

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 102

March 2023

Post Captain's Log

The past year has gone very quickly and my term as Captain of the Cachalots came to an end at the well-attended Sea Pie Supper when I handed over the role to Captain Noel Becket. For Noel's wife, Debbie it was also a very memorable event as it is not often that you can celebrate your birthday with over 380 guests without having to pay for their bar bill! Our thanks go to the Boatsteerer, Captain Robin Plumley, Terry Clark and their team for organising yet another great Sea Pie Supper and all our other events throughout the year.

The Captain's Charity for the past year has been the Southampton Sea Cadets, which thanks to your generosity, has raised nearly £400. This will help towards funding our project to extend the pontoons from the unit out into the River Itchen in order to increase the boating period by a few hours every tide. Along with drill nights, piping competitions, and Duke of Edinburgh Award activities the cadets have to achieve a minimum of 30 hours afloat in our various craft. This project will go a long way to helping them achieve this, and also the other Sea Cadet Units that use us as a boating hub.

The Club's connection with the Southampton Sea Cadets doesn't end here as we will continue the Peter Marriott Bursary of £500 a year to help some of the Cadets to spend time afloat on the offshore fleet of sail training vessels.

Company health and safety publications frequently give advice on climbing the office stairs in a safe manner but pilots face a far more difficult challenge when embarking or disembarking a vessel to bring it safely in or out of a port, often in severe weather conditions. From a small launch ranging alongside a vessel that is often rolling heavily, the pilot will have to either transfer to a rope pilot ladder and then climb vertically up to 9 metres or similarly climb down it and transfer to the launch if disembarking. This is the most dangerous time for a pilot and there is great trust between the pilot and the launch crew to ensure a safe transfer is achieved. It is very much the same ladder that sailors from the days of sail would have used; in an age when we can send rockets to Mars, every mobile phone is a bigger computer than the one used on the first Moon landing and one 23,000 teu container ship now carries more cargo than that of a whole Atlantic convoy in the Second World War. The safest means of getting a pilot on and off a ship is still by a ladder made of rope with wooden rungs! Sadly, since the beginning of January two pilots have died undertaking this transfer and our thoughts go to their families and the many serving pilots who are Cachalots.

At the recent Burns Night dinner organised by the Club I had to give the Immortal Memory to Robbie Burns. Never having attended one of these before, I did some research and discovered that Captain Richard Brown, a sea captain and friend of Burns is credited as the person responsible for "encouraging him to endeavour at the

character of a poet". Well – when it comes to supporting characters of low morals, high spirits, hard drinking, kirk defying and womanising, you can guarantee that the Merchant Navy will be close at hand!

Thank you for all your support in the past year; wishing Noel all the best in his new role.

Martin

Captain Martin Phipps MBE

The New Captain



Captain Noel Becket MNI

Noel was born in High Wycombe and went to sea as a Bank Line cadet in 1979. The huge reduction in British shipping in the 1980s meant that no job was available at the end of his cadetship. Far from being put off, Noel was able to try his hand at a multitude of different nautical adventures, the peripatetic nature of which allowed him to experience all manner of roles and vessels. These have included banana boats (Geest), cable ships (BT), luxury yachts (Mediterranean/Aegean), ferries (P&O), canal trip boats (London Waterbus Company), a Thames Hotel boat, coasters (Arklow), Training Ships (Marine Society), some time with the RNR, supply boats in West Africa & the North Sea (Zapata) and dredgers (UMD) as Master, including standing by the new build of 2 vessels in Appledore.

During these years, with the help of a few welcome grants and assistance from the Marine Society, he financed himself to obtain CoCs for Mate and Master. Noel joined ABP and became a pilot in 1999, specialising with Carnival Cruise ships from 2004 to 2019 when the role was abolished.

In his spare time, Noel spends time looking after the fabric of the Victorian church in West End, enjoys wood-working, real ale, raising money for charity by sharing maritime knowledge with groups such as the U3A, is a keen choral singer and continues to enjoy canals and industrial architecture as well as being a Harpooner. He is married with two grown up children.

Boatsteerer's Locker

Greetings to all and many thanks to all our Cachalots who supported our Sea Pie Supper either in person or in spirit due to illness. The feedback from distinguished guests, corporate attendees and guests has been very positive and complimentary. See article in this edition.

Annual General Meeting 2023

The AGM, required in accordance with Rule 11, was held on Friday 13th January at the RBL Club room. Fifteen members attended in person with four others joining us by Zoom. A minute's silence was held for the eight members who have Gone Aloft in the past year. Changes to the Management Committee were confirmed. The list of Club Officers, Harpooners and Co-Opted members is available on the website and on the notice board in the Club room as well as on the notice board here (centre pages).

Zoom gatherings – I am continuing where possible to maintain a Zoom gathering on a Thursday morning, opening from 1045. On February 9th we celebrated the 95th birthday of our Club President, Captain Reg Kelso, MBE FNI MNM and sang Happy Birthday across the screens!

250 Club – Remember, you have to be in it to win it!!! Here is a reminder from the website how it helps the Club:-

HOW THE "250" CLUB HELPS TO SECURE OUR FUTURE.

THE INCOME OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB IS HAVING DIFFICULTY KEEPING PACE WITH ESSENTIAL EXPENDITURE – DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?

Several years ago we introduced a system of a voluntary additional payment (with the inducement of a prize) so that those who can afford to pay a little more will do so and those who cannot need not.

THE IDEA OF THIS "250" CLUB WAS SUGGESTED BY THE LATE CAPTAIN WILLIAM ("ROBBIE") ROBERTSON WHO HAD USED IT TO GOOD EFFECT WITHIN ANOTHER ORGANISATION.

THE CONCEPT IS SIMPLE AND HERE IS HOW IT WORKS.

Each £5.00 you contribute gives you 2 chances, every month for 12 months, to win one of the £40 monthly prizes (£100 in December); there are two prizes each month.

The odds on your winning are a great deal better than the Lottery and your contribution will help the Club to meet its financial obligations.

Please consider "increasing" your subscription by subscribing annually to the "250" Club.

Make your cheque payable to "The Cachalots", write "250 Club" on the back and we will do the rest – and GOOD LUCK.

Functions

A programme for the year has been posted on the Club room noticeboard and is available on the website too. Please remember the Functions Officer is Julia Whorwood and all contact and ideas for other events can be sent to functions@cachalot.org.uk

Shipping Festival Service

A date for your diary. This year, we will be arranging the Shipping Festival Service at St. Michael's Church in Southampton on Thursday 8th June at 1900. The format will follow similar to those held in previous years. We will be looking for volunteers to assist.

Cachalot Golf Day(s)!!!

With great assistance from one of our Cachalots and Southampton Pilot, Bruce Thomas, we are going to run two golf days this year:

Thursday 13th April 2023 at Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club (Cost to be confirmed)

Thursday 28th September 2023 at Corhampton Golf Club (Cost to be confirmed)

Please contact the Boatsteerer in the first instance.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

Welcome to this bumper edition of *The Cachalot* which contains the usual mix of things old and new, all written by or sourced through Cachalot members. The new includes reports on happenings within the past month and that *is* new by our standards. The old is a previously unpublished account of the wartime experiences of an apprentice with PSNC which will be completed over the next couple of issues and which I hope that some of you will find interesting.

At the meeting of the Past Captains on the 7th January when the appointment of Capt. Becket was confirmed, a new Staff Captain was also appointed. He is Lt Cdr David Carter RNR MNM, currently the RN/MN Liaison Officer. His background is MN and he was 16 years in command with Shell Tankers. His full cv can be read in the New Cachalots pages of the website but you will have to scroll down to March 2018 when he joined.

Capt Phipps referred to the Burns Night Supper in his Post Captain's log. At the event my mobile phone lost power and I had to resort to my wife's superior one to snatch some pics. My unfamiliarity with the device shows but I did manage to capture a couple of semi-decent ones, one of John Noble addressing the Haggis (and Capt Andrew Tinsley addressing a pint)



and one of Past Captain/Boatsteerer Lionel Hall giving the Toast to the Lassies, his 15th attempt at getting it right. All good fun of course and hugely entertaining, as ever.

Editor

MOL Treasure

After a serious incident in Southampton Water on the 26th January, The United Kingdom Maritime Pilots' Association (UKMPA) issued the following statement:

"The MV MOL Treasure, an Ultra Large Container Ship, departed the Port of Southampton at around 1100 bound for Le Havre. For pilots Capt Christopher Hoyle and Capt Neil Dunn this should have been a routine act of pilotage; but nevertheless one which only very experienced pilots are authorised to do, given the size of the vessel at 400m long with the capacity to carry 20,000 twenty foot containers. The weather conditions were good although gusty, with clear visibility and a calm sea state.

Not more than an hour into the passage, the MOL Treasure developed a significant reduction in engine power. Thankfully an escort tug was already in attendance and Southampton Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) deployed a further three tugs to assist the pilots & vessel to remain safely controlled within the navigation channel at all times.

