

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 103

June 2023

Captain's Log

I am sure that when each newly promoted Captain of the Cachalots receives the 'don't forget to write your log' message from the editor, he or she looks back at past Captain's logs to check the sort of information that is usually written about.

It would appear that the Captain's activities is yet another part of life that has been permanently affected by the pandemic as, since 2020, there have been fewer invited events to write about (I'm trying not to take it personally!). In fact my only official 'duty' to date has been to attend the Cachalots' Golf Day in April at Lee on the Solent Golf Club which Bruce Thomas and the Boatsteerer had organized. Thank you to them for their organization and to all the players who supported the event. The money raised was donated to my nominated charity - Solent Dolphin, who operate MV Alison MacGregor, which takes people with disabilities on day trips out to sea. More details can be found at <https://www.solentdolphin.co.uk/>

The Sea Pie Supper seems a long time ago, but I did enjoy refusing to kneel before Captain Martin Phipps MBE as he tried to place the Captain's ribbon over my head. I am grateful to him for his continuing support as he takes on the role of Past Captain and thank him for all that he did for the club during his year in office. For those of you who weren't at the Sea Pie Supper, I would like to introduce Lt Cdr David Carter RNR who will be the Staff Captain of the Cachalots for the forthcoming year. David was in the Merchant Navy for 34 years, 16 of which were in command. He is the Royal Navy's Merchant Navy Liaison Officer and a Younger Brother of The Corporation of Trinity House.

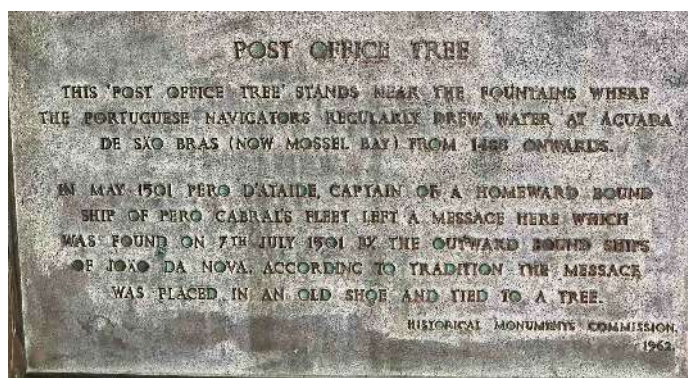
Although I haven't been attending the official social events of yore, I haven't been idle. We have set up a subcommittee to consider how the Cachalots might evolve as the years go on. Whilst there is a very convivial group of Cachalots who gather in the clubroom on a Friday (ALL are welcome – times etc are posted later in this magazine) and a myriad of events, both social and official organised by various members of the management committee, many of the members don't attend any of these. However, on joining the Cachalots, 'socialising/networking with like-minded people' is often mentioned on the application forms.

To try and remedy this, we are looking at how to communicate differently with the 'unseen' members, via social media (The 'Cachalots, Southampton' Facebook page is now live and the 'Cachalots LinkedIn page' is waiting in the wings) and through some social events to try and gauge interest and enthusiasm. To this end, we are holding a Solent Maritime Night social event on the Shieldhall on 14th July to which all Cachalots, local mariners and their partners are invited. This is being held jointly with the Southampton Wardroom, a social group of mariners, and the Solent Nautical Institute. We are also joining the Southampton Wardroom for social evenings. Details of all these events will be promulgated in due course.



30 years ago, I was the navigator on a tug for the passage from Angola to Cape Town for dry docking and back. I had the option of staying in Cape Town for 6 weeks or flying home. As I was newly married, this apparently wasn't really an option.

After enduring all those years of 'it would have been nice to have stayed in Cape Town', Debbie and I marked our recent significant birthdays with a trip to Cape Town and a 1400 mile drive along the Garden Route and back. We paused in Mossel Bay where we found the Post Office Tree where an old shoe was used to pass messages between ships in 1501.



Times have moved on and the Cachalots communicate by email, a few by WhatsApp, Cachalites etc. We also have our website which is great for making information available for members. At present it is not good for the casual enquirer and there is room for development of online payment/easier browsing etc. It would be great if any of you have the expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm to help us with this project, whether by taking it on or by sharing any knowledge with me so that, alongside the present webmasters, I can move things forward. Please email me if you can help with the website or with any other ideas for the Cachalots to consider.

Noel Becket Captain of the Club

Boatsteerer's Locker

Greetings to all and hope you are enjoying the spring weather. It seems nearly back to normal, April showers but will there be a flaming June?

Zoom gatherings

I am continuing where possible to maintain a Zoom gathering on a Thursday morning, opening from 1045.

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 - The Shipping Festival Service is 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 running two golf days this year. We have already completed one at Lee-on-the-Solent with wonderful support from David Ayres (Cachalot) and Svitzer Marine Limited as sponsor. See report in this Cachalot. Our next day will be Thursday 28th September 2023 at Corhampton Golf Club.

Please contact the Boatsteerer in the first instance if you are interested in joining us.

