, that's a bit too *American*. We needed something a bit more, well, *English*. And so it was that, in 2009, we arrived in Texas carrying a well-oiled cricket bat – and a well-polished cricket ball to go with it.

What we hadn't accounted for was the intervention of the Swine 'Flu virus. Before long, the US/Mexico border was virtually closed. The Mexican part of the plan had to be shelved - 'to be achieved by other means.' This road trip would be North of the Border and not Down Mexico Way. Now, all we needed was a vehicle in which to do it. And it had to be cheap.



After scouring all the nearby motorhome dealers and then the small-ads in the local Midlothian paper there were, it seemed, only two motorhomes for sale which were sufficiently old and, therefore, sufficiently cheap.

One was a private sale, an old Chevy (well, there you are then), 1988, with 98,000 miles on it. The other was from a dealer, an old Ford, 1996, with 30,000 miles on it. My resident *voice of reason* pointed out that the Chevy had only 'lap-type' seat belts which would therefore have to be changed. In addition, she pointed out that the choice between a vehicle 21 years old with 98,000 on the clock and one 13 years old with only 30,000 on the clock is a 'no-brainer' unless you're a complete idiot.

The final negotiations for the purchase of the Ford began the next day. They were interesting. It was clearly a trade-in to be got rid of quickly as it was bringing down the tone of the establishment that had a showroom full of very large, very shiny, mega-expensive bus-sized motorhomes. The salesman was extremely tall, tanned and very Texan, complete with Stetson hat, drooping moustache, a pony-tail (in a hair-net!) and some very fancy tooling on his high-heeled cowboy boots. And he was dripping with gold – a heavy gold watch on a gold bracelet on his left wrist, a matching heavy gold bracelet on the right wrist, huge gold rings on every finger of both hands and enough gold chains and medallions round the neck to make even 'Mr T' go pale with jealousy.

In addition to all this – he was rude, untruthful and a complete arsehole.

As we drove away Jilly said "We've done it now. What shall we call it?" "We could name it after the salesman," I said, not really thinking it through. Again.

"You mean arsehole?"

And thus, **AH** was born.



What began in 2009 as a 2½-month trip in this old motorhome at the end of which we would just sell and go home – job done – rapidly became a

way of life that was simply too good to stop. One summer eventually became every single summer for 11 years. We sent an email home every now and then, just to let folks know how and where we were. Inevitably, these began to describe the amazing places we found and people we met and, with a bit of editing here and there, they became this manuscript. Each individual chapter can be taken as a separate story and, as such, read in isolation. If we have visited a place more than once, sometimes by intent but more often than not as a total surprise (like being completely lost or having a senior moment), then it may get described again.

But maybe from a different angle?

This s intended to be simply a taster, an 'amuse bouche' to tickle the taste buds, rather than a normal travel guide. Nor is it about the glamour and brashness of 'Flosneywood'. It explores, instead, an altogether gentler and more rudimentary side of the continent. Perhaps it could be described as a journey through the 'Other Side' of **North America**.



Their travels took place over 11 summers from 2009 to 2019 and totalled over 86,000 miles. That's more than 3 times round the earth or, to put it another way, almost a third of the way to the moon.

**AH** covered more or less the whole of North America, every state and every province, from Atlantic Ocean to Pacific, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean and pretty much everywhere else in between.

These travels have all been voyages of discovery – trying to find out what 'off the beaten track' really means, to seek out the places that are rarely visited, the people that are rarely met and the roads that are rarely travelled.

**'Travels with AH' is over 340 pages of history, geography and philosophy with wildlife, geology, a touch of physics and over 550 photographs thrown in.**

Please contact  **Bison Books** at [cdhcrimp@gmail.com](mailto:cdhcrimp@gmail.com) and order your copy for a mere ~~£16.99~~ + P and P (UK £3.70, overseas £10.20)

**Special introductory offer to Cachalots of £12 + P and P !!**


ISBN 978-1-838-2577-3-6

Cash or Bank Transfer with order, please. Sort Code 11-08-54, a/c 00631564

## Operation Pedestal

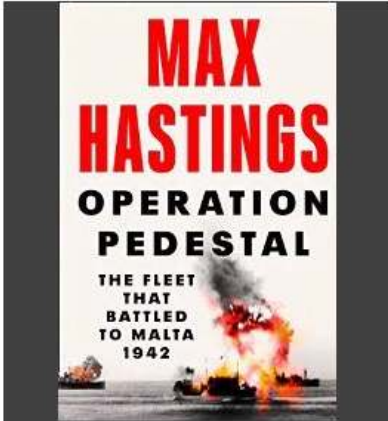
Sir Max Hastings is the author of twenty-seven books and served as editor-in-chief of the Daily Telegraph and editor of the Evening Standard. He has now written a book about Operation Pedestal which was published on the 13th May and received positive reviews in the press, including the Sunday Telegraph [Here](#).

Cachalots may take exception to his comment about *the merchant seamen* who “commanded little respect ashore” and mostly went to sea “because they lacked education to aspire to anything better”. Needless to say, the merchant seamen were in a no-win situation with regard to Pedestal: even if they survived, they would have none of the glory (which was the preserve of the warriors). Yet most of them, says Hastings, “accepted their fate without much fuss”. But I haven’t read the book and this is just a quote from the press, probably taken out of context.




