

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 91 Printer Friendly Digital Edition August 2021

As advised last month, it is our intention to produce a printed edition in September and subsequently quarterly. This all-colour magazine will be sent by post to those members who do not use the internet and to any other members who request it. (Contact the editor if you have not already done so.) A pdf version will continue to be sent to all hands on the e-mail distribution list, as will a digital newsletter, like this, in the intervening months.

Because of the time constraints imposed in printing and distributing a physical copy the cut-off date for contributions has had to be brought forward a week (to 13th August) so your Captain has decided to keep his powder dry until then and bring us a bumper log for the resurrected edition.

Boatsteerers' Locker

We have held our first 'in person' gathering in the Club room at the RBL on Friday 23rd. A small number, about ten members, came along. Simple precautions were followed with hand sanitizer at the entrance and open windows providing plenty of air circulation. For the time being we will meet at the RBL on a Friday only. Opportunity was taken to present Peter Grant with his long awaited present acknowledging his outstanding contribution to the Club as Functions Officer. Our Staff Captain, Martin Phipps and Club Chaplain, the Rev'd John Attenborough made the presentation of an inscribed sword cut whisky tumbler to Peter.



As a postscript to my update about Richard Olden, I have asked Nicola, his daughter, if we can have ten copies of his book, *'From Cadet to Marine Consultant – A Past Era in Shipping'*. If you become lucky enough to receive one from the available stock, we would be grateful if you make an appropriate donation to Richard's favourite charity of choice. This is the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. Donations can be made through their website which can be found at the following link.

<https://shipwreckedmariners.org.uk/support-us/donations/>

Zoom - Our Friday Zoom gatherings will stop while we gain confidence in meeting up in the Club room at the RBL on a Friday. When I can, I will set up the Zoom gathering for a Thursday at 1100 but may need to ask someone to take control as I sometimes play golf on a Thursday. We will be swinging the Zoom lamp for a few weeks yet on a Thursday from 29th July. Anyone is free to join us. If you have not joined us yet, please drop me a line and I will pass you the joining link.



Merchant Navy Day Service
Friday 3rd September 2021 at 1900
St. Michael's Church, Southampton



Dear Cachalot,

Firstly, I apologise for the seemingly late appearance of this invitation, but due to Covid-19, we have only just recently been able to commence discussions with St. Michael's Church.

Our Club Captain, Andrew Moll is delighted to invite you and your spouse or partner to join us to celebrate **Merchant Navy Day** in a service at St. Michael's Church in central Southampton.

This service in no way attempts to replicate the annual Shipping Festival Service held at Winchester and hence will be reduced in terms of numbers of attendees and ceremony due to constraints on space and socially distancing protocols.

Civic dignitaries including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, High Sheriff of Hampshire, the Mayor and Sheriff of Southampton have been invited along with representatives from organisations associated with Southampton.

The service will commence at 1900 but there will be no parade of flag parties beforehand.

We are advised by St. Michael's that unless there is a significant change in social distancing rules, we will all be expected to use the hand sanitizer provided and record contact information, or use the QR Code, as you enter the church. The seating arrangements will allow for social distancing which means the numbers we can cater for will be limited.

To assist us determine the seating plan, we would be grateful if you would provide the names of your spouse or partner, if you wish them to accompany you, at the soonest opportunity.

Yours faithfully,

Captain Robin Plumley MBE
Boatsteerer
The Cachalots

All communications to be addressed to:

Email: office@cachalots.org.uk
boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk



Stole the show

Our Honorary Chaplain,
John Attenborough, was ordained at Winchester Cathedral on
the 4th July.

The Staff Captain decided that he should have something nautical
to wear and asked a lady in his village to make a stole with that
theme as a present from us on his ordination.

Also in the picture is Canon Andrew Wright who is the Secretary
General of the Mission to Seafarers .

Slow ahead both

This picture was posted on the Cachalots LinkedIn page this month.

It came from Staff Captain Martin Phipps who explained:

“Bill Hargreaves and myself on the Thames last week.

Loa 14ft
DWT - depends on how much you ate for lunch.
Draft 1inch

Checked all the safety requirements ie leash, lifejackets, repair kit, mobile phone and responsible person notified ashore. Well maybe not the last requirement as both wives had taken out extra life insurance and were encouraging us to paddle down a weir !”



Thanks to Peter Roberts for the suggested caption.

Their ex-colleague, pilot Noel Becket observed, perhaps more astutely,

Who is in command and who thinks that he is in command?

Curry Lunch

KUTI'S ROYAL PIER

“Officially the Best Indian Restaurant in the UK”

After 18 months and a few false starts we are booked to return to our favourite Curry House on

Saturday 28th August

1230 for 1300

(Note the change of time)

The price will be **£25** per person

It may come as no surprise that there have been some changes at Kuti's, both in personnel and what's on offer, so we will have to suck it and see before we make any more commitments.