For 10 hours, whilst the Chief Engineer set about trying to identify the issue with the engines, Pilots Hoyle and Dunn worked with the tugs to keep the ship from drifting and grounding. This was only possible due to their unique understanding of the waters in this very tricky tidal area of the Solent.

To ensure all personnel involved were fresh enough to carry out their tasks, the tug crews were exchanged and a third pilot, Capt Richard Harding, boarded the vessel so that the pilots could 'tag team' as two pilots are always needed to pilot a ship of this size. Finally, shortly before midnight, after more than 10 hours with significantly reduced power available, the MOL Treasure was safely manoeuvred back to port. Without the skills of the pilots working as a team with the Port's maritime management team involving Harbour Masters, Tug crews, Southampton VTS and the respective port management staff, the outcome could have been vastly different - a major international waterway blocked to trade, possibly for weeks, pollution to a major waterway, serious injury or loss of life and significant disruption to supply chains, were all averted.

This is why in the UK, no matter the cost, pilots are essential for UK plc to function smoothly. Their skills and dedication should never be undervalued."

Well, the UKMPA can be rightfully proud, as should ABP, of the actions of these three Southampton pilots as they successfully returned this huge ship safely to her berth. While investigations into the incident are ongoing they are duty bound by commercial confidentiality and reticent to sing their own praises, but as a long retired Southampton pilot I am, perhaps, in a position to make some personal observations myself.

We tend to refer to these ships, some of the largest moving objects on earth, as 'monsters', but that has the very negative connotations of something evil and frightening. 'Goliaths' or 'Behemoths' would be better. They are the face of modern global trade and we must learn to live with them and treat them with great respect. Yes, they can be 'bent' round Post Office corner to the upper reach berths but everything must go exactly to plan. No failures of plant or equipment, no breakdowns of communications or even of personnel. That can only be achieved by investing in top quality tugs and machinery and with the application of the highest standards of maintenance and training. To be able to undertake such manoeuvres one must have total confidence not only in the ship and the attendant tugs but also in one's own abilities. And that confidence and skill only comes with years of training and experience. In Southampton it takes over five years of piloting to attain authorisation as first class, with peer assessment at every stage. Only then would a pilot be considered for further training to become a container ship specialist.

The momentum of these leviathans (another good word) when underway is staggering. At her maximum draft of near 16m the Treasure displaces almost 190,000 tonnes. The slightest contact with anything can result in very serious and expensive damage to both ship and shore. I don't expect that she was down to her marks but even so was probably weighing in at over 150,000 tonnes. It was absolutely vital that she be maintained within the navigable channel, stemming the flooding tide until it turned sometime during the afternoon and choosing an opportune time to swing her to the ebb before easing her back towards Southampton. (HW was at 1409 that day and LW at 1954, with a range of 3.7m.) During that swing her 400 m length would be straddled across the channel with the stem and stern at their closest to shallower water. And there is sometimes a very short and rapid transition from being in shallow water to being in deep sh*t. Recent experiences with similar vessels, in the Suez Canal and at Chesapeake Bay, has proved that it can be a very lengthy and expensive business to dig them out once they have gone aground.

So it is no surprise that, at the recent Sea Pie Supper, the outgoing Captain, himself a retired Southampton pilot and Harbour Master, chose to laud the actions of the three pilots, all of whom are Cachalots and were all present in that room which was full of over 350 people representing all aspects of the maritime world in the south.

Terry Clark



Sea Pie Supper – Friday 3rd February 2023

Following last year's successful return of the Sea Pie Supper, we returned to St. Mary's Stadium. Sadly, we lost two of our distinguished guests ahead of the evening, as well as our M/C, Richard Wilson OBE, due to illness, hence twenty-one on the top table. The main hall accounted for the rest of the 386 members and guests on thirty-six tables, an increase of 27 from last year. Sixty-seven Cachalots attended. It should be noted that our Cachalot Member, Imogen Smart, did a fantastic job as stand-in M/C for the evening.



In all things ready ...

This year the Boatsteerer made contact with Jamie Cayzer-Colvin, Head of Funds at Caledonia Investments. Jamie has strong connections with shipping and the Sea Pie Supper. One of his antecedents was Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe of Scapa, who attended the first Annual Luncheon in 1929 as the guest of honour. Jamie is responsible for the archives of the Union-Castle Line at Cayzer House in London.

Our group of *Meeter's and Greeter's*, armed with their list of mugshots, the younger Cachalot's with them ready on their phones, did a grand job in meeting the distinguished guest at the entrance, and guiding them up to the VIP Reception in the Press Room. A photo opportunity of the VIP group was achieved by Terry.



Our Distinguished Guests

Standing, L -R:

Prof Anthony Hill CBE (Director NOC), Mr Alastair Welch DL (Port Director, ABP So'ton), Rev'd Reg Sweet RN, Cdre David Eagles (RFA), Capt Robin Batt (Master HCMM), Cdre John Voyce OBE (Naval Base Commander Portsmouth), Lt Col Verity Crompton (CO 17 Port & Maritime Reg Marchwood), Capt Ian McNaught CVO MNM FNI Stowaway, Capt John Lloyd MBA FNI RD (CEO Nautical Institute), Rear Admiral John Lang FNI FRIN DL (President Winchester Sea Cadets)

Seated, L - R:

Mrs Muriel Potter, Mr Marcus Rayment, Clr Jacqui Rayment (Lord Mayor Southampton), Mrs Penelope Jarvis, Surgeon Rear Admiral Lionel Jarvis CBE (Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire), Capt Martin Phipps MBE, Capt Elect Noel Becket, Mr Jamie Cayzer-Colvin, Lady Mary Fagan LG DCVO Stowaway, Captain Christopher Fagan DL.

The evening commenced with a superb and topical Grace delivered by the Rev'd Reg Sweet, and all settled down to the Sea Pie Supper.

The Loyal Toast was provided by Captain Phipps MBE while the Boatsteerer gave the toast for Absent Cachalots. The room was reminded of the marked envelope on each table and asked to put their place card, with a decent amount of money, preferably of the note variety, into them for later collection.



With the meal complete, Captain Phipps handed over the Club Captain's Collar to Captain Noel Becket and Noel handed Martin his 'Past Captains' badge and ribbon. Following Noel's speech, a toast to the Guests was completed following which Noel introduced the Principal Guest and Speaker.

Jamie Cayzer-Colvin's speech was both well delivered and interesting. On completion, the guest speaker proposed the toast to the Cachalot's.

Following a short break, and before the appearance of the '*Ansomed Cabin Buys*', opportunity was taken to complete the Prize Draw with an Apple Smart Watch device generously donated by the Southampton Shipowners Association. One of Whitaker's young lady's drew the place card which belonged to Susan Simmonite Congratulations, Susan.



Nathalie Freeman, from Exxon Mobil and who was a guest on the Whitaker table, drew the place card of a fellow guest on the same table, Susan Simmonite,

The generosity of those attending was confirmed by a count of £3,721.65 plus a €5 euro note! Included in this was £55 resulting from a sweepstake on the MCA table to guess the length of the main speech. This was won by Mark & Janet Watkins of the RAF Yacht Club. They donated the prize to the overall collection. During the meal, Jamie Cayzer-Colvin told the captain he would match whatever amount was raised!! Hence we will have **£7,443.30** to divide equally between the three seafarers' charities, the Mission to Seafarer's, Stella Maris and the Sailor's Society.

The assembly was then entertained and joined in the singing of the Sea Shanties led by the '*Ansomed Cabin Buys*'.

A-Rovin, Blow the Man Down, South Australia, Drunken Sailor and Spanish Ladies were well sung, even two extra verses, clean, for Drunken Sailor not shown on the song sheet! This year, Shep Woolley brought along a fiddle player who entertained us and clearly struck a chord with a female Cachalot and her guest who got up to dance a jig in the middle of the room. Needless to say, the fiddling and dancing were well received.



In the party mood and up for an impromptu dance, a Cachalot member and her guest

With a resounding rendition by all of Land of Hope and Glory followed by the National Anthem, time was then taken to complete networking and catching up with friends and acquaintances before heading home.

The feedback from the distinguished guests and others in the hall has been very positive and highlighting a very successful Sea Pie Supper. We look forward to carrying the success forward to Friday 2nd February 2024. A date for your diaries!

Last but by no means least, I wish to thank all the distinguished guests, VIP's, corporate entities and their guests, Cachalots, Club Officers and Harpooners who were able to attend and those who were able to provide assistance by whatever means.

Compiled by Robin Plumley, Boatsteerer



Captain Elect and his wife, Birthday Girl Debbie

Going Under – the first part

Cachalot Colin Crimp and his partner Jill Fitzpatrick travelled through North America many times and wrote of their experiences in a book, "Travels with AH", parts of which have appeared in these pages before. Now they are on a different tack altogether, bound for New Zealand.

We've already been 3 weeks on 'Arcadia'. We'll have 6 weeks on this ship before getting to Auckland, New Zealand, for a month of travels and half of it has gone already. How did that happen?