The Cachalots, Southampton Facebook Group

As part of the initiative being led by our Captain, Staff Captain and Mark Oakley to improve outreach of the Club to other like minded organisations, we have now set up a group on Facebook. It is Private so the Admin's, Noel, David and Robin, will assess people wishing to join the group. You can find us here

[The Cachalots, Southampton](https://www.facebook.com/groups/898921234737627)



Search on Facebook or use this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/898921234737627>

100th Anniversary of RRS Discovery

To mark this 100th anniversary, the current RRS Discovery will also join its ancestral inspiration, the original RRS Discovery in Dundee from June 2 – June 4, 2023, where the past and present will stand in each other's presence, serving as a reminder of the UK's world leading ocean research capabilities and long-term commitment to future scientific ocean research.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk



The Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar Dinner

The Cachalots have celebrated Trafalgar day for some years now but it was an in-house function for members and their guests. In 2017 it was decided to expand the event to the greater local maritime community and use it to raise funds for the then Southampton Sea Cadets Expansion Plan. The then Mayor, Councillor Harris, was a supporter of the SSC and he was approached for his support which he readily gave. To indicate the inclusivity of the event it was called the Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar dinner because the incumbent Lord Mayor holds that title. It was intended to be a one off black tie event for an estimated 150 people but the initial response indicated a greater number and it was held at the larger suite at St. Mary's Stadium. In the event, the function attracted 189 attendees and the Club broke even but, more importantly, it raised £1920 for the SSC Expansion Plan.

Because of this fund raising success it was decided to continue with the Dinner in 2018 with the hope of it becoming one three annual charity functions within the maritime sector, the others being the Southampton Shipowners Summer Ball and our own Sea Pie Supper.

It was moved to the smaller venue of The Grand Café at South Western House and 147 attendees raised £1455 for the SSC. Having based the pricing on a lesser number the Club made an unexpected profit and this was used to boost the SSC takings to £2000.

A repeat in 2019 had just 118 attending and this lack of promised support led to a loss for the Club of £345 but still raised £1250 for the SSC.

The decision whether to continue with the event in '20 and '21 was taken out of our hands by Covid and the lockdowns.

Last year the function was resurrected with 114 attending, no loss to the Club but just £915 raised for SSC.

This year the decision has been made to continue with the dinner as previously, at the now renamed The Grand, and to promote the event more, both internally and externally.

The Dinner, which has been supported by all the subsequent Mayors and Lord Mayor by their attendance, is not intended to be a fund raiser for the Club, which just hopes to meet its costs. The ticket price includes the hire of the venue, the cost of drinks reception, the meal and incidental costs to the Club.

This year it has been set at **£65**, an increase of £10 on last year, due entirely to the increase in the catering costs. The money for the SSC is raised by a Grand Draw for just one significant prize, usually a modern electronic/digital device generously donated by the Southampton Shipowners Association. Attendees are invited to make a donation to partake in the draw and from the figures above you can see that this averages out to around £10 per head.

The format of the evening is that the Cadets form a welcome guard to receive guests to the drinks reception held in the splendidly restored lobby of what was the South Western Hotel, the premier hotel for passengers in the glory days of the trans Atlantic passenger liners.

After the attendees are piped to dinner, the Lord Mayor and party will process to their table, Grace will be said and the meal served. Following which the Principal Guest, usually a high ranking RN Officer, will give the Toast to the Immortal Memory of Lord Nelson. Then the Grand Draw and in previous years we have finished with some nautical entertainment in the form of Shantymen. Last year our normal group were unavailable so we went ahead with just ourselves led by some willing volunteers and guess what? We enjoyed ourselves just as much so we will probably repeat that this year. It will keep the costs down.

So, not a formal Trafalgar Dinner, RN style, but then we are basically MN and the evening is our own blend of the formal and informal and we do know how to enjoy ourselves.

This year we have an additional problem in that a rival charity do is to be held on the same night, just along the road at the football stadium. But their prices are more than double ours and it is not a strictly maritime event anyway.

All of the above is leading up to us asking you to please support this years Trafalgar Dinner. Partners, friends and colleagues are welcome. Tables are rounds of ten but we can accommodate any numbers, or individuals, and will endeavour to ensure that you are seated suitably.

Time, perhaps, to meet those like minded people and other marine professionals.

So, put Friday 20th October firmly in your diary and help support not only the SSC but also the Club in its efforts to maintain its profile within the greater maritime community.

Tickets will be available only through the office. See the notice board in the central pages.



A Coronation Special

Our Royal correspondent, Margaret Tinsley, wife of Past Captain (2004) Andrew Tinsley, camped out on the Mall for four nights to bring you this exclusive report. She was accompanied by her friend of more than 50 years, Shirley Messinger, who is also the wife of a Cachalot, Phillip Messinger.

This was Margaret and Shirleys' seventh such royal event but on the previous occasions it was two nights maximum so this was an even bigger challenge!