Also, we see from Southampton City Council's website that, in their relentless war on the motorist, they have subtly changed the payment system at Mayflower Park. The rate remains the same, £1 for 2 hours, but you have to renew your ticket after 2 hours instead of buying 4 hours for £2.

Book through the office by 20th August please.

The cut-off date for the next edition will be

13th August 2021

A fitting send-off for a well loved Cachalot

There were around 100 in the congregation for Gerry Cartwright's funeral service at St. Boniface Church on the 28th July and 34 of those were from the Club.

We were required to register our attendance on arrival, hand sanitize, wear face masks and maintain social distancing. Alternate lines of pews were roped off but this was relaxed as more people arrived. We were allowed to sing, though "gently" through our masks.

During the service his sons, Richard and Robert, paid moving tributes to their father and our President, Captain Reg Kelso MBE, gave a good account of Gerry's involvement with the Club and of the respect and affection with which he was held.

The coffin was draped with one of the Club's defaced ensigns and we understood that Gerry had been dressed in a Club bow-tie. Several of the Club members were also wearing bow ties as a tribute to this particular sartorial affectation of Gerry's.

It became evident during his boys' affectionate tributes and the Address from the Rev'd Dr Ian Bird that it was not his only such affectation. He had a reputation locally of wearing shorts and sandals whatever the weather.

After the service, refreshments were served in the St Boniface Centre and once the masks were off we quickly reverted to normal social discourse, testing our Covid defences to the limit.

A picture of sartorial elegance



On a CLub trip to S.Brittany in 2008.
Tommy Turner takes it in his stride while
Roy Martin can hardly bear to look.



Master of Ceremonies, he prepares to greet the VIPs
at the Sea Pie Supper in 2012

Donations in memory of Gerry can be made online via www.gerald-cartwright.muchloved.com

An invitation from Les Morris

Ann Morris, Celebration of Life

Ann Morris, wife of Past Captain Leslie Morris, passed away on the 5th September last year.

Her funeral took place on the 21st September under covid restrictions with a limited number of attendees.

Now that the restrictions are relaxed, Les writes:

"I have booked the Courtyard at **The Mortimer Arms** at Ower on

Tuesday, 17th August at 1200

for Ann's "**Celebration of Life**".

I would like to extend an invitation, especially (referring to the funeral)

*"To those who came,
and to those who would have come under different circumstances"*

I would be most grateful if I could have a number as soon as possible. Partners are also invited – of course! A light buffet lunch and drinks will be served - of course – in a room with adjacent garden area."

Please contact Les at leslie.morris@btconnect.com or 01794 884115

Letters to the Editor

I was interested to read Bill Hargreaves' article on streaming the walker log. This was something that I also remember from my cadet days with Trident Tankers, and a necessary entry for the Cadet Record Book. We had a different way of streaming the log. The log was always streamed from the lee side, (to keep it clear of the prop wash?) Once all was assembled on deck the rotator was carried over to the opposite (weather) side of the poop deck. The logline, was then paid slowly out over the stern in a big loop, where it skipped on the surface in the ships wake. When all the logline was out, we threw the rotator far out to windward on the opposite quarter. For a short while nothing would happen as the rotator initially sank, then you would see the logline pulling taut and cutting round in a half circle and the governor would slowly start to spin, picking up speed. The purpose of this practice was twofold, firstly to avoid the logline twisting up into knots, which would happen if the rotator was paid out first; these knots might well not come out, and would compromise the operation of the rotator. Secondly, by taking it to the other side and letting it sink, the shock to the register and its fittings when the logline was first pulled taut was minimised (I remember being cautioned that the whole register, shoe and bracket arrangement might be carried away by the sudden shock, and they had even been known to take away whole sections of the ships rails!).

We carried many spare lines and rotators; the latter were very occasionally lost (taken by sharks?). We also had set logline lengths for loaded and ballast. This was achieved by having a 60 fathom length (37,000 dwt tanker) for loaded, and an additional length (about 10 fathoms) with another frog to extend the line for ballast conditions. On the whole, I think they gave pretty accurate readings – indeed better than the pitot log in most cases.

Our logs - the Walker "Trident" model – were identical to the "Cherub" but they also had an electrical connection and plug which relayed the speed info back to the bridge, where the speed indicator could be selected between taffrail log and bottom log (although I think we still had to go down aft to read the distance at the end of each watch). A couple of our midships bridge tankers also had booms which could swing out from the deck immediately below the starboard bridge wing, so that the Walker log could be streamed alongside, clear of the propwash. These booms were dual purpose and also equipped with fittings for "Patent sounding machine". However, I never saw the log deployed this way, nor did I ever see the patent sounding machine used.