A lot of the other 1500 or so passengers on board have been cruising for years, know all the ships and all the routes, and some have been round the world countless times. Their only conversation seems to revolve around how many cruises they've been on, how cheap they were, what's going wrong with this one, how many times they've complained so far and how much better things were with this or that company or this or that ship. These are The Moaners.

This is an 'Adults Only' voyage and so, not only are there no children on board, the average age of the passengers is a bit more than might otherwise be the case. Inevitably, there is some infirmity and disability and this seems to be well catered for which is very good. There is also quite a lot of obesity (is one allowed to say that?) and the sights around the swimming pool sometimes defy gravity – beached whales letting it all hang out and trying to make it go brown in the sun. I think this might be an occupational hazard with cruising as it is quite possible to be eating constantly for almost 24 hours a day. Indeed, a favourite line of several of the comics that we have seen in various venues and theatres around the ship has been "I won't keep you long, I'm well aware that many of you haven't eaten for at least 20 minutes."

This is our first time, we're virgin cruisers, it's all new to us and, unlike The Moaners, we can relax. We're having an absolute ball.

When 'Arcadia' initially arrived in Southampton from her previous cruise in Northern Europe, there had been some cases of Norovirus on board and so departure was delayed by about 2 hours while some cleaning was done. There were hand sanitising stations everywhere on board and it also became apparent that, for the first week of the trip, all passengers and crew had to wear face masks. The rain came down in sheets as the 'sail away' fireworks sort of went off and 'Arcadia' set sail down the English Channel into the teeth of a Force 9 gale. There was some doubt about whether the Southampton pilot would be able to leave the ship and the Captain mentioned the possibility of having to deliver him to the more sheltered waters off Brixham in Devon instead. The Moaners were gathering ammunition. That evening, the Captain patiently addressed the whole ship in response to a complaint that he'd had and carefully assured everyone that in the North Atlantic in January with a Force 9 gale blowing it was perfectly normal for there to be a few creaking noises and some ship movement. Poor Captain - The Moaners had excelled themselves.

We share our allocated dinner table with four others. There is a Scottish couple who aren't really a couple but share an inside cabin and who seem to be constant cruisers and firmly in The Moaner's camp (let's call them Mildred and Barry). Mildred has been married several times before, not surprising as nothing is ever quite right for her, and Barry goes on and on about football, how many watches he's got, street art, how many rock concerts he's been to and how he's a regular shopping channels viewer. The other couple, in contrast, are Micky Groves of The Spinners (Liverpool folk band of 1950s – 1980s) and his wife, Do. Micky, now 86, is very interesting company.

'Black tie' at dinner means wearing a dress shirt and I only brought one. Come to think of it, I only possess one. This formal dining seems to happen every 3 or 4 evenings at the moment and so the laundry is busy. It's worse for Jill, though. At least I can get away with wearing exactly the same thing every time. To counteract the effects of all this eating, we tread the Promenade Deck every day, forward underneath all the lifeboats on the Starboard side and then back underneath all the lifeboats on the Port side. It's extremely pleasant when the sun shines and the water is calm, and amounts to about one mile for every 3 circuits. When the wind blows and the sea is rough, as it was for the first 7 days across the Atlantic, 3 circuits amounted to about 1.1 miles on account of all the staggering about.

Unable to resist the compulsion to sing we have both joined the Arcadia Choir (about 140 strong) which means an hour or so of choir practice almost every day. Our first concert was very well received and was given somewhere in the Atlantic from the stage in the Palladium, a huge theatre that can accommodate about 1000, complete with all the theatrical gizmos including a revolving stage. It's located towards the bow of the ship and, as a result, the whole thing moves up and down quite a lot – musical dynamics took on a whole new meaning. How the dancers cope with a moving stage in the evening shows is anybody's guess.

Our first port of call after crossing the Atlantic for 9 days was to be in the Bahamas. We approached Freeport and berthed just as the sun was rising. The palm trees and the little bars and market stalls outside the berth looked beautiful in the early sun. A



bunkering barge came alongside and started pumping fuel on board. We waited. Eventually, after a few holding announcements, the news came over the PA that the Port Health Authority had looked at the number of Norovirus cases that were still on board (we'd no idea how many or how few that was) and had withdrawn permission to enter the port. No one could get on and no one could get off. All we could do was look down at Freeport from deck 10 and, once the fuelling was finished, set off again with our tail between our legs. That really gave The Moaners something to moan about.

Two things resulted from the Freeport incident. Firstly, compulsory hand-washing stations were set up at the entrances to the main restaurants and secondly, a Deep Clean of the ship had to be carried out at the next port, Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale) in Florida. This meant that everyone had to leave the ship for the whole day. Trying to disembark all the passengers at once had resulted in long queues for the busses into town and even longer queues to get back on the ship in the evening. There was muttering among The Moaners. For ourselves, we weren't really intending to go ashore in Florida anyway but ended up having a wonderful day on water taxis seeing Fort Lauderdale from the canals and waterways before eventually being dropped off back in the port, just a short walk from the ship. The Captain had so far been having quite a stressful week. I'm sure, at that point, he was wondering just how much worse it could get.

Montego Bay, Jamaica, was the next stop and on the way there we spotted shoals of flying fish and pods of dolphins and seabirds diving into the ocean to grab fish. A coach took us around the coast of the island, past beautiful scenery and, yes, a lot of poverty, to a beach resort for a day of chilling in the hot sun (if that's possible) and the necessary, almost compulsory, jerk chicken washed down with daiquiri.

One of the anticipated highlights of the trip, in fact one of the reasons for making the voyage in the first place, was to transit the Panama Canal. It is truly an engineering marvel that recently celebrated 100 years since its opening in 1914. The canal runs NW to SE for about 48 miles in total, roughly half of which is across the man-made lake of Gatun. It was very hot and humid as the canal pilot came on board at the Atlantic entrance (Limon Bay) at 5.00 in the morning, and we finally cleared the Pacific end of the canal about 12 hours later. We watched the entire performance from the upper deck, going up 3 massive locks, across Gatun Lake and then down 3 more locks into the Pacific – just amazing. The ship was under its own power but was guided through the locks (into which we only just fitted) by 3 electric 'mules' on each side. The antics of these 'mules' and their crews kept us fascinated all day. There are big ships passing through the canal each way for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with scores more anchored at each end of the canal waiting for a 'slot'. It was getting dark as we passed the incredible skyline of Panama City and finally entered the Pacific Ocean, making our way through all the anchored ships, each one lit up like a Christmas tree. Quite a spectacle.



Huatulco beach bar and Arcadia



Huatulco market



Our Huatulco boatman

Huatulco used to be a small fishing village on the Pacific Coast of Mexico and is rarely shown on atlas maps. A government decision was taken, however, to develop a tourist industry on the Pacific coast and so, on the outskirts of the village, there are now villas and hotels and resorts being developed and a cruise liner jetty has been added alongside the harbour. The old village at the centre, though, is still such a beautiful place – so much so that within a few minutes of arriving I'd decided that I want to live there. Jill bought a dress in the market and we had Margheritas and grilled fish on the beach before finding an elderly fisherman with a small boat who would take us out for an hour. We visited coves and little beaches not accessible by land and looked at coral through the clear blue water. In one of these coves, the fisherman suddenly suggested snorkelling. I was not prepared for this but, of course, Jill was. She and the fisherman set off for about half an hour looking at coral and brightly coloured fish all around where the little boat was anchored. We were out for nearly 2 hours altogether and so offered him way more than had been agreed. But what a day.

Further up the Mexican coast is Manzanillo, a major Mexican port – quite the opposite to Huatulco – but about an hour's drive inland and up into the mountains is the old area capital, Colima, with an equally old colonnaded town square complete with gardens and cathedral, just re-opened after being badly damaged in a recent earthquake. Having clambered over some recently excavated ceremonial pre-invasion ruins (discovered while digging foundations for a new supermarket), with a wonderful backdrop of two conical volcanoes, we went even further inland and up to the smaller, older town of Comala with a colonnaded square

with gardens in the middle and a cathedral, almost identical to Colima, just smaller and older. This was real Spanish colonial history so we just sat and looked at it. And had an ice cream.

When we had left the ship down in the port, we and all our rucksacks had been vigorously sniffed by a very nice black labrador who was looking for drugs and illegally imported foodstuffs. On our return to the ship our departure was delayed by an hour or two because the black labrador was then at the airport doing his sniffing job and the few extra crew that were joining the ship were not allowed on board until they had been sniffed.



Clearly, our black dog was the only qualified animal in the entire Manzanillo area as the Captain announced, ‘we are unfortunately delayed briefly while we await the arrival of one man and his dog from the airport.’

From Manzanillo, the next part of the voyage was to be 7 days heading west, straight across the Pacific, aiming for the Hawaiian island of Honolulu. But forget tropical heat and the sun-kissed beaches of ‘South Pacific’ – as we lost sight of land, the ocean became grey, the sky clouded over and the air was decidedly chilly.