Also in the group of friends was Eunice Hartstone, her third event, Jessie Young, who flew down from Scotland for her second, and Elizabeth Couzens, the baby of the group on her first such event.

They were quickly seized upon by the media and the press and branded "The Dorset Grannies", their adventure being broadcast daily by the BBC on their news channels and their website and also by other news organisations, websites and social media.



The five: Jessie, Margaret, Shirley, Eunice and Elizabeth

Margaret reports:

I declared after Prince Harry's wedding that I would never do it again. However Shirley had other ideas thank goodness because this was truly one of the highlights of my life and I just did not want it to end.

After six months planning we set off to London on the morning of Tuesday May 2nd with a reporter from BBC South Today. From past experience we knew where we wanted to be and were delighted to be able to set up our camp of beach shelters and chairs opposite Clarence House.



The first supper



The camp



Wrapped up for the night

We took all our food and drinks with us. Coronation chicken followed by meringue case with cream, bananas and passion fruit on the first night was the piece de resistance but we continued to eat well with the appropriate tippie for the time of day.



Press-ganged

Apart from reporting and filming by the BBC, the requests for interviews from TV crews from all over the world were relentless. We can only think this was due to our Coronation hats and our ages - two 81 year olds, 78, 76 and a youngster of 57.

And we were followed on social media too, *right*; with my daughter Kathryn.



There are so many wonderful memories. The full dress rehearsal on Tuesday night which was magical, and the Coronation Coach right in front of us at 3am is something we will never forget. Also, David (*David Mounde, Margaret's son in law*) who was back and forth to check on us and to solve any problems that arose, the lovely people from all over the world who just wanted to chat, friends who visited, the fun and laughter, the general atmosphere and buzz, the wonderful processions, the pomp and ceremony that only the Poms can do! (*Margaret is Australian*)



On Friday I turned around in response to a tap on my shoulder, and there was Milo, my 14 year old grandson. What a super surprise to see him and then to be side by side when we met our wonderful King was so very special.

The King made us feel as if we were the only people there. He was natural, friendly, so delighted we were there to support him and just a truly lovely man.



Margaret and Milo meet the King



As do the other ladies

Later on Friday David and his niece joined us to camp the night and a message from my daughter Kathryn informed me that she and my other grandson, 16 year old Felix, were hard at revision at home. However, less than an hour later they walked into our camp - I was bursting with pride and excitement - my cup overfloweth.

Right: with Felix



The security on this occasion was far far greater than we have had on previous ones. The police and security were all kind and helpful and made us feel very safe. The few protesters in our area were made to feel most unwelcome and did not stay long.

Left: Margaret getting cross with some protestors

The rain on Coronation Day went unnoticed as we savoured every minute of a truly remarkable day. Fortunately we had family Mounde with us as we started our journey home. Without them I fear we would have been camping another night on the street. Tube station closures and lack of information regarding same saw us walk to Westminster, Charing Cross, Embankment and finally Waterloo where we received assistance to get the trolleys up the stairs from none other than the Royal Dragoon Guards, David's old regiment.



Homeward bound; The (by now) Famous Five

We met so many lovely people. Roger and Andrea Westh joined us, a super generous couple. He is an orthopaedic surgeon in Melbourne. We ate and drank very well. Ben Moore (*BBC*) is as lovely as ever, he came here and stayed the night in Kathryn's Cowsheds. And spent one night sleeping out with us. Maria, the BBC producer, joined us too, a delightful girl.



Waiting for the big Parade

The experience far exceeded our dreams and the wonderful memories will stay with us forever.

Cachalots Golf Day – Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club

Following our successful golf days in 2021 and 2022, it was decided to arrange two golf events in 2023. The first being at Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club in April and the second at Corhampton Golf Club in September. We have Cachalots as members at both clubs which eases getting arrangements in place.

Although I can find no written record, the Club has two plated silver cups which identify a healthy pursuit of the game by members from 1962 through to 1989 for the Whitbread Cup and from 1981 to 1989 for the Charles Webb Golf Trophy.

Thus, on Thursday 13th April, twenty-nine of us gathered at Lee-on-the-Solent for a bacon buttie and coffee ahead of the third Cachalots Golf Day since 1989. For this event we were very pleased to receive sponsorship from Svitzer Marine Limited, arranged by Cachalot David Ayres (Svitzer Port Manager-Southampton). Each player received a golf towel and a sleeve of 'Svitzer' embossed golf balls.



The weather forecast had been generally favourable for our day although some players did suffer from heavy rain and hail showers in the afternoon which, to be fair, was forecast and it was April.

The twenty-nine players were from DP World, ABP Pilots, SERCO, Svitzer Marine, Southampton Shipping Golfing Society (SSGS), Denholm, Exxon Fawley, BMT Group, and other guests to swell the numbers. Nine of these were also Cachalots. The majority of players from 2022 signed up quickly and we had five teams of four and three teams of three. Adjustments were made to allow two working pilots to join the later teams teeing off.