Coming up to the present day, I do still have a complete boxed Walker Cherub III, set which I 'acquired' from a vessel going to scrap. I have been known to stream this behind my Westerly sailboat, especially when cruising longer distances. At sailing boat speeds of about 5 knots, it under-reads, no matter what length of line I deploy, but it is still fairly consistent, and I will generally have a reading of about 46 miles on the register for every 60 miles actually travelled. Still useful info, when going cross-Channel in poor visibility.

Richard Leedham

In another response, this time to one of Michael Grey's articles in which Michael said "...the idea that a 6/6 hour watch system can be operated legally is utterly laughable, but remains in place for a huge fleet of small ships", Richard says:

Having just read Cachalot 90 and Michael Grey's (as always) excellent and pertinent article 'Justifying the Unjustifiable', I am reminded of a sea chanty from over a hundred years ago called the Limejuice Ship, which is a very tongue in cheek description of conditions on board British Merchant ships of the nineteenth century, following the introduction of laws (the Merchant Shipping Acts) to, amongst other things, improve the conditions of seafarers:

Now if you want a merchant ship to sail the seas at large,
You'll not have any trouble if you have a good discharge,
Signed by the Board of Trade, with everything exact,
Your lime juice and your vinegar, According to the Act
Chorus:
So haul, boys, your weather mainbrace, and ease away your lee,
Hoist jib and topsail, lads, and let the ship go free,
Shout, boys, shout, I tell you it's a fact,
There's nothing done on a limejuice ship contrary to the Act.

Now when you board your lime juice ship you'll hear your articles read,
They'll tell you of your beef, your pork, your butter and your bread,
Your sugar, tea and coffee, boys, your peas and beans exact,
Your lime juice and your vinegar - According to the Act.
No watch-and-watch the first day out According to the Act,
Ten days out we all lay aft to get our lime juice whack,
Fetch out a handy billy, boys, we'll clap her on the tack,
For we're going to set the mainsail, oh, According to the Act.

It's up on deck, my bully boys, with many a curse we go,

A-waiting to hear the eight bells struck, so we may go below,
Eight bells is struck, the watch is called, the log is hove exact,
Relieve the wheel and go below, According to the Act!

Obviously, these things – especially the last verse – did not happen in practice. It is interesting to see the inference that “Watch and Watch” (i.e. 6on/6off) the first day out was apparently prohibited by ‘the Act’ even in those days? It really makes me think that nothing much has really changed as regards seafarer’s welfare and owners attitudes to it over the last century-and-a-half! I think the Act being referred to was the UK’s Merchant Shipping Act of 1854, although I have not confirmed that; it may be a combination of MS Acts up to that point in time. Interesting also to see that “the Articles” and the archaic provisions are still in use today by some flag states. Anyone for powdered egg and condensed milk?

Chanty, chantey or shanty, Richard? That might be another can of worms.... Ed



WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meeting

Again, of the Dorset branch of the World Ship Society

2.30pm, Saturday, August 14th 2021

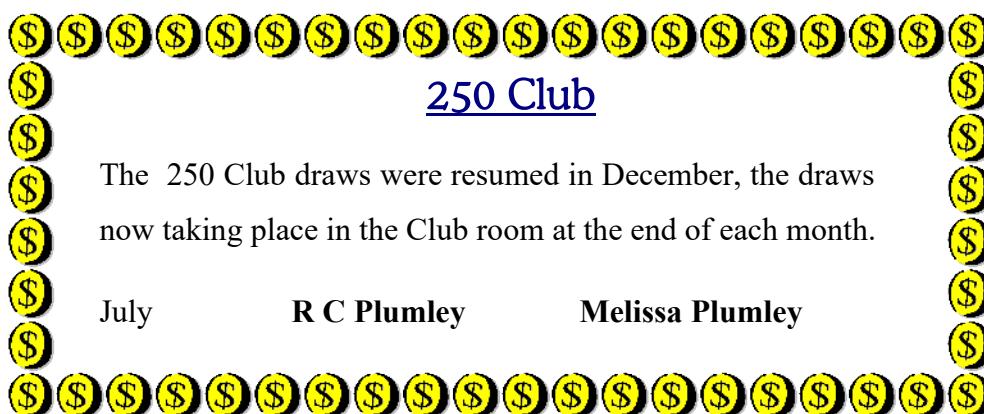
**~ Rule Britannia: Bygone British Ocean Liners ~
with Bill Miller**

**... the biggest passenger fleet of the ‘50s & ‘60s ... Cunard, P&O, Blue Funnel,
Shaw Savill & more ... a nostalgic review ...**

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our April 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 and follow the links.



250 Club

The 250 Club draws were resumed in December, the draws now taking place in the Club room at the end of each month.