The Wrong Stop

I thought I would get in touch to confirm, that, yes indeed, “Wrong Stop” was a feature on Blue Funnel telegraphs.

I have some memories of seeing this on board the first Blue Flue ship I sailed on, the “Autolycus”, and a subsequent voyage on her sister-ship “Aeneas”. Vague memories indeed, as this would have been in 1970, back when I was a “Middie” with just a few months sea-time. (Blue Flue apprentice navigation cadets were called Midshipmen, and generally manned the telegraph and wrote the movement book while on standby). I had not seen the “Wrong Stop” before on the relatively more modern Elder Dempster ships which were my first two trips to sea with Ocean Fleets. So I asked the third officer about it, and was told it was to be used when the engineers rang the wrong response, or the bridge had rung the wrong order. In the days of the old-fashioned chain telegraphs, where bells rang mechanically as the handle was swung about, it was too easy for the “Middie” operating the handle to miss the correct position for the intended order, by swinging the handle too far, or leaving it slightly short. If the Middie was then tempted to move the handle slightly to the correct position, the bells inside the telegraph in the engine room might only just ping, and this would be missed in the noisy environment down below (no control rooms in those days).

I don’t think that the telegraphs on those two A-Class Blueys, which were built in the early 1950’s, had been converted to electric operation when I was on board. I do recall having to swing the telegraph handle back and forth for a “Double Ring” emergency astern on sister-ship “Elpenor” in Belawan (or perhaps Surabaya?) when collision with the berth was imminent. That would have been 1973, so chain telegraphs (and Wrong Stops) persisted in Blue Flue until at least then. The collision was an exciting moment, hence I remember it well, but can’t recall which Indonesian port it was...they all blend into one composite in the fog of the past.

Knowing the philosophy of Alfred Holts (who left nothing to chance); only they would have thought that Wrong Stop was important, and commissioned Chadburns to include it in their telegraphs, but I may be wrong. Perhaps other Liverpool companies might have fitted them. Whatever reason (a past incident?) caused the naval architects at Alfred Holts’ head office to require Wrong Stop is lost in the past, long before my time.

If only I had realised then that keeping a diary and writing down all my experiences might end up being a source of reference for me to answer questions like this.

Best Regards

Philip Truscott

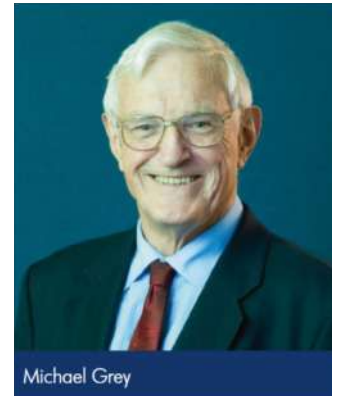
Sea service: 1969-1983 Ocean Fleets, 1983-1989 KOTC, 1989-1994 Esso International

Testing Times

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 823 February 11th 2023

By Michael Grey MBE

You would almost think that it is a seasonal phenomenon, these regular warnings about ships' machinery grinding to a standstill on account of something nasty having been introduced into the bunker tanks. The consequences of off-spec or non-compliant fuel are generally dire, ranging from wrecked machinery, to expensive operations to purge the system and rid the ship of the filthy stuff, which never should have been aboard in the first place, if the proper precautions had been taken. And it might be that the "non-compliance" involves illegality, which beside the above, could see the owner and the Master (why the Master of a ship is responsible for bunker specifications is one of the mysteries of the sea) heavily fined by a wrathful flag state, whose inspectors have detected the problem.



The latest warning, in the shape of a report from Lloyd's Register and their specialist consultants Thetius, put some numbers into the public domain. The report suggests that no less than 1m tonnes of off-spec and non-compliant fuel are detected every year; a pretty staggering quantity. I always like to think of these numbers in units which can be easily grasped, and that's four VLCCs full of the stuff, if you like, which is said to cost ship operators between \$27,000 and \$50,000 per incident. And what about the ones which got away?

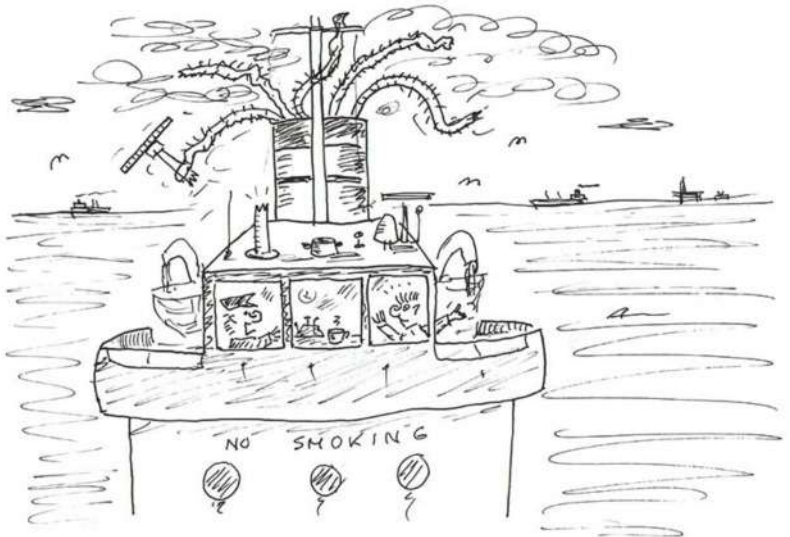
Is this a problem which is getting worse, or is it that with a greater emphasis upon inspections to ensure compliance with more onerous fuel regulations, brought about by emission criteria, there is just more of it being picked up? And it is worth putting the problem into perspective, in a time of changing regulations, increasing focus upon fuel quality and against the millions of tons of maritime fuels that are annually consumed by the world fleet.

But whatever is the answer to these questions, there is no escaping from the fact that the quality of marine fuel is generally far less assured than practically any other. One can be reasonably sure that somebody running a power station, or other large fuel consuming machinery, will not put up with the sort of louche performance standards in the supply of fuel routinely put up with by ships' chief engineers. And a supplier of off spec fuel to the motor trades or aviation wouldn't last long in the business. You might say that ships – here today and gone tomorrow – are natural victims of sharp practice – there are plenty of stories from years ago about even coal being so poor that the steam pressure could not be maintained. Perhaps the "culture" which presided over shale and stones masquerading as useful fuel just never really changed when oil came along.

It is probably also a fact that in so many cases it is the charterer, rather than the owner, who is responsible for the bunkers, is looking for a cheap deal, and may only be vaguely interested in the quality of what is supplied. Moreover, even though there are these regular warnings and stern invocations to test fuel taken aboard before it is ever let near the machinery, it will be invariably to the owner's account.

There are excellent and highly reputable fuel testing services available all around the world, so if everyone could be persuaded to use them, you would think that this problem would disappear. In these columns we have pointed to companies which have been put on this earth precisely to test and track fuel all the way from its refinery to the ship, able to detect every possible impurity. But there will always be some bean counter, or chancer, who will veto their employment, leaving the quality, or specification in the lap of the Gods, who are not always smiling.

You could also argue that if the industry is to embrace some of these exciting new fuels, like methanol or ammonia, there will need to be new levels of precision and expertise in their handling, to provide both safety and quality assurance. It seems to be the preferred strategy of designers to place the fuel tanks containing these "future fuels" on the weather deck, rather than below. One doubts whether anyone has consulted the seafarers who will sail on these emission-free ships, but one proposed design for a large bulk carrier that is current shows an enormous tank of ammonia each side of the accommodation. It rather spoils the view, although their near neighbours may have other thoughts.



Printed here with the kind permission of

The
MaritimeAdvocateonline
www.maritimeadvocateonline.com

and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey MBE

greyjm@gmail.com

"What makes you think our new bio-fuel bunkers are off-spec, Chief?"

Officers of the Club and Committee Members for 2023

CAPTAIN	Captain N. S. Becket
STAFF CAPTAIN	Lt Cdr David Carter RNR MNM
BOATSTEERER	Captain R. Plumley MBE
STOREKEEPER	Captain I. Odd
POST CAPTAIN	Captain M. Phipps MBE
Hon. MEMBERSHIP OFFICE	Captain D. Gates
Hon. EDITOR	Captain T.E. Clark
Hon. FUNCTIONS OFFICER	Julia Whorwood
Hon. BURSARY OFFICER	Captain J. Mileusnic
Hon. CHAPLAINS	Fr J. Mosher, G. Hogan, Rev'd F. Sahetapy

HARPOONERS:

T.E. Clark, D. Gates, J.M. Noble, A. MOLL, L.R. Morris, M.L. Oakley, J. Whorwood

The Cachalot

Members are reminded that this newsletter is produced both in a digital format, delivered online to their email address and as a printed copy which can be collected from the clubroom or sent by post to those without email facilities or who just prefer to read a hard copy. The default is to send it online to all those who have supplied us with their email addresses but if you would like a printed copy please let us know and you will be added to the postal distribution list.

The two versions are usually identical, the email one is just the pdf copy of the printed one. Sometimes, as with this edition, there may be an edit after the copy is sent to the printers and before the email copy is promulgated.