Save The Valletta Skyline Appeal

Sir Max Hastings  
presents  
**Operation Pedestal**  
**The Fleet that Battled to Malta in 1942**  
Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June at 16:00 BST / 17:00 CET



MAX  
HASTINGS  
OPERATION  
PEDESTAL  
THE FLEET  
THAT  
BATTLED  
TO MALTA  
1942

The book has been brilliantly reviewed in the British press this weekend.



Max Hastings is the author of twenty-seven books and served as editor-in-chief of the Daily Telegraph and editor of the Evening Standard.

This is a fundraising event in support of our **Save The Valletta Skyline Appeal**  
**for the restoration of**  
**St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral in Malta.**

The UK fund-raising committee for the restoration of St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, Valletta, have invited us to:

Join us for this riveting Zoom webinar presentation by Sir Max Hastings, celebrated historian, author and journalist who will talk about the Santa Marija Convoy, featured in his new book that was published on 13th May. Sir Max will be with us for a Q & A session following the presentation.

This is a thrilling new account of a critical naval battle, known in Malta as the Santa Marija Convoy, where it is still remembered and celebrated, but little-known elsewhere – one of the most vital operations of World War II, which ensured Malta's survival.

In his signature brilliant style, Max Hastings gives a thrilling narrative of this crucial naval battle, retelling the intense action, which perfectly encapsulates the spirit and power of the Royal Navy, surely the fiercest and most iconic fighting force of WW2.

There is no fee for registration but donations are requested either via the Donate button below or via online transfer to:

Barclays Bank, Soho Square London W1D 3QR

Diocese in Europe Sort Code: 20-06-13 Account No. 40317039

Reference: Operation Pedestal

OR CLICK [HERE](#) TO DONATE

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/savevallettasskyline>

The event is kindly hosted by The Malta Business Network. For further information click on this link

[The Malta Business Network Webinar: "Operation Pedestal - The Fleet that battled to Malta" in conversation with Sir Max Hastings | Malta Business Network](#)

TO REGISTER NOW, CLICK [HERE](#)

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_1\\_7abr-tTvmEKCH9twpixA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1_7abr-tTvmEKCH9twpixA)

For more information on the Save The Valletta Skyline Appeal click [here](#)  
<https://stpaulspromalta.org/restoration>

*This information was previously circulated by Cachalite to enable those members who wish to attend to register in good time.*

## Losing patience

**The Maritime *Advocate* online Issue 778 May 21st 2021**

**By Michael Grey**

There will be few seafarers today who sail off to the Gulf of Guinea with a light heart and cheerful demeanour, any more than they did a couple of hundred years ago, when disease was endemic along its shores. It is a different sort of blight today, with the depredations of kidnap gangs from the Niger Delta inflicting a miserable sort of existence on those aboard every merchant ship entering these waters.

People go to sea to make an honest living in an essential trade and don't expect to be dragged from their ships by violent, heavily armed gangs, subsequently to be held ashore in frightful conditions against the payment of ransom. Last year in this area, this was the fate of more than 120 seafarers and there is no sign of any improvement, understandably perhaps, with the range of problems currently afflicting Nigeria from the delta to the far north of that large country.

It is tempting to compare the Gulf of Guinea piracy with that off Somalia, which was effectively suppressed by armed guards on merchant ships and international naval patrols. But whereas Somalia was a failed state, Nigeria is not and remains jealous of its sovereignty over its offshore waters, a not unreasonable attitude. What other sovereign state would agree to effectively surrender its sovereign powers, no matter how aggravating the situation might be to those whose ships have been victims of piracy? And compared to what the Nigerian authorities are combating in the north of the country, where hundreds have been killed and kidnapped by Islamist militants, the offshore problems constitute a low-level irritant.

It is nevertheless increasingly intolerable to the international shipping industry and a measure of this impatience is to be found in the Gulf of Guinea Declaration on Suppression of Piracy which was signed by no fewer than 99 maritime companies, organisations and flag states, on the day it was launched. Indeed getting together this level of support is a pretty good demonstration of the fact that any patience with the situation has been unequivocally lost.

It appears that any attempts to persuade the Nigerian government to change its stance on armed guards is now regarded as a lost cause, and the



Declaration makes it clear that suppression of the Gulf of Guinea pirates is a matter for navies, operating in international waters off this dangerous coast. Can some coalition of governments now step up to the plate and provide the relatively modest rotation of frigates and aircraft which it is believed can keep shipping safe? And can the Nigerian government be part of this strategy, providing the landside logistics and more importantly, the prosecution of the malefactors?

Senior naval officers like to emphasise that the “protection of merchant shipping on its lawful business” is an important and fundamental auxiliary role to that of warfighting. Well, there can be no doubt that shipping off the coasts of Nigeria badly needs naval protection and one can only hope that the strength of feeling represented by this Declaration will register with responsible governments, whose ships, and citizens go in fear of their lives. The authors do point out that the aim is to work with Nigeria and that country will itself be one of the economic winners, if this scourge can be eradicated.