July R C Plumley Melissa Plumley

Keeping it in the family

Now the Club room has reopened, this month’s draw took place on Friday, the 30th. Boatsteerer Robin offered the bag of numbers to Liz, as the only lady present (no woke gender politics here). The first number out belonged to, who else... Robin! The second number had not been allocated and a re-draw produced a number belonging to his daughter Melissa! All above board and witnessed by every member in the room. Well, the two of them anyway.

You’ve got to be in it to win it, quipped Robin

Variable human rights

Seatrade Maritime Opinion and Analysis July 2021

My sister-in-law, who lives in New Zealand, was telling us about the latest Covid controversy in that country, where the government has provoked the wrath of the waterside workers by suggesting that it should be made mandatory for them to be vaccinated against the disease as a condition of their employment. This, of course has led to enraged shouts about human rights, which, these days seem to trump everything, including common sense.

The rationale for this is obvious. If the disease is brought to the shores of their country by infected international seafarers, who might conceivably get a bit too close to a passing wharfie aboard their ships, then vaccination of the waterside workforce would provide a sensible measure of protection. An international seafarer, on the other hand, who knows that shore leave is not permitted in that well-protected country, might sardonically observe that it would make just as much sense if they would make available vaccinations for seafarers.

That option probably will not have occurred to the government of NZ any more than it is thought about by those in charge in many other countries in these times of pandemic. The priority around shipping is the “stuff” aboard ships and not many people, as they obsess about the “logistics chain”, ever think about the human beings who drive ships for a living. They have human rights too, but it is obviously somebody else’s job to think about them.

Meanwhile, the ships upon which all utterly depend, trade on, with their crews of unvaccinated and vaccinated seafarers aboard them, occasionally sparking a frisson of localised fear, when there is a notification of an infection aboard. They even sail on with the bodies of dead seamen aboard them, in the absence of sufficient humanity to permit the corpse to be landed for repatriation.

It is quite obvious that more could be done to provide an internationally acceptable vaccination service for this itinerant workforce, if the will was there. The Netherlands, among a minority of other nations, has made available such a service and there was a recent story about no fewer than 110 crew members of a cruise ship getting the jab on the quayside alongside their ship. We were told that the service had been organised by the Dutch government, the Royal Dutch Ship Owners Association KVRN and Arbo Unie.

One might say that if a cruise ship is going to get any customers as the sector gears up again, it is essential that all on board are protected and any owner will move heaven and earth to make this happen. Let’s face it, good commis waiters and sous chefs aren’t readily available. But should their rights for vaccination trump those of a boatswain on a bulker or a third mate on a container ship? Let’s be honest, the world managed to get by without the cruise sector for the past eighteen months, but it would have descended into chaos and starvation, if the crews of those bulkers, tankers and container ships had stopped operating their ships. So you might think that somebody – owners, managers, flag states, WHO officials - would have been loudly championing the priority of seafarers for vaccination, once approved jabs had been made available.

Frank Coles, formerly head of Wallem, bless his disruptive heart, was saying the other day that he was ashamed of the industry and even suggesting that only a mass withdrawal of labour would make people notice the plight of the seafarers. It won’t happen, of course in this fragmented industrial sector, where the labour force is predominantly drawn from the economically disadvantaged. But it was a great idea.

It would be marvellous if a message could be simultaneously transmitted from all the world’s ships, saying to the effect – “sorry; we won’t deliver your goods and take away all your exports until you expedite the global vaccination of seafarers and streamline their requirement for visas and travel.” They do it for aircrew, so why not seafarers? If wharfies in Whangarei can be jabbed double-quick (always supposing they consent), why not the crews of merchant ships, in all the ports of the world?

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The Cachalots Golf Section

As July is the month of The Open Championship, and that the Club is hosting a Cachalot Golf Day in September, I thought I would do a little research about golf and the Club.

Although I can find no written record, we do have two plated silver cups which identify a healthy pursuit of the game by members from 1962 through to 1989 for the Whitbread Cup (below left) and from 1981 to 1989 for the Charles Webb Golf Trophy (below right).



The Whitbread Cup is Inscribed with the following winners.

1962	Commander D.R. Mallinson. OBE, RN	1976	T.D. Clay
1963	F. Sands	1977	L.J. Goulden
1964	P.E. Drinkwater	1978	J.B. Davies
1965	Commander D.R. Mallinson. OBE, RN,	1979	J.W. Ireland
1966	Commander D.R. Mallinson. OBE, RN,	1980	Cdr I.M. Balfour. RN, Rtd
1967	J.C. Frampton	1981	Capt. R.E.A. Bayley
1968	R.K. Mills TD	1982	A.M. Ferguson
1969	R.K. Mills TD	1983	A.L. Mathams
1970	Capt. W.E. Brawn. MBE	1984	J.B. Davies
1971	Capt. P.I. Bevan	1985	J.G. Dalton
1972	J.H.R. French	1986	A.M. Ferguson
1973	Capt. E. Edwards	1987	J.R. Ellis
1974	J.B. Atkinson MBE	1988	J.W. Ireland
1975	J.H.R. French	1989	J.B. Davies

While the Charles Webb Trophy is inscribed thus:

1981	Capt. R.E.A. Bayley	1984	J. Pennington	1987	Capt. R.E.A. Bayley
1982	J. Pennington	1985	Capt. R.E.A. Bayley	1988	J.B. Davies
1983	J.G. Dalton	1986	J.B. Davies	1989	J.G. Dalton

Our Cachalot Golf Day is being held at Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club on 30th September and we have thirty-three members and marine related guests enrolled for the day. The cups will be displayed and returned to the Club, but a glass trophy will be presented to the overall winner to keep.