Each edition is also posted on our website in the members only section where you will find ALL the previous editions too.

Copies are also emailed to certain non members such as widows, contributors and similar maritime clubs and associations.

The cut-off date for the next edition
will be on
Friday 19th May '23

250 Club

Nov	J Jones	M Sebbage
Dec (£100)	F N Pedersen	I B Thomson
Jan	C R Kelso	G. Thornton



Curry Lunches



EVEREST CUISINE

With the demise of Kuti's
this is now our preferred Curry House.
It suits our palates and our pockets as well as our numbers.
The stairs may be daunting for some (no lift)
but they are in three flights so you can always pause at
Base Camp or Camp I during your ascent.
It's on the corner of Queensway and Briton Street
(Some will remember it as POSH)

The first Curry Lunch this year is booked there for

Saturday 25th March

1230 for 1300

The price will be £24 per person, exclusive of gratuity.

Subsequent bookings are for

22nd April

15th July

19th August

23rd September

18th November

Nearest car park is Gloucester Square, off the High Street.
Book, and pay, through the office a.s.a.p. please.



Club Supper



A Club supper is being arranged on

Wednesday 17th May

downstairs at the RBL
Menu and price are as yet undetermined
but full details will be promulgated when known.
Expect something Royal.

Max numbers will be 42.

My Wartime Years

Thurston Holmes

These previously unpublished memoirs come to us courtesy of Cachalot Peter Giles and were written by the uncle of a friend of his. I hope they will prove of interest.

Being born under the sign of the fish, Pisces, and having spent every holiday except one at West Mersea messing about in boats I was fairly naturally pretty keen on the water and all things to do with the sea. When it was time to leave school my Parents engaged the services of some sort of employment counsellor to examine me and to recommend what avenues of employment he would suggest. I don't remember much about any conclusion and it was decided, after consultation with Granny, that the sea was to be my future. Granny suggested a training ship and in due course I was sent off to *TS Mercury* at the Hamble River near Southampton.

This place was run by two martinets, man and wife, with the most rigid discipline imaginable and the boys were treated as if they were outcasts of society. Hair was shorn to bare pates and kept short by repeated applications of the shears. Night accommodation was aboard an old clipper ship moored in the River Hamble. Extensive upperworks had been added and the appearance was of a convict ship, Beds were non existant and sleeping was in hammocks strung very close together. Two blankets were provided with no pillow. Such things were considered quite unnecessary; as an alternative we used rolled up clothing. Our uniform was naval rating issue of square necked shirt, collar, a sort of tunic, bellbottomed trousers and boots. Strangely the hammock was very warm and comfortable although access to a hammock about five feet off the deck was an athletic act.

Naval cutters were used to transport the boys, or "convicts" my number was 998, rowed of course by the boys night and morning. The ship was only used for sleeping and all other activities took place in classrooms spread across the campus which was extensive with an abundance of playing fields. The food provided was of the very basic variety and my Mother used to send food parcels to help out. One of my favourites being apricot jam from the Sibford Co-op.

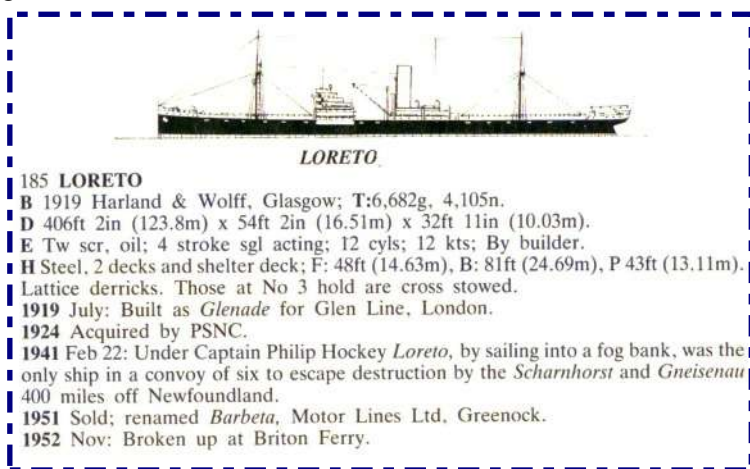
The Mercury was a very very unhappy period in my life and I refused point blank to return after the first term. A telegram "998 not returning" was sent and that was that.

We had a good friend in the village, Sibford Gower, called Edward Winter. He had been adopted by a devout Quaker family Mr and Mrs Winter. He was rather a strange and lonely chap, perhaps twenty years older than me, who was currently a deck hand on trawlers out of Hull or Grimsby, fishing in the North Sea, and at times up into the Arctic Circle. Edward used to regale me with tales of his experiences which were extremely tough and hazardous with a view to dissuading me from a career at sea.

However I was not put off and letters were sent by Father to many shipping companies seeking a Cadet/apprenticeship for me. Eventually a favourable reply was received from the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) in Liverpool offering a four year apprenticeship without the payment of a premium. Remuneration was £7 for the first year, £8 for the second year, £10 for the third year and £15 for the last year. The Cadet was to diligently apply himself as servant of the Company. Deductions would be made for National Health and Unemployment Insurance. Later the Ministry of Transport paid "War Risk Money" to all Merchant Seamen of £10 per month. After some thought this was accepted and I duly attended with Father at the Company's Offices in Water Street, Liverpool, where indentures were signed.

After a short period I was told to outfit myself at suitable outfitters in Liverpool and to present myself to the Master of *MV Loreto* currently in Canada Dock in Liverpool for my first voyage. Father and I again travelled to Liverpool where I was equipped with all the gear considered, by the outfitters, necessary for a young "officer". Father went off home and I spent, on the recommendation of the outfitters, a very disturbed and apprehensive night at the local Sailors Home, a poor down-trodden establishment, feeling very strange in my new uniform..

So in February 1941 I travelled from Pierhead by what was called " the overhead" which was a little railway running over Dock Road to all the dock areas and very efficient too. I found my way to Canada dock, presented my pass to the policeman and was shown where the ship lay. She was tied up alongside a large warehouse and fairly low in the water having taken on cargo for the countries on the west coast of South America where we were bound. There were three other cadets and I, of course, was dogsbody. However they were a friendly lot and we all got on well and due course they showed me the ropes. *Loreto*



was a general cargo ship of about 4500 tons built in the early 1900s and should have been scrapped long ago. There were 5 holds for cargo. 1 and 2 being between the fo'castle and the midships accommodation, number 3 between the accommodation and the boat deck and 4 and 5 between the boat deck and the poop. Upon the poop was installed an ancient 4" naval gun operated by four DEMS. [?] On the foredeck were two platforms with twelvepounders and on either side of the bridge Oerlikon machine guns with which I would in due course become trained. Over the bow was a triangular affair which I think was for streaming paravanes to cut through cables in mine fields. Right round the ship was a heavy electrical cable to provide protection against magnetic mines known as Degaussing Gear.

Our cabin on the boat deck was rather isolated from the officers cabins in the centre castle and comprised four bunks, a settee and a wardrobe. Adjoining was our bathroom. Officers cabins and a few passenger cabins with diningroom kitchens etc. Masters cabin and sitting room and Bridge all in the centrecastle. Crews quarters in the poop at the stern.

The following day tugs appeared and the ship was warped out through the lock into the Mersey and our voyage had begun, all very exciting but strange to me. As the junior cadet I was to attend on the bridge with the Third Officer, one Tommy Tourney, an Irishman, on the 8 to 12 watch morning and evening. Other cadets attended the Chief Officer on the 12 to 4 and the Second Officer on the 4 to 8 watch. The Captain, known as the Master, held a roving commission as necessary 24 hours a day. Off we went down the Mersey out into Liverpool Bay to form up with about 30 other ships of varying nationality into a convoy through the Irish Sea north of Ireland and so out into the Atlantic attended by various naval Destroyers and Corvettes.

So I slowly adjusted into life in a merchant ship in convoy in wartime learning what it was all about and settling into a routine. The Third Officer was my "boss" on watch and he was really a very nice understanding chap with an Irish brogue and a fund of tales of his journeys home through Ireland to his home in Trallee. My job on the bridge was to be on the opposite side to the officer and to keep a good lookout for anything extraordinary, to fetch and carry as necessary tea, coffee, cocoa errands to all sorts of strange places. Like being told to go and find the Chief Engineer in the engineroom and ask for some red oil for the port light, to find the Bosun and get the key of the keelson, all banter imposed on the new boy which had to be carried out seriously.

During one evening watch I remember being told to go and turn the ventilators round away from the wind when suddenly there were very strong vibrations throughout the ship culminating as explosions when some unfortunate ship had been torpedoed, I hastened to our cabin and collected my lifejacket and returned to the bridge. Many ships were torpedoed that night and the nights following in fact I think we lost about half the convoy before reaching the other side of the Atlantic. The escorts would race about dropping depth charges which if they were near could be felt very clearly.