You might also argue that it is pretty sad if the shipping industry has to produce such a statement of the obvious, and that governments around the world have so far been unable to take the protection of merchant shipping seriously. But maybe it is not surprising, with the curious way in which the governance of international shipping has developed over the past half century.

Nevertheless, as we have seen with the pandemic, when the lives and welfare of seafarers have been taken for granted as governments assume that the exports and imports they depend upon will be carried regardless, it is a reasonable question to ask – whether this timely and important intervention will have its desired result?



One sailor was killed and 15 were kidnapped from the Turkish container ship MOZART on 23rd January when armed pirates boarded the ship in the Gulf of Guinea and breached its protective citadel.



## A new lease of life for the Calshot?

*The 'Calshot' was launched in 1929 as a tug tender for Red Funnel. She had a passenger certificate for 566 and would frequently be used as a relief vessel on the excursion services.*

*During the war she was taken up for Admiralty service in Scapa Flow, tendering to battleships. Returned to the Red Ensign in '42 she tendered to the Queens and other ships in the Clyde. She returned to Southampton in '44 for 'D' Day ops, transporting*

*sections of the Mulberry Harbour and also served as a 'non-assault HQ ship', being the last survivor of the vessels so designated.*

*After a post-war refit she returned to service in '46 sporting a pleasing pear-shaped cowl topped funnel.*

*In '64 she was sold to a subsidiary of Holland America Line, converted from steam to diesel and used for the servicing of liners such as the Maasdam and Ryndam. For this she was based in Galway Bay, Ireland, and was renamed Galway Bay after her new area of service. She would later be operated by CIE as a ferry between Galway and the Aran Islands.*

*In 1986, Calshot was bought back to Southampton, with the intention of making her the centrepiece of a maritime museum in Ocean Village. In 1991, she was moved to an apparently permanent berth at the Town Quay. But every plan and scheme came to nothing and she ended up on 50 berth, looked after by volunteer members of the TT Calshot Trust and slowly rusting away. At one stage the Club was considering using her as a club-room but access and safety issues foreclosed those plans. In 2017 the MCA declared her unseaworthy and the following year ABP gave her notice to vacate the berth but extended their deadline while negotiations over her future took place.*

*Cachalot **Richard Hellyer** has been closely involved with both the Calshot and the ST Challenge and takes up the story.*

### **Tug Tender Calshot.**

Many years of serious attempts were made to get her to a place where she could be restored, but it looked as if the only place she was going, was the Harry Pounds scrap yard..!



Passing Ocean Village on the way to James' Wharf on 25th May.  
Photo: Daily Telegraph



Many false dawns, with hopes raised and subsequently dashed.

Then, whilst I was supervising the Challenge dry-docking at Hythe, I was approached by a gentlemen looking for a project..!

The Calshot was mentioned, but I thought nothing more of it.

The next I heard, was that a serious offer to take on the Calshot, had been made by the owner of Woodshack.

The Directors at that time, decided that the offer was not appropriate, and declined it.

At this point I offered to take up the cudgels, as one does, to get this decision reversed, as the only other option available to us , was to send her to scrap.

The “Directors at the time” were asked to retire, which they did, and I took the Chair, with 2 new Directors.

Woodshack were asked to re-submit their offer, which they did, and which we immediately accepted.

Many meetings and much paperwork rapidly followed, and £1.00 was offered by Woodshack, in exchange for the ownership of one Tug Tender Calshot as is, where is, on berth 50.

The TTCTrust therefore became redundant as it no longer has any assets.

I am in the process of closing the Trust down.

The Calshot was removed from Berth 50 on the 25th May and is now resident with Woodshack, on the Itchen.

Her future as I am led to understand, is that she will be stripped out and re-stored as a “private yacht”, in line with the modern day MCA requirements.

As much of her history as possible will remain on board, and we hope that her shape and colour can be retained.

It is considered that a three year period will be required to achieve this end.



Heading towards St. Mary's stadium



ST Challenge keeps a watchful eye



Approaching James' wharf

## Steam Tug Challenge.

The ST Challenge languished many a year on 37 berth, as Volunteers dwindled, and the expertise required to operate a steam plant ceased to be available.



Belonging to Dunkirk Little Ships, as she is one of this collection, much effort was put into finding a new owner for her, as the older folk were rapidly falling by the wayside.

A team from London came to visit her, and offered to take her on, as part of their London based collection.

She is a very attractive proposition as she has had a complete refit some years ago, which included the replacement of her old boiler, with a modern Byworth, oil fuel fired boiler.

As part of the preparation for her transfer to London, I was asked to arrange and supervise her dry-docking, here in Southampton.

The dry-docking included a request for a high pressure blast to steel, which proved of interest, as a few holes appeared here and there.!

These sorted, along with a variety of other problems, and she was returned to the water. (*See Cachalot 77 June '20*)

At this time the London team advised that, for whatever reason, their interest in her had ceased to be, and that they would not be taking her on.

All the bills were settled, and she returned to being a ship in waiting.

Elsewhere, a young man (CB) was investigating taking on a sister tug to Challenge.

On hearing about the plight of the Challenge, CB requested a visit to view Challenge, which DKLS immediately arranged.