Cachalot Bruce Thomas made arrangements at Lee and organised the prizes with David Ayres at Svitzer.

The teams were chosen with a mix of handicaps and different organisations which provided interest for players to mix and talk during the round.

The first team tee'd off at 1018 led by Bruce Thomas.

Individual rounds were scored by Stableford points and all scores counted towards the team score but adjusted depending on three or four ball team.

Prizes were given for the best individual round and best team score.

Prizes were also awarded for;

Nearest the pin on the 9th hole

Nearest the pin in 2 shots on the 3rd hole and,

Longest drive on the 12th hole.

In the clubhouse we enjoyed celebratory drinks and a pleasant meal. Our Club Captain, Noel Becket joined us for dinner and described the role of his chosen charity, Solent Dolphin who operate the vessel, *Alison MacGregor*.

And then to the prize giving!

The results:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Longest drive on 12th | Ryan Reece (Denholm Port Services) |
| Nearest the 9th pin | Steve Wallis (Esso Rtd) |
| Nearest the 3rd pin in 2 | Dave Lewis (Guest Rtd Hampshire Fire & Rescue) |
| Team prize | Mark Hooper (DP World/Cachalot), Steve Wallis (Esso Rtd) and Mike Ferguson (Guest) |
| Individual 1st 41 points | Steve Wallis (Esso Rtd) (on countback from Neil Dunn) |
| Lowest gross score 79 | Neil Dunn (ABP Pilot/Cachalot) |

An enjoyable and successful day in great company with about £600 being raised towards the Captain's Charity.

Sneaky move of the day belonged to a local fox which managed to pinch the bacon roll from the pocket of a golf bag!!

Many thanks to all who came along and supported us on the day. Special thanks to Bruce and Mark Oakley for the encouragement to do these golf day's in 2021 and their support and to all the staff at Lee-on-the-Solent golf club for looking after us. **Robin**



The winning team



The winning individual



The longest drive winner

Cultural differences

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 829 May 5th 2023

By Michael Grey MBE

The latest UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch Safety Digest arrived in the post the other day, packed with interest and lessons to be learned from reports compiled in recent months. There are no huge calamities reported on here, although any death or injury as a result of a marine accident is awful for those involved. But the accent, as always, is what can be usefully learned from the various incidents, which are simply explained and brilliantly summarised, in order to make people think.

As Chief Inspector Andrew Moll notes in his introduction, “it is how you deal with an incident, rather than what happens, that matters.” This particular digest demonstrates several events where people who had trained and even practised for emergencies found that this precautionary effort was fully justified after their practice had saved the day, when the incident actually happened.

The UK MAIB remains a thoroughly useful and practical organisation which could have been the model for accident investigation throughout the world, as its work is solely driven by the need to discover what happened after an incident, rather than attempting to identify who to blame. Rather sadly, in an era when too many authorities seem anxious to start criminalising anyone who might make an error of judgement, the more positive strategy of the MAIB in ascertaining the facts has not been widely followed.

And experience has demonstrated that those involved with a marine incident will be far more likely to fully co-operate with a non-judgemental professional inspector, than some law enforcer whose main task is to discover grounds for prosecution. The MAIB also makes the important point that it will refuse to permit its findings and the statements that might be made to them to be released to other agencies. What happened, and what we can learn from it, to prevent it happening again, is a far more useful strategy than the apportionment of “blame” and the gruesome machinations of legal procedure.

A recent example of these sort of differences in approach was perhaps identified in an incident in the US, where a vessel operated by the Washington State Ferry was involved in what might be described as a “hard landing” on piles at its Seattle terminal, which caused some damage to the ship and the installation. The company undertook its own inquiry into the event and concluded that the captain of the ship “lost situational awareness” as the ship failed to slow as it approached its berth.

The company representatives came to this conclusion, despite the captain refusing to answer any questions about the incident. It might be assumed that he was exercising his legal rights to avoid incriminating himself, anticipating that he might find himself in a subsequent legal procedure. It is something that happens all too often these days. But it would surely have been helpful to the cause of safety if he had felt able to give his version of events without any fear. Maybe his recollections would have added no important maritime safety message, but it is possible to imagine an incident in which very important and safety-critical issues were lost or postponed, when they should have been immediately raised, because of this reluctance to speak. It is why the MAIB methodology is arguably so much better. It was also revealed that there was no VDR evidence available as the ferry was not instrumented to record what went on in the wheelhouse. That too was a lesson to be learned.

Ports at risk

If you want to know what is happening around the UK coast, a regular perusal of the excellent journal Coastal Shipping is to be recommended. There may be little glamour in the fleet of small bulk carriers that wander around Europe, but if you just look at what they are carrying, as revealed by this journal, you get some idea of the importance of these trades.

In the latest issue, the editor draws attention to the perennial risk of the small ports that serve these ships, (and incidentally stop the roads being bunged up by trucks,) being closed by their owners, who see a better return in non-marine development. I can recall Preston, Colchester and Exmouth and that is just three which were taken out of commercial use. Now there are threats to berths on the Medway, while the future of the little port of Perth hangs in the balance, after the local council voted in favour of closure.