Robin Plumley

By Michael Grey

The UK, it seems might be getting another Royal Yacht, to replace the elegant HMY Britannia, which was retired in 1997 as the new barons of Blair's Britain showed us who was in charge. It is not entirely certain whether HM actually wants another vessel, so the scheme seems to be to designate it as a "government ship", available for ministers and other important folk to project commercial and diplomatic power abroad –a sort of "Seaforce One" - run by the RN. It is by no means certain that the RN, with two aircraft carriers to man, three store ships to buy, besides managing all their other grey ships, want a yacht either. But the RN does what it is told.

Some £200m has been plucked from a money tree and allocated to the purchase, and an artist's impression has been published, to a certain amount of derision, one distinguished ship designer suggesting that it looked a bit like a trawler. That, I considered, did trawlers something of a disservice, as there are some really elegant fishing craft around these days. I just thought it looked boring, small and old-fashioned and would be unlikely to generate the same frisson as was produced in the past by HMY Britannia entering port, with flags flying and band playing. At best, they could manage a small ensemble on the mooring deck, albeit with amplification.


The current edition of Naval Architect journal offers a sort of alternative Britannia reimagined by the institution's former President Stephen Payne, who was, it will be recalled, the designer of Queen Mary 2. And while the government's option looks a bit of a "back of the envelope" job, to give Boris a diverting bit of positive press as the Irish bridge looks a non-starter, this is a more substantial vessel, accompanied by a thoughtful commercial proposal for the ship's employment. A true national flagship, capable of generating its keep in a continuous trade promotion role around the world, he envisages a ship with exhibition spaces, conference facilities, shops, restaurants (and a British pub), state and VIP apartments and business centre. The ship would also be a floating British Embassy.

He suggests that while it would be commanded by a RN officer, the ship's manning would be mixed RN and Merchant Navy, offering a substantial training role for both and rather more practical a manpower solution. He also offers a concept painting of the ship, which certainly looks rather more imposing than the government offering, although it could be argued that these days it probably needs to be festooned with Flettner rotors, collapsible and fixed sails, solar panels, kites and is propelled by a fuel cell consuming hydrogen produced from recycled plastic.

Stephen Payne produces a convincing case for a "cost-neutral" build and operation, but would it really work? Would British industry be willing to rock up and shell out, not just for an inaugural cruise but for the twenty years or more after the ship is commissioned. You might argue that the old Britannia did very well, but those who sat in her elegant dining room flogging widgets to foreigners, did not actually have to pay for the privilege.

In the 1970s, I seem to remember going on board the Japanese exhibition ship Shin Sakura Maru in London's Millwall Dock, when she was on a world cruise, selling Japanese technology and being very impressed. But she only came once and it wasn't that many years had elapsed before she had been converted into a cruise ship. I suppose that before too long Japanese goods were seen for what they were and didn't need ships to promote them.

One shouldn't be cynical and part of me says that we ought to harness the genuinely world-class design skills available in the UK and produce something that would have even the Prime Minister lost for words. But as somebody old enough to have seen the whole of this nation's maritime decline, I am bound to feel pessimistic about the possibilities in this "post-maritime" UK. Could we build something like this, without bankrupting the builder? Can we make it work with a multiplicity of roles, year in, year out, with a design that can evolve to incorporate future innovation? I would love to see us try, but feel in my aged bones that yachting is probably a bit "yesterday".

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and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey rjmgrey@dircon.co.uk



Captain Ken

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

Ken lives in the Derbyshire Peak District and has been writing about some of his sea going experiences for the Magazine, so his stories are not particularly aimed at maritime folk.

"Outlook" is an excellent Parish magazine, edited by a very able couple who thought they had retired but have been pressed into taking up the editorship again due to unexpected circumstances.

It can be read online at <https://mellorchurch.org/outlook-magazine/>

Hopefully, on 11th July, you will notice the Red Ensign proudly flying from the top of Mellor Church tower.

The Mission to Seafarers have asked that this date be known as Sea Sunday, making it a special time to remember seafarers all over the world and reminding us to keep in mind that over ninety per cent of all we eat and use comes by sea.