It took CB no more than a guided tour of the tug, to offer to take her on.

The DKLS team set to work, and many meetings and much paperwork later, an agreed sale arrangement was in place, offered to and accepted by CB.

CB is a self-employed professional welder by trade, so the variety of steel related problems posed by Challenge, are not any problem for him.

CB is also a steam Fundi, but involved with the traction engine side of things.

The complexities of the steam plant were very quickly mastered, and CB and his team of young steamers, have had her running and operational for over a year now.

It is planned over the next few years to have her fully up to standard,



Challenge enthusiasts, Richard Hellyer, high-vis, centre

including new wheelhouse, and a galley refurbishment, as the bacon butties on the tug are first class..!

Challenge is open to visit, and she undertakes regular outings, upon which passage is possible.

*Woodshack is a Private Limited Company with no previous history of the restoration of heritage vessels and is owned by a British multi-millionaire financier.*

*However, Richard Hellyer told the Daily Echo that Woodshack would restore Calshot using the skills and expertise of more than 150 people employed by the company.*

*He added: "This will be the first restoration project planned at the refurbished James Wharf facilities, which are just a few hundred yards from where the vessel was built in 1929 at the Thornycroft yard on the River Itchen.*

*James Wharf is currently undergoing extensive development to restore 70,000 sq ft of shipyard to create a world-class centre for restoration.*

*The purchase of TT Calshot by Woodshack is a significant step in the restoration of an iconic ship in Southampton's maritime history.*

*This would not have been possible without the dedication and perseverance of a small group of trustees and volunteers over the past 23 years.*

*She will be sympathetically restored as a repurposed historic ship, which will conform to modern operating standards, whilst maintaining her unique qualities."*



## Size matters

**Ship & Offshore Repair Journal, Dockgate Column, April-May 2021**

By Michael Grey

By the time they had hauled the *Ever Given* off the bank of the Suez Canal, we were all experts in container shipping and its contribution to the supply chain that brings us the stuff we need. So in that respect alone, the grounding and the maritime excitement it brought to the world's media was a welcome intervention, even though it will have container terminal managers around the globe tearing their hair out, as the knock-on effects of the interruption fade away. Until the next big panic, that is.

To convey the sheer size of this monstrous vessel, this being quite difficult for lay people to comprehend, we were provided with the length translated into football pitches, with helpful graphics showing the Evergreen ship juxtaposed with the Empire State building lying on its side. Even the tugs, sitting around waiting for something to happen, looked ridiculously small compared with the sheer bulk of the monster they were called upon to assist.

To me, the best illustration of the sheer scale of the problem came from the pictures of the towering bow of the ship and its huge bulb, around which a tiny digger (which was really quite sizeable) was scraping away the canal bank with commendable energy.

To some people who might be better informed than others about the modern maritime industry, it is just confirmation that these ships are too enormous, vulnerable and cumbersome for their own good. There is just too much of them on top and not enough to balance them under the waterline. They are optimised for the single purpose of cramming as many containers as can be stowed within a 400m length, and at sea, in reasonable weather, at full sea speed.

If the designers were ever taxed about the need to handle them in narrow channels in strong winds or unpredictably gusty conditions, they probably changed the subject rapidly. And as for moving them around in the close confines of ports, festooned in container cranes and other obstructions, their great bow flares and quarter overhangs resemble the shape of a nuclear aircraft carrier on steroids. Put the blooming thing alongside at even a slight angle to the quay and the shiploaders will be toppling like dead flamingos. It doesn't help, of course, that their designers always build to the absolute limit and beyond, just like the old naval architects did when they were drafting 1499grt paragraph coasters on their drawing boards. The 400m length limit was prescribed by the Suez Canal, so they have built to that, give or take a few centimetres. But they feel no compunction about pushing their luck with ports and terminals, where pilots discover that the diameter

of their published turning circles are largely ignored, with bland assumptions about “flexible envelopes” using tidal ranges to facilitate the elasticity of their limits.

If it is possible to squeeze a few more boxes aboard or a few more inches on the channel depth the owners of these monsters will demand to be accommodated. “After all, Mr Port manager, you wouldn’t want us to take our ships away elsewhere, would you?” So the masters of ships and the port pilots will shorten their lives a few years as they employ all their skills and experience to take these behemoths beyond the limitations of what was once termed ship-handling prudence.

What could be done to make the operation of such ships rather less “on the edge” of accidents every time they come near land? You could lower the profile and thus the sail area, simply by not piling the boxes so high. One might suggest that this is done for other reasons, as the cost of this season in the North Pacific is totted up, but just to mildly make such a suggestion will provoke howls from the owners who will tell you that even a couple of tiers fewer than ten will be the difference between a modest profit on a voyage and a disastrous loss. They may well be right.

Port or waterway authorities could be rather more insistent about the number and power of the tugs these ships take, recalling the limitations of the bow thruster and ignoring the pleas of the master who has been told by the office that tugs cost money and his job is on the line if too many are taken. As evidence to back up this demand by the port authority, they might inform themselves of the number of “allisions” and the cost of dead container cranes and dock damages which rather less haste and more tugs might have prevented. And while there is a type of ship owner who will gruffly tell you that is why they have insurance, there should be a firm rejection of such an argument. Tugs are not a luxury when these monsters are loose in confined waters, with their feeble rudders reduced in size to minimise resistance on those long ocean passages.