You can see the attractions of real estate, rather than the port estate, with all the maintenance requirements and trying to fit in bigger ships, but you can argue that ports, even little ones, are important parts of the national transport infrastructure and shouldn't be interfered with by impatient local politicians. We should remember Dr Beeching, and the harm that he did to the rail network, although it might have taken a long time for it to sink in.



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and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey MBE greyjrm@gmail.com

Going Under – the second part

The concluding part of Colin Crimp's account of his and his partner Jill Fitzpatrick's recent odyssey to New Zealand aboard P&O's "Arcadia".

The Pacific Ocean continued to be grey and chilly, with winds from the north, for much of the next seven days as we made our way westwards towards the Hawaiian Islands.

The food on 'Arcadia' was, generally speaking, excellent, whether in the restaurants or the self-service buffet but this in itself began to reveal some issues. On the 25th January, there was formal dining in honour of Robbie Burns. That afternoon as I began to change and the time came to fasten my trousers, trousers that had always fastened without difficulty before, there was clearly a problem. Not only that, but I'd always been able to do up the neck button on my dress shirt without too much contortion but that, too, was resisting all attempts. Bow ties and cummerbunds were clearly invented to cover up this type of shortcoming. The Haggis was finally carried in to great applause whereupon it was duly eulogised and viciously stabbed several times by the 2nd Engineer. And very fine it was, too. Except that moaning Mildred on our table declared that she would not be having any because 'it won't be done properly, not like my mother did it'.

More exercise was surely the answer. We doubled the laps around the Promenade Deck and Jill signed up for 'Fitsteps', a sort of combination of dancing and 'keep fit'. One of the sessions was Beginners Ballet. When I learned of this, I tried very hard to keep a straight face and said "but you didn't bring a tutu." But she persevered and seemed to enjoy it even though, afterwards, she ached in places where she didn't even know she had places. Her enthusiasm was further heightened after the next session which was Latin Dance, taken by Giovanni, the entertainments manager. "You should have seen his hips go", she said afterwards, "no human being should be able to move its bottom like that". That put me in my place and she became a regular after that, presumably in the hope of another session of Latin with Giovanni.

By the time 'Arcadia' approached the Hawaiian island of O'ahu, the weather had perked up a bit and it became quite hot. We berthed in Honolulu early in the morning, so gently and quietly that neither of us had realised that we were alongside until we looked over the balcony - Azipods and bow thrusters are wonderful things. Having travelled in our motorhome AH though all the other US states in recent years (all 49 of them), this was at last an opportunity to tick the final box - state number 50.

Towards the end of the 18th century, after Capt. Charles Clerke had first stepped ashore on O'ahu, it had become clear that the climate and fertile volcanic soil would be ideal for growing sugarcane. Natural forest was subsequently cleared to make way for sugarcane plantations and more forest was felled to provide timber for fuelling sugar production. By the beginning of the 20th century, the resources of the island were so depleted and the fertility of the soil so degraded that sugar production was reduced to a small fraction of what it had once been. The families that controlled the sugar business decided to move into tourism instead and, to that end, sought to re-forest the plantations. High in Manoa Valley in the foothills behind Honolulu is the Lyon Arboretum where 200 acres of tropical trees and shrubs, mostly from around the world, have been grown and researched to facilitate this re-forestation. After a very steep climb in a small van to the valley, the ensuing walk through this steep rainforest was challenging but so rewarding, almost like being in a David Attenborough documentary. Manoa Valley has its own micro-climate and it is usually raining up there, about 165 inches a year. It once rained continuously for over 200 days. Fortunately for us it was not actually raining but it was so steamy and humid that the trees were continuously dripping. The flowers and the birds among these huge trees were just stunning and the anticipated mosquitoes mostly left us alone. Strange to think that, until Europeans arrived, there had never been a single mosquito in Hawaii.

The other main excursion that was on offer in Honolulu was to see the museums and memorials of Pearl Harbor, including the enormous USS Arizona, now a war grave, sitting at the bottom of the harbour and viewed from the memorial building constructed over it. However, for us, the rainforest was first choice. Indeed, back on 'Arcadia', some of The Moaners were ranting that their Pearl Harbor trip was extortionately priced and they could have done the same thing at a fraction of the cost using public transport. What can one say, except 'why didn't you do that, then.'

Considered to be the father of surfing, Duke Kahanamoku (1890-1968) has his bronze statue at the head of Waikiki Beach, Honolulu. In the midday sun we picked our way along the very crowded sand and headed for a beach hotel umbrella and some very expensive beer, sandwiches and an amazing dish of the biggest prawns we'd ever seen. Looking out across the beach to the breakers, starting way out in the distance and rolling in rather lazily to the sand, and watching the surfers at play, it became clear that, in Waikiki, unless you're a surfer then you're nobody. Everyone in town seemed to be carrying a surfboard which is no mean feat on a crowded sidewalk, and if you didn't actually have your own there were countless places where you could rent one. We took the gentler option of a bus back to the port and a cream tea on 'Arcadia'.