As we are all aware, the Covid-19 pandemic, has virtually changed the lives of all of us in some way or other and it is having a particularly serious effect on the world's seafarers. They are finding it increasingly difficult that for long periods of time they are unable to be relieved from their ships to see their families.

I find it truly remarkable how the Mission to Seafarers has adapted its concern to cope with the current circumstances.

The Mission has played a huge part in persuading the Government to recognise seafarers as Key Workers, together with our remarkable medical workers and I believe the British Government is the first in the world to stress the importance of this recognition.

In fact, as I write I know of two international ships which are currently being drastically affected by the Covid-19 regulations and situation.

There is the sadly unfortunate case of the Italian container ship *Ital Liberam* presently bound from Italy to China, whose captain has died (believed as a result of Covid-19) and which has been refused entry into any Asian port and has had to return to Italy in order to repatriate the captain's body.

There is also the plight of the Liberian registered *Vantage Wave* which is presently waiting off Huang Pu, a port in South China. The captain of this ship has also died (cause not specified) and the ship has almost run out of food. They have been refused entry to any other port and have therefore as yet been unable to repatriate the captain's body.

It is good to know that the Mission to Seafarers is doing its level best to help the ships and crews cope with this and the chaplains will do their very best to bring comfort to the unfortunate crews and their families.



Important *Outlook* editorial discussion



This editor is extremely jealous of the hospitality afforded to his counterpart in Mellor and is only too willing to discuss your contributions over a pint, at your expense of course.

One of the reasons for agreeing to taking on the editorship of your favourite magazine for a while longer was fond memories of my compulsory meetings with one of *Outlook's* contributors. Captain Ken's articles were discussed with great intensity and all seriousness in one of Ken's farm barn saloons. Refreshment was provided by Ken and graciously accepted by your esteemed editor. This was taken at about 10.30 a.m. Good to be back for the time being.

Prevention and cure

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 782 July 16th 2021

By Michael Grey

These are tough times for the professional salvor, with concern being expressed about weak revenues and worries about capacity. To the casual inquirer about salvage matters, it might seem that marine casualties have been both frequent and spectacular of late, what with containership fires, blazing tankers and car carriers that won't stay upright. Then there was the *Ever Given*, which true to her name was giving us all a couple of months of headlines but, more importantly, a spectacular reason for salvage expertise being always available.

But professional salvors, who no longer sit around aboard powerful tugs waiting for something to happen, just have not been earning the rewards they need to maintain their investment. There is, these days, no compulsion to stay in an unrewarding sector, so there can be no surprise that a number of famous names, notably under the Ardent label, went off to more lucrative non-salvage business. They probably won't be back.

Despite the various maritime casualties that make it into the mainstream media, the maritime world is a safer place, so there are fewer opportunities for the professional salvor to make a decent crust. The Annual Report of the International Salvage Union emphasises the economic pressure being faced by the sector, with revenue both from salvage itself and wreck removal declining.

Now it might be suggested that while the salvage specialists are having a hard time, there is plenty of hardware that can be pressed into use when something nasty happens. There are powerful anchor handlers available just about anywhere there is offshore drilling or construction and gigantic cranes and barges with lifting capacities that would have been thought impossible only twenty years ago.


To a certain extent that is true, but salvage is not just about hardware but expertise, which will always be the crucial element that intervenes between success and failure. The craft of the professional salvor is based on experience and without this component, all the tugs and cranes, pontoons and barges will be useless. Without resources, can this expertise be preserved, with a new generation of salvors coming along to carry the torch? It was interesting to read in salvor Alan Loynd's recent biography "All at Sea", that concern about the age of available expertise in Hong Kong has led him to start what can be described as an apprenticeship scheme, to encourage younger professionals in the field.

There is a tempting analogy that can be made between marine salvage and the fire brigade, which these days is more about prevention than cure. The ISU figures show the value of the work of its members in the amount of pollution that doesn't end up in the sea. It is also worth considering that pollution comes in many forms these days, with the menace of oil pollution seemingly being less severe than the mess that can come from plastics, where container ships have come to grief.

It seems that vast quantities of plastic beads are being carried around the world at present, as raw materials, which, as seen recently in the case of the *Xpress Pearl* casualty off Sri Lanka, can be devastating to the environment. We learned about this new curse some years ago, when the plastic bead cargo from the ship wrecked off Tauranga was washed far and wide up and down the New Zealand coast. Sadly, this menace, it seems, has yet to register more widely.

You might think that a well-resourced salvage sector, with its vital elements of experience and expertise is as essential now as it has ever been. Container ship design and construction has focussed more about the unit costs of carrying boxes around and has largely ignored what might be done with these monsters when they ground, are wrecked or as seems obvious, about once a month, catch fire. People probably never saw, or don't remember the totality of destruction in the fore part of the *Maersk Honan*.