Maybe some clever designer could think of some device that would increase the rudder area when the ship is operating at low speed. If you inspect the hull of old Nansen’s *Fram* in her museum berth in Oslo, you will see that her rudder can be raised and lowered to minimise the risk of ice damage in her Arctic odyssey. Does that suggest an idea? Presumably these gigantic ships are far too big for a Becker flap rudder, although I bet that if asked something could be devised by energetic manufacturers. Some years ago, I steered an 8000dwt bulker with a Becker rudder down the River Tees and it was like driving a car. The master said it was as good as having a ship with dynamic positioning. But if we are going to see giant ships having giant accidents; and there are more monsters afloat each year, we maybe ought to look –er- outside the box.



## Captain Ken

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

The grounding of the mega sized container ship 'Ever Given', briefly closing the Suez Canal swiftly disappeared from the headline news, once she was under way again.

Although the accident was colossal, I confess to feeling some satisfaction, that due to the worldwide news coverage, people became aware of the importance of the continuous stream of large container ships, which is the basis of world trade as we know it.

As I write, the ship is still being held by the Suez Canal authorities, until a very large payment for expected costs, is received, from the owners.

And what is quite unusual, is that the ship's insurers have declared a state of General Average, which stems from an ancient maritime agreement that requires all the parties that have cargo on the ship must pay towards the costs involved.

The Canal authorities blame the ship's captain for the grounding, even though they supplied two pilots to conduct the Canal passage.

My sympathy is with the captain, as I know, the German management company concerned is of the highest quality, and their staff likely to be the same.

These extremely large ships are very difficult to control when affected by very strong winds, such as occurred on this occasion.

I have transited the Suez Canal a great many times, and know how frightening a sand storm can be, while you are steaming through.

In 1978 when the Suez Canal was re-opened after a long closure following the Israeli war,

I was Chief Officer on the large container ship 'Cardigan Bay' owned by Overseas Containers Limited, a ship with the exact same dimensions as the QE2. The Suez Canal authority claimed that they had now dredged the canal depth to 41 feet, and thus we would be safe to go through with a draft of 38 feet.

Our Captain (a most brilliant Cornish man) told the Fleet management that he didn't think the canal was yet suitable for a ship of our size.

However, as the saving, in cost to the Company, by using the canal rather than going round the Cape was 23 million pounds, The decision was made.

South bound, in the channel, almost exactly where the 'Ever Given,' later came to grief, We Grounded,

We had ripped a huge 150 foot gash in the ship;s bottom and taken a 15 degree list,

All the convoy behind us had to stop, and the Canal authorities were in a panic.

Fortunately, by pumping water between ballast water tanks, we were able to right the ship, reach the Red sea, where we anchored to inspect the damage.

As we suspected, we had struck a rock, which was supposed to have been dredged.

I well remember, that just as the divers began to inspect the bottom of the ship, a large school of sharks appeared. I was desperately worried, but impressed with the divers, who simply flattened themselves against the ships hull when a shark came too close.

We were able to hire a floating crane to shift enough containers to open the hatch lid. and then re-position enough containers to make a cement box over the damaged area, to stop the sea coming in to the hold.

We then requested permission to go back through the Canal to return to Hamburg, where the ship had been built, for permanent repairs,

This was refused, as the Authorities now realised they hadn't dredged the canal as deep as they had claimed.

Fortunately, Mitsubishi ship yard in Kobe, Japan, offered a solution, and we continued our voyage east-bound. at reduced speed, calling at Port Kelang, Singapore, and Hong Kong , to deliver all our containers, an the way.

We dry-docked in Kobe, where a complete double bottom section for the damaged hatch was lowered into place by a giant crane, and the ship continued very successfully, in service for many years.



## Keeping pilots safe

**The Maritime Advocate online Issue 777 May 7th 2021**

*By Michael Grey*

There were some astonishing pictures in the press last week of a Royal Marine employing a jetpack to launch himself from a RIB to land on the deck of a ship with extraordinary precision. You cannot imagine that it would be a feasible proposition to equip pilots with such a device, but it did cross my mind after reading a horrible catalogue of disgraceful seamanship and poor design exhibited in what ought to be the simple matter of keeping pilots safe as they board and leave ships.

These awful examples formed a sizeable section in the Annual Digest of the Confidential Human factors Incident Reporting Programme – CHIRP Maritime – which is well worth closer examination. If you are even slightly concerned with maritime safety, and the interface between people and ships, then this publication ([www.chirpmaritime.org](http://www.chirpmaritime.org)) ought to be compulsory reading.

It ought not to be rocket science (sorry, that jetpack intruded again) to be able to provide safe access to and from ships at sea, but sadly a combination of idiotic short cuts, sloppy seamanship and people designing ships without the foggiest notion of the need for safe pilot access, has combined to make this a problem which just will not go away. Pilots are being killed and injured and frightened half to death on their way to and from work, which is pretty disgraceful when you think about it.