There were usually five columns of ships with between five to ten ships in each column and the leading ship in the centre column contained the Commodore. Usually a high ranking retired naval officer called back for this duty. The Commodore would liase by morse light or signal flags with the Senior Officer of the escort in the lead destroyer. Signals would be given by the Commodore with flags to his charges which had to be repeated by each ship. These were read from a code book. It was the Cadets job to read these signals and get the appropriate flags from their locker and hoist for other ships to see. Occasionally we received morse code signals by Aldis lamp. This ran from a rechargeable battery which could be carried about as necessary. The light was on all the time whilst in use and reflected by a trigger to the recipient. Naval signallers to merchant ships were inclined to send very quickly knowing that we were not proficient much to our annoyance. I determined that I would beat them at their own game and in due course could send and receive at full speed.

As soon as the weather got worse and a full gale was upon us I succumbed to seasickness. Little sympathy was forthcoming and I had to attend watches as usual and told to eat dry toast. It passed off after a while but always returned in later voyages during bad weather.

Many of the ships were very old and had difficulty in keeping up with the 8 knot convoy. Escorts were constantly racing up between the columns telling ships by loud hailer to close up or to stop making smoke which could be a give away to U boats. Our course through the north Atlantic was close to Iceland and it was at times extremely cold with snow, fog and ice to contend with. I remember wearing nearly all the clothes in my possession with a greatcoat on top and still being frozen. A hot mug of cocoa and a warm bunk were always looked forward to..

Ships were under instruction not to stop to pick up survivors and there was usually a Trawler at the rear of the convoy for survivors. German Focke-Wulf planes would be seen flying round the perimeter of the convoy relaying messages to U boats giving our location and at times we would see British Sunderland flying boats circulating. Occasionally accompanying the convoy would be a specially fitted merchant ship with a catapult on the bows with a Hurricane. I never saw one fly off and presume they would have to ditch in the sea as we were too far from land for them to land.

When the convoy reached perhaps two thirds of the way across and usually out of reach of U boats the ships would disperse and make their own way onwards. Our port of call was to Hamilton Bermuda where we tied up alongside the main shopping street of the town. It was my first foreign visit and Bermuda was a thoroughly magical place. It was a British Colony

and there was only one car on the island and that belonged to the Governor. The water round the ship was so clear and the anchor cable could be seen right to the bottom. At the bottom of the gangway across the road was the local drugstore where most things could be bought.

Next we travelled on to Havana in Cuba where the crew were given shore leave whilst cargo was being discharged. The dock area was right in the middle of the town and access was very easy. The crew's main idea was always the same; to find the nearest bar for drinks and the nearest knocking shop for whores. Advances of local currency were made to the crew by the Purser according to their credit. For Cadets there was usually little credit and therefore little money to spend.

On we went next to Panama canal. This was a fascinating and very interesting experience. The ship would enter the lock escorted by tugs and a huge steel net was pulled under the ship from bow to stern apparently to prevent bombs being thrown into the canal. Powerful locomotives were attached at bow and stern and we were pulled through the various locks. In the centre is a large lake and we made our own way through this under our power. Through locks again and so into the Pacific.

After leaving the convoy our watches were abandoned and all four cadets worked on day work under instruction from the Chief Officer. Holystoning decks and hand rails which consisted of wetting the decks with hoses and rubbing holystones with long handles up and down to smooth the teak decks and hand rails. The weather was very hot and we would get up to a variety of mischief whilst Officers were not around. Another job was chipping and scrapping. Small hammers with sharpened blades would be used to chip off thick layers of paint from the upper works. Any residue would be removed with a scraper and the treated areas painted. Always, of course, with dull grey paint.

Many small and large ports would be visited where cargo was unloaded. The first was Guayaquil in Ecuador where we anchored in the river and unloaded into lighters alongside. This little town is on the Equator and it was extremely hot and humid with many biting flying creatures. The deck would be covered in these creatures in the morning and it was impossible to avoid crushing them - most unpleasant.

It was our job to tally cargo both in and out. Cargo from England was very mixed and would include crates of washbasins, lavatory pans and other sanitary ware, bales of suiting and other cloth, cars and many special items ordered by the various countries. In each hold was a locked store usually containing cases of whisky, gin and other alcohol. The local stevedores favourite ploy when unloading these cases was to drop the net when it was perhaps a few feet in the air thus breaking some bottles and to drink the droppings. I remember sitting on a large bale of worsted cloth counting the items as they were removed only to find when I moved that nearly all the suiting had been removed by the dockers without my knowledge. They were very poor, uneducated and up to all the tricks.

Other ports of call were Talara, Pimentel, Mollendo and Callao in Peru. Sometimes we called at several ports each day and were on duty for long periods. Amongst our other duties was the sweeping out of the holds and laying dunnage before loading cargo. This was a very dirty and hot job laying scrap timber on the decks to keep the incoming cargo off the steel deck. Whilst discharging cargo we would also load a lot of bags of nitrate. This stuff is very heavy usually only maybe twenty layers would be sufficient per deck. Other cargo was tin, antimony and little barrels of iodine.

Whilst in Callao we went to Lima which is the capital of Peru and took a trip on a mountain railway 12,000 feet up into the Andes stopping a little stations on the way where various produce was always for sale. Lima was a beautiful Spanish colonial city with many squares and tree lined avenues. Spanish was the local language but it was usually possible to get by with English and a few gestures.

On to Chile calling at Arica, Iquique, Tocopilla, Mejilones, Antofagasta. Taltal, Coquimbo and finally to Valparaiso where we would stay for about two weeks. Many of these calls were to very small towns, hardly ports, and we would anchor and be unloaded and loaded from lighters brought off by launches. Often there was a heavy swell running and there were many mishaps. Valparaiso was, like Lima, a Spanish colonial town with many fine plazas and avenues. Nearby was Vina del Mar a noted seaside resort which I visited several times.

On our way North we would call at many of these little ports again, through the Panama Canal, and up into the Atlantic to pick up a homeward bound convoy. The homeward voyage was very similar to the outward bound except that during a period of very bad weather with very dense fog we collided with another ship during the night. It was a fairly small vessel but it suffered a very wide gash from the deck down to the waterline. The *Loreto's* bows were severely damaged and water flooded the forepeak. Bulkheads were shored up with heavy timber and as the wind and weather were from the west we continued our voyage with the convoy. It was suggested that if heavy weather from the east was experienced, thus making a head sea, we would have to leave the convoy and slow down. In this event as there were few escorts already none would be spared to escort us home and we would have to make our own way and be an easy target for any passing Uboat. It was reputed that the other ship was a Uboat supply ship and it might have sunk after the collision.

Fortunately the weather favoured us and we continued to Liverpool arriving on 19th July 1941. Dry docking was, of course, necessary for repairs to the bows. Leave was granted and I went off up to Lime Street Station to catch the next train to Banbury. This was very crowded and it was quite impossible to get a seat. However leave was leave. *To be continued*

Future fuels: It's anybody's guess

Baird Maritime: Grey Power January 18 2023

By Michael Grey MBE

As everyone raves on about “net zero” while lighting fires on the pavement outside the IMO building to keep the protesters warm (as the “Just stop oil” fanatics increase the price of glue), it is maybe time to take stock of progress. Who remembers the shipping industry politely pointing out that the wholesale movement of the world fleet from running on fossil fuels would take time and was a change that could not be accomplished by the industry itself? As we have found with other forms of transport and energy provision, it is a whole lot easier to ban things than to provide practical alternatives.

Did governments – queuing up to signal virtuously at climate change festivals – acknowledge the scale of this massive transition and move to assist industry with meaningful research funding to accelerate the change? A sensible and practical mechanism suggested by the International Chamber of Shipping for an international research fund was rejected, perhaps because it was the horrid polluting industry proposing it in the first place.

And apart from the “sticks before carrots” approach of more taxes, levies on fuel users, and the “market based measures” beloved of the European Commission and creative financial manipulators, it has been left to the industry and largely individual shipping companies to get on with it.

“There is no body that can provide any assurance whatsoever that alternative fuel can be made available at the sort of scale that will be needed.”

The industry itself gets precious little recognition of the effort and money being spent to effect the transition and devise a sensible strategy for the way ahead. And in a global and traditionally fragmented industry, there is yet no real industry-wide consensus about how the next generation of deep-sea ships will be fuelled and powered.

It is not that there has been no progress – the industry’s own technologists in the shape of class has done plenty to assist the engine manufacturers in devising sustainable fuels that, all things being equal, could be used.

While LNG has clearly been regarded as a transitional fuel (unsurprisingly attracting plenty of environmentalist nay-sayers) and become unremarkable, and machinery has already been built that is able to use methanol, ammonia, hydrogen and bio-fuels, there is no great confidence that any one of these will provide the key to a decarbonised future afloat. The fuels have been shown to work and their characteristics have been studied, but there is no body or agency that can provide any assurance whatsoever that such a fuel can be made available at the sort of scale that will be needed, and at an affordable price.