The day after we left Honolulu, there was an emergency drill (for which there had been several days' notice and constant reminders) requiring all passengers to attend their Muster Station. The General Alarm duly sounded and, by and large, all seemed to go according to plan - except for the non-appearance of about 25 passengers who didn't bother to turn up. After a little cajoling from the Captain, this number crept down to about 18 who were 'unable' to attend. Unbelievably, some of these had actually refused to attend. I mean, why would you? I'm sure there's something about Maritime Law here, but what punishment awaited this recalcitrant few was not revealed. The equator was fast approaching - no doubt King Neptune would exact his due.

When it came to it, King Neptune turned out to be quite jolly, in a severe sort of way, accompanied by a very camp Queen Aphrodite who referred to the Captain as "seems like a nice boy." The price for permission to cross the line was laid down and resulted in a series of tests of strength, boldness, endurance and cunning between the Arcadia crew team (Hooray!) and Captain Hook's team (Boo!). Of course, this contest was won by our Captain and crew, but only just and only after some dastardly cheating by the Captain. While all the contestants were throwing each other into the swimming pool, to the great relief of all on board, 'Arcadia' sailed unimpeded across the Equator on 4th February. This milestone was immediately followed by another as Saturday led directly into Monday. Now, I know why the International Date Line is there, when it was 'discovered' and what has to happen when you cross it - but trying to explain it all to someone else I have always found impossible. I long ago gave up even attempting it.

The Samoan island of Upolu is approximately 2500 miles southwest (ish) of Honolulu, about six days at sea. 'Arcadia' made her customary silent approach and undetectably gentle berthing in Apia in the early morning and we were finally awoken by the sound of loud music, drumming, singing and dancing by about 20 performers on the quayside. There were spears and clubs and grass leggings everywhere. This noisy and moving welcome lasted for about 30 minutes before we finally got dressed and headed to breakfast. What an opener.



Welcome dancers, Samoa

It was hot and humid as the little bus took us through lush green vegetation and past numerous villages of colourful houses, each house with an open-sided area for keeping cool and each village with an open-sided meeting space (fale), looking rather like a bandstand, and a church, frequently also the school. It was difficult to tell where one community ended and the next began until you looked at the decorations and planting along the roadside. The design and colour of these decorations is carried out by the women of the village and frequently involves coconuts. The coconut palm is known as the 'Tree of Life' as, not only does the fruit provide food and drink, but every part of the tree and the fruit can be used for making something. Whenever we stopped, everyone smiled and waved, even babes in arms. It looked so idyllic. Sadly, in Samoa, as in so many other places, there is the beginning of a drug problem. However, the social structure is strong, each village having a chief and a council who, along with police, cooperate in addressing the situation.



Sapoaga Falls, Samoa

Our little bus took us further up into the lush green mountains to see the immensely high Sapoaga Falls along with a demonstration of how to break open a coconut and convert the flesh into coconut cream – much harder work than opening a tin. Back down at the coast, Brenda's Beach Fale Resort gave us some relaxation in the heat of the day, emerald sea, palm trees and white coral sand, and then lunch in the main fale. This consisted of local pineapples, papaya, bananas, mountain apples and, of course, coconuts all laid out on banana leaves and augmented, just for the carnivores, by fire-cooked chicken, sausages and plantain for an extra \$5. Taking a different route back across the mountains, with a brief stop to look at the even higher Papapapa Falls, we had, in one fairly exhausting day, had at least a flavour of nearly the whole island. After another quick stop to look at the Roman Catholic cathedral back in Apia, we returned to 'Arcadia' for afternoon tea.

That evening, our martinis out on the balcony were interrupted by an announcement from the Captain. This was when we learned that the deep depression that had been observed forming north of Australia had been categorised as a cyclone, had been given the name Gabrielle and was heading for Norfolk Island, just north of New Zealand. Our next port of call was due to be Suva on the island of Fiji before heading south to Auckland on a course that would put us directly in the path of Gabrielle. Having seen what a cyclone can do, I was not at all surprised that the decision had been reluctantly taken to miss the visit to Fiji and seek shelter in Auckland harbour ahead of the cyclone. Of course, The Moaners had their own opinions about whether the Captain had got it wrong and how it looked perfectly all right outside.

There was a very fine young flamenco guitar player on board called Samuel Moore. He had already given the five recitals that he was contracted for but, in view of the loss of the Fiji visit, he volunteered to give an additional concert. He was excellent as always, and played to a capacity audience. The other excitement during the final four days down to Auckland was, of course, the concert given by the Arcadia choir, for which over 100 of us had been rehearsing nearly every day since we entered the Pacific. The theatre was packed, the applause was rapturous.