There is no shortage of regulations governing the use of pilot ladders, but the CHIRP articles provide terrible examples of either ignorance of them, or their wilful neglect. There are instances of ladders being damaged, affixed to the ship in all sorts of daft and dangerous ways and allowed to deteriorate to such a stage that they will simply give way. Perhaps worse still, there are examples of obviously illegal and non-compliant arrangements that have not been put in place by stupid crew, but designed into a ship from new in such a fashion. There are, for instance, “impossible” arrangements on ships where there are bulges or belting, which, as well as making boarding jolly dangerous to the pilot, could damage a pilot boat if the ship rolls when the boat is alongside.




Curiously, some of the worst cases seem to involve big, high-sided vessels where a combination of pilot ladder and accommodation ladder must be used, and the pilot must safely switch from one to the other on the ascent or descent. CHIRP reports on some notably cack-handed arrangements involving trapdoors in the gangway platform, such as pilot ladders being suspended from the bottom of the accommodation ladder rather than the ship itself. Several seem to assume that the pilot will have the characteristics of an Olympic gymnast as he swarms up the side.

The pity is that for some years now, there has been a concerted campaign to inform owners and managers, ship operators and seafarers about the “rights and wrongs” of pilot boarding arrangements, with information, posters and advice. Pilots themselves have been encouraged to make it clear that they will not take ships that have unsafe arrangements and good employers are backing them all the way. So there are serious cost implications for the non-compliant if the pilot declines to take the ship.

One of the real problems is that the pilot meeting a ship at sea has to actually get on the ladder before it is realised that the arrangements are fundamentally unsafe. On one “near miss” reported, he had managed three steps only, before the rotten ropes gave way. One of the more gratuitous examples of poor seamanship illustrated by CHIRP was when the pilot reached the top of the ladder, to find it had been “secured” by two very heavy sailors standing on the side ropes. The master of the ship was outraged, but sadly, not at his dim sailors, but at the pilot, for complaining.

You might argue that those ports where there are helicopters employed to ship and land the pilots value their safety rather more, although there is no reason why properly secured and compliant traditional arrangements are not adequate. If you are looking for a rather special system you might consider what they do in the Gulf of Bothnia during winter, where the icebreakers, employed as rather posh pilot boats, use a “cherry picker” mounted on the bow to safely transport the pilot between ships. Jet packs are for the future.

Printed here with the kind permission of  (here)

and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey [rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk](mailto:rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk)



## 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 3.*

### Chapter 3

#### THE CLUB GETS INTO ITS STRIDE



It may be interesting to recall that the Club's first debate after its formation was, "Women's Place on Board Ship". Encouragingly enough, this and many other talks received very wide publicity from the press which thereafter gave very generous coverage to the weekly luncheon discussions, the Club's views as expressed at these debates being quoted universally as 'experienced and authoritative', on all nautical subjects. The Boatsteerer, quite frequently, would receive letters, many of them couched in the pungent phraseology of the sea, from different parts of the world commenting on these debates as reported in the shipping journals of various nations.

A very substantial measure of credit for the excellent publicity given by the press to the Club's professional and social activities during those formative years must go to Mr. Reg. R. Gleave, the Club's Honorary Recorder at that time. His many and strong links with the important shipping press such as "Lloyds List", "The Journal of Commerce" and "Nautical Magazine", in addition to the local "Southern Daily Echo", contributed greatly to the high esteem in which the Club's debates were held. "The Hampshire Advertiser" always accorded a two-column space to Reg. Gleave's report, generally in full, on the Club's luncheon discussions on topical subjects.

An excellent memory and a competence in shorthand contributed to make Gleave's newspaper reports lucid and interesting, and it was only when he was promoted to Editor of "The Southern Evening Echo" that he, reluctantly, expressed a wish to relinquish the Recordship after having chronicled the Club's first 25 years. The Club showed their gratitude by conferring an

Honorary Life Membership on him on 25th March 1953, for his stalwart services to them at a time when it was so greatly needed.

It is appropriate here to mention that the Club was fortunate in having Mr. Arthur Taylor (Shipping Reporter for the "Southern Evening Echo") to take over Mr. Gleave's duties as Club Honorary Recorder. One of the highlights of Taylor's conscientious efforts in this role was the excellent press coverage he obtained in pre-senting the Master Mariners' Plan for The Development of the Port of Southampton in 1963.

A brief review of some of these luncheon-time discussions, which in their day sounded a little *avant garde*, but eventually bore good fruit, might be mentioned here.

Prior to 1930 there was no kind of fog signal between Dock Head and Calshot Spit Light Vessel; and Shipmasters and Pilots navigating up Southampton Water often complained of the difficulty which arose when sudden dense fog descended in that very restricted area. The "hand lead" was of little use as the depths were practically uniform with hardly any variation in the nature of the bottom. This led to a general discussion of the lack of navigational aids in the approaches to the port during low visibility. It is true to say that as a result of this discussion the Harbour authorities had a fog signal established on Fawley Beacon. This, of course, was long before ships were fitted with any kind of electronic aid to navigation whatsoever.

Nowadays this is regarded as commonplace and essential, but it was the Club's public expression of view that brought this useful signal into operation and it established a step forward in the young Club's importance.