But after the *Ever Given*, when the public at large was given some idea of the sheer scale of a modern salvage operation, it might be thought that there will be some pressure on ship operators to consider the "what if..." question rather more responsibly. But more likely, they will just hope for the best and expect professional salvors to pull the rabbit out of the blazing hat and clear up the mess they have made.

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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 4.

Chapter 4

THE CLUB'S LONG ROOM, AND ADJACENT ROOMS



In a corner of the Long Room the memory of some of the Club's old friends is preserved in the shape of silver tankards, old sailing-ship models and paintings, and a host of characteristically nautical items. A few of these pieces are really worthy of the National Maritime Museum. Many of the items have been presented anonymously. At this point in time it might prove of interest to mention a few of those that can be identified with their donors.

The marline-spike gavel used at Club meetings was presented by Founder member, Captain Braithwaite.

An oak-mounted brass bell inscribed *CARMANIA*, came from the famous Cunarder of that name which fought and sank the German sea-raider, *CAP TRAFALGAR*, in the South Atlantic during the First World War, and was presented by the ship-breaking firm of Hughes- Bolckow of Blyth. The custom used to be for this bell to be struck every half-hour, ship's-time fashion, during Club Luncheon meetings. It is about 70 years old.

A hand-spear harpoon from one of the last of the old Dundee sailing whaler-ships, the *NOVA ZEMBLA*, was presented by Mr. Spence of the Shipping Federation, in 1931. There is also a small harpoon on an ebony stand bearing the names of the Club's first Committee Members, presented by Messmate H. V. Reynolds, of Thornycrofts' Shipbuilding Company.

In addition there is a fine small nickel-plated harpoon from the late Sir John Thornycroft.

In a mahogany cabinet there is a solid silver speaking-trumpet (megaphone), dated 1846, presented by Captain J. Goodridge, F.R.A.S., in 1933, in memory of Dr. Wood, Bishop of Winchester and the Club's first "Stowaway".

A whale's tooth was presented by Cachalot R. C. Freaker, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.D.

A lignum-vitae block-sheave and a plated belaying pin from his famous round-the-world cruising yacht, *SUNBEAM II*, bearing the date 1874, presented by Sir Walter (later Lord) Runciman. Incidentally, this particular belaying-pin has a nostalgic memory for one of the Club's present Cachalots, Captain Don. Brackenbury. It was his special duty to polish this fine brass pin every morning while he was serving his apprenticeship aboard *SUNBEAM II* over half a century ago.

Suspended on the South Wall of the Long Room is an old P. & O. Line officer's sword, presented by Colonel Glover, a former Engineer Officer in that Company. The sword is considered to be one of only three such swords in existence in this country.

These P. & O. officers' swords, have incidentally, had a very controversial history. It is understood that when the British ruled India the Admiralty gave the old P. & O. Line officers permission to wear these swords as occasion demanded, but with the stipulation that they had to be worn on the right-hand side only, as opposed to the left-hand as worn by Officers of the Royal Navy-thus rendering these swords as purely ceremonial arms only.

Close by the sword hangs an ancient quadrant and compass of some antiquity, presented by Captain H. E. Tourtell (Master of Sir Bernard Docker's celebrated luxury yacht, *SHEMARA*).

On the mantel-piece is a beautifully-turned and polished bow fair-lead from the once famous *AMERICA* Cup Challenger, *SHAMROCK I* (1928) presented by Messmate E. Lepard.

High up on the South Wall are a pair of Port and Starboard ship's side-lights, which are always switched on at night. Donor unknown - probably fitted by the Club members.

Hanging in its original gimbals by the fire-place is a fine old mercurial barometer, mounted in a dark mahogany case, and still working well. This was presented by Major Trevor-Lewis, a former White Star Line manager. The donor's Master-Mariner father had used this old "weather-glass" when in command in sail. A well-worn index thumb screw evokes memories of anxious days rounding Cape Horn under reefed topsails.

The graceful chiming clock above the Long Room door was presented by Lady Charles, whose husband, Commodore Sir James Charles, K.B.E., C.B.E., R.D., R.N.R., died so tragically on the bridge of the Cunard flagship, *AQUITANIA*, as she docked at Southampton on his final voyage in 1929.

Another historic relic, stowed in a show-case drawer, is a small part of the original main back-way of Nelson's old flagship at Trafalgar, H.M.S. *VICTORY*, and also a short piece of the original Atlantic telegraph cable. The two latter items were the gifts of a very old "square-rigged" Mariner, Captain D. Forbes, F.R.G.S., who ran a small private navigation school at Southampton in the early part of the century.

Various other items of nautical interest may be seen in the Club Ante-room and Library.