There is a sort blind confidence that if the users of ships can be persuaded to pay a bit more for their sea transport, the clean conversion will happen, and almost of its own volition. It has already been grudgingly acknowledged that “green or blue” derivations of these fuels will be expensive and only made available by the use of vast quantities of hopefully “sustainable” electricity. And while it has been recognised that the provision of any of these fuels at scale will require the shipping industry to join the end of a long queue of industrial and energy consumers for the stuff of choice, the future enters a fog of uncertainty once again.

“For a lot of pragmatists, net zero remains something of an aspiration, rather than a firm date in the calendar.”

Outside the few really large shipping industry players, there is some apprehension at the ability of small- or medium-sized ship operators to access their fuel of eventual choice. While an operator the size of Maersk is able to range around the world securing contracts for the green methanol it seems to be betting on, others merely wait and see what the future might bring in the shape of the inevitable regulation.

It is also a very brave ship operator who will commit to one course of action, lest they get it wrong. There are plenty of ships being ordered with machinery capable of operating with an alternative fuel, but precious few actually using it.

Meanwhile, the world seems to be divided into two camps: 1) the virtuous elements who are making efforts (or at least voicing their determination) to phase out hydrocarbon use; and 2) the not inconsiderable number of countries who are still determined to keep drilling, acknowledging the reality that only oil and gas will keep the lights on and their industry operating for the foreseeable future. Check out the activity of the global drilling fleet and where it is currently operating and it is demonstrated that for a lot of pragmatists, net zero remains something of an aspiration, rather than a firm date in the calendar.

Re-printed here with the kind permission of Baird Maritime and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey MBE.



Captain Ken

Here is another contribution from Ken Owen that appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" of January 2023.

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

My sea life has certainly been full of surprises.

But I must say that last week was certainly one of the nicest. My wife Allwyn and I, were invited by Princess Anne, to attend a Reception at St. James Palace. The occasion was the seventy fifth birthday of the Royal Institute of Navigation, of which her father, Prince Philip, was a leading light: I am privileged to be a Fellow.

St. James's Palace is a magnificent building and was, of course, the Sovereign's residence until Buckingham Palace was built. We were shown how a window was removed, to enable King Charles III to give his Proclamation following the Queen's death. The reception was held in the Queen Anne room, and was a most friendly and relaxed gathering, with the Princess Royal taking the trouble to personally greet virtually all the some 150 guests, individually.

I was reminded of a very different surprise, when I was 4th Officer on the Blue Funnel ship 'Eurybates' in 1956'. We were bound from U.K. to Indonesia, and before we reached there, the combined forces of Britain, France and Israel had invaded Egypt, to control the Suez Canal. Consequently, the various ports in Indonesia, had been instructed to harass British and French ships calling there.

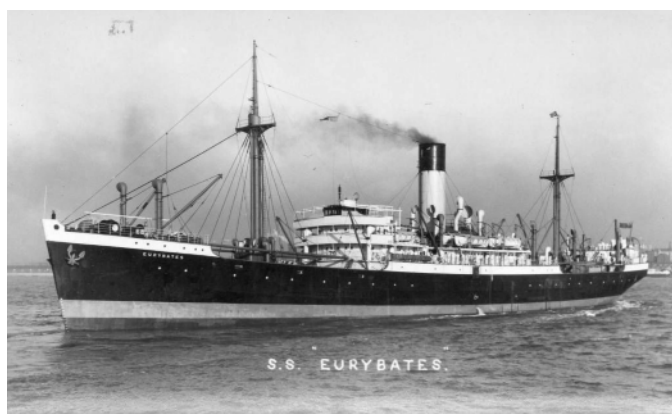
Our first port of call was Balikpapan in Borneo. We had run out of fresh water at the end of our passage and found to our surprise, when we anchored, that the port Authority refused to supply us with any.

In those days, ships were unable to de-salinate sea water, and relied on supply by barge, from ashore. We were fortunate to have extra life boats on 'Eurybates' as it was customary to carry pilgrims from Indonesia to Jeddah in the Hajji season.

But although it was inconvenient to drink the life boat fresh water, cook with sea water and wash using salt-water soap, what really worried us was that we needed the fresh water for the engine room boiler, without which the ship's engine could not be used.

'Eurybates' had originally been built with a combined steam and diesel engine, but later converted to pure diesel, due to the double number of qualified engineers required, when both steam and motor. Eventually, the harbour master took pity on us, and afraid we might die of thirst, supplied us with about fifty tonnes.

Our Chief Engineer, immediately put it all in the boiler, and we heaved up the anchor, started the engines and made off to friendly Singapore, where we could have as much water as we wanted.



When Ken completed a painting of the Eurybates he was challenged by George Holt, of the Blue Funnel dynasty, in that he had somewhat overemphasised the "woodbine" funnel. Ken replied that that was what the funnel looked like to him when he looked up at it from the bridge so it was classed as artist's license!

See what you think.

The painting now hangs in Ken's bedroom.



Russ Fairman's 'Round Britain Sailing Pilgrimage'

Celebrating Stella Maris' 100+ yrs of service

A Southampton sailor is set to embark on a 2.5 months long sailing pilgrimage around the UK – in aid of seafaring charity Stella Maris.

Russ Fairman, who is based in Southampton, is a passionate supporter of Stella Maris. He aims to raise funds and awareness for the work of the charity, a leading global maritime charity which exists to support seafarers and fishers.

This 2,136 nautical miles journey, which gets underway on Saturday 29th April, will sail from Southampton and interested boat owners can even join a small flotilla to see Russ off if they wish.

It then makes its way around Britain and is scheduled to stop at 50 ports and holy sites along the way. These include Gravesend, Harwich, Grimsby before heading for Scotland to take in Leith, Lochboisdale in the Outer Hebrides, Campbeltown in Argyll and the Isles, and Glasgow – the charity's birthplace.

The journey continues across to Ardglass in Northern Ireland, Milford Haven in Wales, and Plymouth prior to its arrival back in the south coast in Portsmouth on the same day as Sea Sunday, 9th July.

This eagerly anticipated Round Britain Sailing Pilgrimage will celebrate Stella Maris' 100 years of service to seafarers and fishers and contains many local connections.

Cachalot members Paul Owen and Peter Giles are existing volunteer ship visitors for Stella Maris while Gregory Hogan, Stella Maris Port Chaplain for Southampton and Southern Ports, is an Honorary Chaplain to the Cachalots this year.

Paul says "It's a privilege to support seafarers in Southampton, working as a Volunteer Ship Visitor, I know from my own years at sea that these acts of kindness and practical help are really appreciated"

Gregory says "Delighted to be serving as lay Chaplain to the Cachalots, using my experience with Stella Maris, to really make a difference to the lives of seafarers, spiritually and practically"

Russ recently attended the Cachalots 'Sea Pie Supper', taking the opportunity to hand out fliers and inform attendees that the sailing pilgrimage was fast-approaching.

He said: "It was a great evening, wonderful to experience the fellowship between the different groups, who obviously feel a bond through their inter dependency in working in the maritime industry. The feed-back on our Sailing Pilgrimage was very positive, and encouraging.

"Through this endeavour, we can hopefully raise further the profile of Stella Maris and the wonderful work it does in helping the People of the Sea."

Russ will be leading the pilgrimage on board the 'Mintaka', a 34ft sailboat. He is a RYA/MCA Yacht Master (Commercially Endorsed, Cruising Instructor) with over 30 years sailing experience.

There is excitement already building for an initiative which has captured people's imagination after it was originally planned to take place in 2020 to mark the charity's centenary.

The pilgrimage offers a unique opportunity for interested people to join as crew members on the boat for one or more days, and experience one leg of the journey first-hand.

The voyage is expected to be a rewarding experience for all involved. They will navigate the coastal waters of the UK, see beautiful coastal scenery and marine wildlife, and make a difference to the lives of seafarers.

Stella Maris provides a range of services to seafarers and fishers, including welfare, practical, and emotional support, pastoral care and chaplaincy services.

It is the largest ship-visiting network in the world, carrying out 70,000 ship visits around the world each year. This sailing pilgrimage aims to raise awareness and funds to help continue this critical work.

People can also get involved by attending one of the 16 area gatherings that will be held along the way in: Southampton, Gravesend, Harwich, Walsingham, Grimsby, Blyth, Leith, Lochboisdale, Oban, Campbelltown, Glasgow, Ardglass, Cardigan, Milford Haven, Plymouth and Portsmouth.

These gatherings will provide a platform for the public to learn more about the work of Stella Maris, meet the crew, and participate in community events.

This is an excellent opportunity for people to show their support for Stella Maris and further highlight the vital work that the organisation does.

For more information about the sailing pilgrimage and how to volunteer to be part of the crew, please contact the skipper Russ at sailing.pilgrimages@gmail.com or through the website <https://sailingpilgrimages.co.uk/stella-maris/>

No previous sailing experience is necessary, just a reasonable level of agility and fitness. Volunteers crewing on the boat can get involved in as much or as little of the sailing operations as they wish.

For more information about the port gatherings and how to attend one of them, please contact info@stellamarismail.org



This page replaces the p.17 that appears in the printed edition.