Following further discussions on the more distant approaches to the seaport, the Club strongly recommended that there should be a radio beacon placed on the Nab Tower, which had recently replaced the old Nab Lightship.

As a result of these pressing debates at Club level, the Portsmouth Naval Command became sympathetic and before long the Admiralty in conjunction with Trinity House established a radio beacon for direction-finding in fog on the Nab Tower.

Although the D/F radio transmitter on the Nab Tower had a range of only 20 miles it has proved an invaluable aid over the years to ships making up for the Eastern approaches to Spithead and the Dover Straits in low visibility, and, incidentally, blazed the trail for the erection of similar direction-finding beacons throughout the world.

About this time David Logie Baird, the famous electronics engineer, was struggling to obtain help and recognition for his invention which he described as "Direction Finding in Fog". He was invited to use the medium of the Club's debates as a means of laying his ideas before the authorities and shipowners, and staged a series of demonstrations at the weekly Club luncheon debates when Club members expressed themselves very strongly in support.

The Club like to think that Baird derived a lot of useful publicity for his great and ingenious work before his untimely death only a few years later. He did, however, live to see his very advanced ideas blossom into the early stages of Radar, and eventually into Television.

As early as 1928 Baird transmitted "images" to the Cunarder *BERENGARIA* in mid-Atlantic.

Another big and epoch-making discussion was the projected change in helm orders in use in British ships. From time immemorial these orders had been given in the opposite sense; e.g. "Port the helm" was the order given when the ship's head was required to go to starboard, and vice-versa. This, of course, dated back to the days of steering by tiller only, and had not been altered with the advent of steering by wheel.

When a foreign pilot was embarked in a British ship there was often confusion between him and the British helmsman. There was a lot of sentimental dismay among older seamen, and all kinds of alarming maritime disasters were predicted during the transitional period.

There was indeed much vociferous opposition to the projected change, but the Club took a different view and strongly supported the proposal to introduce *direct* helm orders as being reasonable, inevitable and above all, logical.

The Government of the day cited the Club views, as being "Expert and authoritative", and indeed "Conclusive", and was thereby encouraged

to adopt the International Convention in that regard by writing Section 29 into the Merchant Shipping Act of 1932, which brought about the official change in helm orders in British ships. The direct helm orders are, of course, now internationally enforced by rule 32 of the International Collision Regulations, 1934.



Although the Cachalots studiously avoided becoming what might be termed a Royal Naval Reserve Officers' Club (even though many of the members held, or had held, commissioned rank in the R.N.R.) it was strongly felt that there was a real need for the closest possible co-operation between the Club and the Royal Navy at local level, in such places as Portsmouth, the Fleet Air Arm at Lee-on-the-Solent, as well as the Royal Air Force at Calshot where there was still a strong element of interest in seaplanes, and indeed, with the Army whenever this was possible.

No opportunity was lost in promoting a close and cordial liaison between the Merchant Navy and the fighting services.

With this in mind, a series of reciprocal visits and talks on technical subjects was initiated between the Navy and the Cachalots, and it is interesting to note that the first of these was given on behalf of the Cachalots to a large audience of R.N. Officers at Portsmouth, by Captain W. V. J. Clarke, who was then the Captain of the Club. The subject was, "The Organization of the Merchant Navy"-a subject which, at that time, appeared to be completely *terra incognita* to the Royal Navy. Many more talks and reciprocal visits followed, and the happy relationship thus begun has continued ever since.

At a later date the Club formed close links with the Navy's principal submarine base at Fort Blockhouse where it had already been perceived that an R.N.R. officer, with his Merchant Navy watch-keeping and practical navigational experience actually makes an ideal submarine navigator. The keenness shown by the Cachalots during visits to these Naval establishments was duly noted in the higher circles, and before very long Club members were invited to visit the Senior Service's advanced navigational Technology School at H.M.S. *DRYAD*, and later to their principal communications training centre at H.M.S. *MERCURY*, where the Mariners got a glimpse of the Navy's myriad types of instant, and other communications.

Highly instructive lectures, often with films, were delivered at the Navy's Damage Control and Bacteriological and Chemical Warfare establishments.

Interesting slides, followed by practical experience and flights in Hovercraft and Helicopters were a feature of visits to the Navy's Fleet Air Arm base at H.M.S. *DAEDALUS*.

Among the most interesting establishments visited annually is H.M.S. *EXCELLENT*, the Navy's oldest, but up-to-date gunnery school, where an amazing variety of lethal weapons are on display to a select few visitors.

"Whale Island" (as the School is affectionately called) has an unique atmosphere. A consummate smartness is in evidence everywhere and the discipline is infectious. The "Gun-slinging" display across an imaginary ravine at amazingly high speed by rival guns' crews is usually a most impressive climax to a very interesting day.

Visits to the Navy's Mine and Torpedo School at H.M.S. *VERNON* give the Mariners an awesome insight into the tremendous advance in modern underwater warfare.

An enlightening view of the great progress made in the application of electronics to every phase of Naval operation, and engineering, was obtained on tours of the vast Naval establishments at H.M.S. *COLLINGWOOD* and H.M.S. *SULTAN*.