Some of the Club's treasures in the Long Room at Club Headquarters



The Club's "Cape-Horners" meet for a "chin-wag" before lunch in the Long Room. In the background, on the wall is one of the only three

Cachalots. These presentations are always the occasion for a jolly, friendly little ceremony. And thus, over the years the Club walls have become emblazoned with an interesting array of ship-crests ranging from, H.M.S. *VICTORY* to the latest nuclear submarine, H.M.S. *DREADNOUGHT*.

Adorning a section of the Eastern Wall, is what is often facetiously referred to as "The Rogues' Gallery", where, arranged in chronological order, are the portraits of every Captain of the Club since its inception in 1928.

Shortly before his death in 1970, the late Sir Reginald Biddle (former Docks General Manager and an old Messmate) presented to the Library a valuable encyclopaedic collection of old Naval and Shipping volumes. These and many other tomes provide a useful source of information for the nautical student.



As the Club prospered numerically and economically, it prudently acquired, when opportunity offered, adjacent rooms on the same floor. These were suitably modified and eventually merged into the pleasantly-appointed rendezvous which it is today.

Some of these rooms, bearing such names as *KING ROOM*, *CLARKE ROOM*, *PERCY COOPER ROOM*, recall the memory of former Cachalots whose outstanding personal service to the Club is thus kindly remembered.

The Committee responsible for such matters demurred in associating any personal name with the room where the Club's liquor is stowed, and discreetly named it "FORE-PEAK" !

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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.

Hoorah for the roving vaccinator

Baird Maritime Workboat World July 2021
Grey Power

Just for a change, there is some good “Pandemic news” for seafarers, care of the Royal Belgian Shipowners’ Association. The Belgian government has put in hand a scheme under which roving vaccination teams will board ships in their country’s ports to provide protection for those aboard the ship, regardless of their nationality. They will be using the Johnson & Johnson single dose vaccine, which has obvious advantages to this itinerant workforce.

It’s a big step, not least because it has been what the seafaring workforce have been asking for during the last six months or so, since effective vaccines have become available. They are by no means universally available, and especially so in those places from where most of the world’s seafarers originate. So this is an example of what is possible, if the will is there and the Belgians, with some very large ports in their small nation, must be congratulated for their enterprise, with the teams beginning their roving on the 26th July.

It may be impolite to say such things, but the Belgian initiative might serve as an example and shame some other governments and agencies which have clearly dragged their feet on this important issue. Despite urgings from the various maritime institutions, from the head of the World Health Organisation and the Secretary General of IMO, to make seafarers a “special category” of worker for vaccination, it appears to have been so much easier to ignore the needs of this international, over-the-horizon workforce. It is never hard to construct some bureaucratic obstacle, especially when you are dealing with somebody else’s nationals, who don’t have either a collective voice, or votes.

We have seen no end of official buck passing, from bureaucrats suggesting that it is the responsibility of the countries from where seafarers originate to organise their protection, even when everyone knows that these are developing nations with insufficient resources to protect their shore-side citizens. The maritime employers have then appeared in the firing line, with politicians suggesting that it is their responsibility to ensure that their seafarers are vaccinated. Flag states have mostly stayed below the horizon, although Cyprus has said that it is prepared to jab seafarers on all ships of the Cyprus-flagged fleet. This is clearly a good start, although perhaps provoking accusations that this is a marketing ploy in the competitive world of ship registration. Who knows, it might persuade some of the other big open registers to follow suit and that would not be a bad thing.

There is also the recurring problem (endlessly repeated by the nay-sayers) which likes to cast doubt on the validity of vaccines which have been undertaken elsewhere. How do we know the vaccinations were “approved”? How can we be sure that the certification is not a forgery? It is not difficult to erect obstacles which make the lives of seafarers difficult, while salving one’s own conscience with these insuperable obstacles.

If the will is there..... It is notable that the cruise companies, which are desperate to start earning money after their long enforced sabbatical, are moving heaven and earth to get their thousands of hotel staff, sourced from all over, properly vaccinated. They know that they cannot afford to do otherwise as they start up and try and recover the confidence of their clientele. It is something of a contrast to the rest of world shipping, which has gone feeding and fuelling the world even though their less privileged crews continue to struggle to find proper protection, shore leave, transits to and from their ships and some modest understanding, from those they have kept fed and fuelled.

The Belgian statement put it admirably. “With the vaccine, we are offering seafarers the certainty that they can carry out their profession under its unique circumstances in a safe manner, and that they are able to travel smoothly and securely to foreign ports”. There are some other countries, notably the US and Germany, where there have been schemes to make vaccination available to foreign seafarers, but the Belgian initiative, taking the vaccine to seafarers aboard their ships, is one that seems to tick all the boxes.

Talking of box ticking, there is no absolute guarantee that some box-ticking bureaucratic blighter, in some inadequate country, will decide that the Belgian documentation is inadmissible. In the complicated world of the international seafarer official bloody-mindedness, like heavy weather, come with the trade. But we must hope for the best that this is just the start of something big.

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