It was raining as 'Arcadia' tied up in Auckland on 12th February and the wind was quickly strengthening, blowing the whitecaps off the swell that was running inside the harbour. Out on the promenade deck it was becoming difficult to stand and external deck areas were subsequently placed 'out of bounds' for safety reasons. By the end of it, however, Gabrielle left Auckland relatively unscathed apart from branches falling from trees, power blackouts and hoardings blowing down. Not so for the eastern coast of North Island, though, where the rain and high winds increased water levels that were already critically high from previous heavy rain. Roads and bridges were washed out and widescale flooding and erosion caused collapse of buildings, the loss of entire crops and several deaths. The situation was made even worse by complete loss of both power and nearly all mobile phone communication due to masts being down. Yes, Auckland got off quite lightly by comparison.

After 41 days on board, it was really sad to leave 'Arcadia', we'd had such a wonderful trip. However, despite the trail left by Gabrielle, in the few days we had in Auckland before moving on, we did manage to get up the Sky Tower (it does move quite a bit right at the top), a ferry across to Waiheke island (with its beaches, vineyards and wine-tasting), a ferry across to historic Dartmouth (with its 'disappearing' gun emplacements) and by train and bus for a day at Auckland Museum (with its fabulous Maori exhibits – I'd never realised that the Maoris arrived in New Zealand only 800 years ago). Auckland is wonderfully cosmopolitan and, in many ways, resembles a scaled-down version of Vancouver in Canada.

But for those leaving 'Arcadia' in Auckland and flying home, the excitement was not yet over. Gabrielle had caused the closing of Auckland airport for several days resulting in a huge backlog of people waiting for flights, one estimate ran at as high as 40,000, and pandemonium at the airport. Trying to get a flight out became a lottery, the price of hotel rooms more than doubled as did the fees for changing flight dates. Our friends Mickey and Do learned of the cancellation of their flight and the closure of the airport shortly before they were due to take off. They were eventually offered a bed for the night by the amazing New Zealand Civil Defence organisation. They were given special rubber ID bracelets which entitled them to free transport, free meals and a very comfortable mattress on the floor of a large gymnasium. As Mickey said, "At the age of 86, I never thought I'd have to wear one of these". A bracelet which read 'REFUGEE STATUS'.



Auckland Harbour – spot the Sky Tower



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In Aid of the Southampton Sea Cadets

See page 3

The cut-off date for the next edition
will be on
Friday 18th August '23

250 Club

| | | |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| Feb | T E Clark | L R Morris |
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Curry Lunches



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**We have had two successful lunches there so far this year and
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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.

Gordon Renshawe

By Simon Daniels

Gordon Renshawe was one of a rare breed of shipmasters in the latter part of the twentieth century, having experience in the navigation of a paddle steamer. Even more remarkable, was the fact that he gained his experience in commercial operations, for Gordon served with the 'Navvies', as the General Steam Navigation Company was affectionately known.

Gordon served for his whole career as Mate and then Master with General Steam, which demanded very high standards in their Masters and, although much of their work was involved in Continental trades, it was required that every Master held a Foreign-Going Certificate of Competency. Gordon recalled the Brave New World that was built in the post-war years, thanks to such companies:

The Company expected all employees to use their initiative, especially in the days before good communications, and this coupled with economic conditions produced individuals of great character and independence, with firm convictions, right or wrong, as well as some eccentrics whose feats of seamanship or otherwise would today provide several exciting scripts for television... One director, Percy Privett, having been trapped as manager in Hamburg at the start of the Great War, spent the whole war in a prisoner of war camp. The camp was for merchant seamen captured at sea, and he organized and encourage all types of sports and studies and several did indeed pass their professional certificates for use after the war. When he became a director, he always thought so highly of the sea staff that he stood up for them, as shore staff rather looked down upon the seafarers. During the second World War he insisted on building the coaster Kingfisher, the first to be built in which each rating had his own cabin.

Gordon's reminiscences of Percy Privett open a very personal window on the Company, shedding light on just what made it tick, that no dry history could possibly manage:

Percy's trade mark was a bright red, bulbous nose. He once noticed a passing second mate glancing at the conspicuous beacon and remarked, "When your yearly salary, young man, equals the sum needed to maintain this luminosity, you will be in a position to marry," a hint to study harder for the required Master's Ticket. He used to hold court in the nearby Cheshire Cheese under Fenchurch Street railway arches every lunch time. Often he would telephone a lowly member of the Port of London Authority staff, or some other organization with which they needed to keep in good favour, such as a foreman in a warehouse in Surrey Docks, and say, "You mean bugger, you haven't bought me a G and T lately." The foreman would say proudly to his mates, "I'm going Up City to buy old Percy a drink, he's a Director of General Steam, you know." The drink would be accepted, but the rest of the session and the sandwiches would be on PP, with lots of chaffing, but no mention of favours required. Should a hold-up or some other problem occur in that area later, PP would jokingly ask what was happening: problem solved right away. After he died, in a similar situation, after pleadings from the ship's officers the Company would send down a young clerk with five pounds in an envelope. But this was regarded as a bribe, and not the slightest notice was taken of such an impersonal gesture.