In addition to these instructional periods spent as guests of the Navy there is the fairly frequent interchange of visits between the Club and ships of the Royal Navy when calling at Southampton; and, judging from the many ship's crests from H.M. and other navies adorning the Club's Long Room walls, there is good evidence of many pleasant visits by Naval Officers.

By way of modest reciprocity the Club usually finds much pleasure in inviting the Commander-in-Chief of the Portsmouth area, as well as the Commanding Officers of the neighbouring local establishments to its own principal social event of the year, the Club's Annual Luncheon, usually held on board one of the large Southampton-based passenger liners.



For those Club members whose professional duties preclude their joining their colleagues in visits to the various Naval Commands, there is often the pleasant compensation of opportunities to meet their naval opposite numbers on their respective cricket grounds during the long summer evenings.

Always conscious of the honour of being privileged to enter, and be entertained at these important Naval establishments, the Club feels duly grateful for the care and diligence with which these technically instructive visits are organised by the Senior Service.

Unobtrusively, and entirely off its own bat, so to speak, the Club thus performs a very valuable and perhaps unique service to the country as a whole.



### [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.

### [Reminder](#)

**Members are reminded that some subs and 250 Club contributions are overdue and the distribution list will be amended accordingly.**

## Farming today

### **Baird Maritime Workboat World, Grey Power 24 May 2021**

There is a great deal of angst amid the farming community in the UK about the contents of a free trade deal between the newly independent United Kingdom and Australia. Lurid pictures are being painted of the UK industry being seriously harmed (farming organisations have used the word “destroyed”) by a flood of cheap and unfair food imports into the country, from the “giant corporates” that run Australian agriculture. Despite numerous assurances being given by the government, farmers, or at least their representative organisations, are convinced that they are being sold down the river as the UK scrambles to cobble together a deal that will further demonstrate the country’s ability to prosper, without the stifling regulatory umbrella of Brussels.

There is such a thing as “getting your retaliation in first” as the parties are still talking. And it is also a fact that there is understandable nervousness about the industry being cut off from all the financial comforts that flowed from the European agriculture policies and access to European markets. Curiously, there was less concern expressed about the cheap goods that were being produced by Eastern European farmers who were undercutting those domestic producers. So the arguments are probably as much political as practical, leavened with the not unreasonable assertion that “Westminster does not understand rural matters”.

If one is a certain age, you can probably remember very similar arguments, but as it were, reversed, as the UK geared up to join the European Union all those years ago. And it is also worth recalling that as Britain took this drastic and ultimately doomed – some might say treacherous – step, the vast majority of agricultural exports from both Australia and New Zealand were shipped off to the UK. Somehow, despite the journey to take that meat, dairy and fruit to market being some 12000 miles, producers down under did not regard themselves as suffering any particular unfairness. There were not, as I recall, any sense of grievance among British farmers at the commonwealth imports. It also kept some 120/130 fine British cargo liners in full-time employment.

It was the Australian and New Zealand farmers who were indeed “sold down the river” as Mr Heath’s government in London grovelled to comply with the demands of the negotiators in Brussels over the entry terms to the “Common Market”. It was this industry in both nations which had grown over more than a century to serve as Britain’s “larder”, but which



would henceforth have to re-adjust to the EU's tariff walls strengthened against them. From a situation where there was no doubt as to where what they produced would be consumed, the producers would have to discover and develop new markets elsewhere in the world, as their access to Europe was, rather too speedily, phased out. The boot, it might be thought, is now on the other foot.

During the late 1970s and 80s, I can remember visiting those charged with finding these new markets in both countries down under and my admiration at their strenuous efforts to sell their products to places where there was no history whatever of market penetration. It was very hard going, and all the while their agricultural producers were suffering terribly. We had farmers in the family in New Zealand, who, over just a short few years, had gone from being very prosperous, to really struggling to make a living. I remember travelling around with one for a day trying to source second-hand truck tyres, as he couldn't afford to buy new. I recall talking to someone in Wellington trying to convince the Chinese to eat more lamb, another charged with sourcing a new market from a national wool clip that no longer could be shipped to Yorkshire. Somebody whose job was to try and persuade Chinese children to eat an Australian apple every day. In the end, they succeeded and these people can be very proud of what they had done as their business world changed so drastically.

In the long term, people might well say that the change taught farmers down under to "stand on their own feet" and reform their industry. But it was awful for those involved, while it was all happening. And along with containerisation and its phenomenal costs, it spelt the end of those fine fleets of British cargo liners and the sight of the Red Ensign in Australian and New Zealand ports, collateral damage as the UK re-aligned its trade to its nearest neighbours.

I also remembered those conversations about the struggle for new markets, as the New Zealand government was taking a lot of flak for their recent refusal to criticise China for their human rights record. It is worth, I thought, remembering those desperate efforts in New Zealand to cultivate the Chinese market and who exactly had forced them down that road as the UK signed away its freedom and forgot its cousins on the other side of the world.

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



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

captain@cachalots.org.uk  
staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk  
boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk  
storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk  
postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk  
functions@cachalots.org.uk  
membership@cachalots.org.uk  
editor@cachalots.org.uk

**The cut-off date for the next edition will be  
18th June 2021**

April                      **K T V Edwards**                      **D F Gates**