New Members

David Ayres is currently Port Manager of the Southampton Operations of Svitzer Marine and has extensive experience of shoreside ship management and servicing, mainly in Australia.

He enjoys golfing, hiking, fitness, playing music and confesses to being a casual maritime enthusiast. That enthusiasm stretches to the Sea Pie Supper and he says that from that event, the importance of being involved in and supporting this community becomes clear and it is also important to ensure that the traditions and uniqueness of our community remain vibrant into the future.

Captain Vikrant Bharat is a Master Mariner with an MBA in Shipping & Logistics. He is Director of Marine Consultants Vessconn Maritime and is an Associate Member of the Nautical Institute. He is also a member of Workboats Association UK, British Marine UK and the Company of Master Mariners of India. He enjoys nature walks, golf, reading and music and joins us to meet other maritime professionals and to engage with new comers to the industry.

Stephen Collins is Head of Unit at the Maritime Volunteer Service in Kingston-upon-Thames whose primary purpose is to provide regular river patrols at weekends, with uniformed volunteers on board the former Thames Police Launch 'Blue Light'. They also provide training up to RYA Powerboat Level 2 standard in association with the local Sea Scouts. Steve, who is a BA (Hons) MA, is a qualified RYA coastal Skipper to Powerboat L2. He joins us to network with colleagues and promote the work of the MVS in Southampton.

David Fortey is a Ship Agent with CMA-CGM UK Ship Agency and is a qualified Member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers. He is a life-long yachtsman, presently sailing a Bavaria 32 in all areas of the SW UK. He is a small time author of shipping and naval history and research. He previously worked with Police/UK government in maritime counter terrorism, national security and training in ship intelligence gathering and operations and modern slavery. He joins us to enjoy the company of like minded maritime people, to further his knowledge of shipping and associated industry and to support new-comers to the industry.

Chris Hoadley is Technical Superintendent of Ferries at Red Funnel and a qualified Marine Engineer and member of IMarEST. He started his working life as an engineering officer onboard container ships before coming ashore and running teams of engineers first at Hamworthy and then at Wartsila. He now enjoys looking after the Red Funnel fleet and is a member of the UK Chamber of Shipping Carbon Intensity Working Group. He is also a National Level Rugby Referee and a member of the RFU Disciplinary Panel. He joins us for the opportunity to meet with a diverse group of people who are like-minded when it comes to the shipping industry and its future development.

Donald Millar is the Owner/Managing Director of Just Be Maritime Ltd, Cadet Management. He is a BSc MBA and qualified EOOW with a 25 year seagoing career and 15 years in cadet management. He is a Younger Brother of Trinity House and joins to participate and contribute to technical discussion in a maritime network of like-minded marine professionals.

Neil William Purdon is a retiree now living in Pinetown, South Africa. He attended the School of Navigation at Warsash and served as a cadet and 3rd Officer with British & Commonwealth (1972 - 1975). He went on to earn a BSc(Survey) Cum laude and become a Professional Member of the SA Geomatics Council and SA Geomatics Institute. He is a former Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He is interested in maritime history, mainly of the 20th century with a focus on RN & MN ships - cargo and passenger, as well as notable personalities. Neil feels that having attended Warsash, membership will enable him to reconnect with fellow former seafarers and he frequently joins us on the informal Thursday Zoom meetings.

Charles Dennis Southcott is a midshipman in the Royal Navy in training as a Submarine Engineer Officer. He is a member of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, the Institute of Marine Engineering and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and is currently studying Naval Architecture at the University of Southampton where he is affiliated with Thunderer Squadron. He enjoys boating in all forms and lives on the banks of the River Tamar where he has a few pleasure boats. In the summer of 2021 he rebuilt a carvel 42ft 1929 Wishbone ketch. He sees joining the Club as an excellent opportunity to meet with people that have a shared passion within the city of Southampton and adds, "A few years ago I met with your wreath layer at the Southampton Remembrance Sunday Service. He talked very highly of the Club."



A Criminal Pilotage Investigation (cont)

Nine years ago, in January 2014, acting against the Pilotage Act 1987 and their own Rules and Regulations for the Engagement of Pilots, the Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners chose to obstruct the then properly authorised pilots from their work and employ cheaper, inexperienced (and therefore not properly authorised) pilots in their stead. This, by their own admission, was purely on fiscal grounds. They continued to charge the full rate for compulsory pilotage by unauthorised pilots, some would say fraudulently.

The MCA flagged up this irregularity to their superiors, the DfT, but were told that the matter should be resolved by the Court. The three pilots involved rapidly ran out of money and the judicial review was concluded without judgement. Subsequently the MCA was directed by the Shipping Minister of the day to issue a 'Clean Bill of Health' to the port.

Barrie Youde, a retired Liverpool pilot and qualified solicitor specialising in pilotage law, took on the case from the start and in 2016 the Metropolitan Police opened a criminal investigation which remains unsolved and even uninvestigated. No attempt has been made to interview witnesses, including two retired magistrates, nor to inspect the pilotage records at Londonderry.

Corruption or cover-up, take your pick, but I can't really believe that every police officer in the Met who has had this poisoned chalice thrust in their hands is corrupt. I suspect that it is just indifference to and ignorance of this quaint thing called Maritime Law. Barrie, however, refuses to abandon ship and continues to fire off almost daily emails and letters to all concerned including his long suffering but supportive MP. I wish him all success.

A fuller report was published in *The Cachalot* no.99 of June '22 and can be read on our website [Click here](#)

A Child of Statute.

The Pilotage Act.

I am a child of statute. I'm the offspring of an Act.
Conceived by every legal means. Recorded by all fact.
My father held a statute role. My mother was compliant.
And in those circumstances I was born to be defiant

Of those who take a careless view of things the law provides.
The statute writes things down and then the common law decides
Precisely what the statute means. The Parliamentary will.
What was the public purpose that the statute should fulfil?

It was to minimise the risks of peril on the sea.
Such is the legislation which has regulated me,
Throughout my life from birth, by every order and constraint.
Am I to stand in silence, now? No, Sir. No, I ain't.

Investigation unresolved is set before us all.
The records show some persons who are riding for a fall,
By Rules ignored for profit, or are overlooked at best,
And strain each very sinew to avoid the legal test.

My role is to defy them and oblige them now to answer
Before some fresh disaster, for the profit of some chancer.
We've seen it all before. My lot is to be at the scene,
Of where such things are righted, as they always should have been.

Parliament is older, far, than either you or I.
Hansard keeps the records which confirm the reasons why
The statute law remains today because the Members chose:-
In short, it's on the record that the Ayes defeat the Noes.

Civis Romanus Sum, proclaimed the citizen of old.
He saw the Roman statutes had the worth of solid gold,
Protecting every one of us against the sin of greed;
And marking private want as quite distinct from public need.

And thus, in short, it's clear that public need upholds the law.
For better or for worse. You too have heard all this before.
You sing it in the National Anthem, every time you sing it.
A point, above all else, where it's not good enough to wing it.

BY
Jan '23

Gone Aloft



**Captain Paul Compton
MNM**

Captain Paul Compton MNM went aloft on 27th November 2022 following a stroke from which he did not regain consciousness.

Paul originally started work in catering but spent most of his career in sail training ships Ts Royalist, Astrid and Pelican. He also worked for a time in the mega yacht industry. He was a Sea Cadet officer for over 30 years and was instrumental in founding the Weymouth & Portland branch of the Merchant Navy Association.

Paul first joined the Club in 1990 but his membership lapsed as he became more involved with the MNA and the sail trainers. He rejoined in 2015 when he was Master of the Pelican, "Now that I have more time" and in that year he was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for services to youth sail training and the Weymouth branch of the MNA.

A regular at the Sea Pie Suppers, he sailed a 28' Shipman and was the Rear Commodore of the Royal Dorset Yacht Club.



Mrs Margaret Dagnall, beloved wife of Ken Dagnall, our immediate Past Boatsteerer, passed away at 23-45 hrs Tuesday 21st February in Southampton General Hospital intensive care unit after a very short heart related illness.



The
World
Ship
Society

WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meeting

2.30pm, Saturday, March 11th 2023

**~ Broadening my Horizons ~ with Ann Haynes ~
Travel memories and ships spotted on Ann's 2012
OLS cruise departing from Marseilles in the south
of France.**

**Ann plans to present the talk from her home ...
we will be meeting at The Centre - Ferndown,
Barnes Road, BH22 8XH ... simultaneously, it
will be available via Zoom.**

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our December 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.

The CACHALOTS

**The Southampton Master Mariners' Club
1st Floor, Southampton Royal British
Legion Club, Eastgate Street
SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3HB
Tel: 023 8022 6155**

Web site: www.cachalots.org.uk

E-mail: office@cachalots.org.uk

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 Club room is currently open on just one day of the week, Friday, 1130 - 1500. Liz will be only too happy to serve you a drink. There is no catering on site but there are many sandwich outlets within easy walking distance.

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.