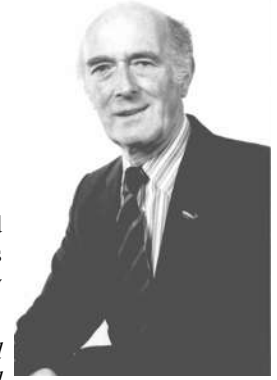
Sometimes the ebb and flow of marine operations have demanded sterner measures. Perhaps such a thing would never happen today, but Gordon recalled an occasion, when he was Master of a General Steam freighter loading in Hamburg, that he fell into a disagreement with a senior port official over the handling of a certain cargo. For all his geniality, Gordon took his responsibilities extremely seriously, and they proceeded to have a furious row on the dockside, gathering an ever-growing crowd of excited on-lookers, anticipating a dramatic climax. They were not disappointed; for, at the height of the argument, the port official proposed that they settle the matter by fighting it out. Gordon accepted. He never did tell me exactly who won, but I suppose the matter had been concluded in the Teutonic tradition, and honour was satisfied; and I think a certain glint in Gordon's eye suggested that he had his way in the end.

Sailortown is a name not to be found in any orthodox atlas of London, but to seafarers for two hundred years it conjured up a thriving metropolis whose allure was renowned worldwide. The heart of Sailortown was to be found in Wapping and Shadwell, but it extended to Ratcliffe, Limehouse, Poplar, Rotherhithe, Deptford, Greenwich, Woolwich and Gravesend. Around Ratcliffe Highway and all along the riverside were mazes of lanes and alleys, where for centuries the seafarer found his heart's desires in chandlers, curio sellers, lodging house, alehouses, brothels, slum houses and wild animal shops. For many, the dizzy delights of Sailortown promised reward enough for months – and years – of hardship under sail. As the nineteenth century progressed with the Industrial Revolution at the helm, though, the rise of sailors' homes, missions, temperance halls, steamships and the new docks changed the area's complexion and, by the time of Gordon's arrival, it was a shade of its former self. But that shade still had a great deal of colour, as Gordon Renshawe recalled:

The Thames Watermen and Lightermen, who acted as Mud (Dock) Pilots from time immemorial, each jealously guarded their own section of the river and usually employed their own sons as boatmen, while also tying up the vessel at the river and dock berths. The families went back many generations and had a great pride in the history and traditions of the river, but above all they had a tremendous sense of humour. A meeting for business reasons at a frontier pub between the heads of two families was not for the faint-hearted. The conversation was conducted at full-blast, over many pints, and the profanities and expletives of their normal conversation would have brought business to a juddering halt around any City pub, but went unnoticed by the stout grey-haired ladies behind the bar.

*George Baker and his three sons of Surrey Docks were one such family. George was famous for his heart of gold, his generosity and his oft-stated boast that the Watermen's Company had its foundation years before Trinity House in 1514, as well as for his vocabulary that did indeed uphold riverside traditions. He once asked me to inquire tactfully of the Surrey Dock harbour master why he had not been invited to a trinity House annual reception that summer. The harbour master, who was a Younger Brother of trinity House, replied that, the year before, the Guest of Honour had been the Master of Trinity House, the then Duke of Gloucester who, in conversation with the harbour master inquired, "I suppose, Harbour Master, in the course of your duties you meet many of our Pilots while they are berthing the ships in your docks?" The harbour master explained that the Trinity House pilots took the ships into the locks, but the ships were berthed by a Waterman. The Duke was surprised and suggested that the job would be done better by a 'proper pilot'. Big, burly George, in his best suit, overheard this; he grabbed His Grace by the lapels and bellowed, "You old ****, you know **** all!"*

The likes of General Steam's diminutive cargo ship *Kingfisher* mentioned by Gordon Renshawe, ushered in the new generation of short sea traders that met the demands of a changing world. Patterns of trade in the years following the war evolved rapidly, leaving the



Gordon Renshaw
Past Captain 1987

traditional general cargo ship far behind, and it was strange that the Company's subsequent post-war newbuildings suffered from a pre-war design that simply was outpaced by modern theories of transport and logistics. Gordon had words of praise for the *Woodlark*, delivered in 1956, which he would command, but she would be sold in 1969 after only a short career along with her sisters, to be replaced with a new generation of six, smaller but far more efficient short sea traders. The new *Oriole* and her sisters had push-button bridge operation as Gordon recalled, equipped with the latest navigational aids and engine rooms, and fully-automated cargo handling gear that met 1960's demands for ever-faster delivery. Indeed, they bore much more of a resemblance to the *Kingfisher* and the *Stork*, and although they were sold out of the fleet they would survive under new owners very nearly into the twenty first century.

But such ships could no longer make a profit for General Steam, for the Continental trades were embracing roll-on/roll-off services, led by Townsend Thoresen, who introduced the *Free Enterprise I*, the first purpose built roll-on/roll-off passenger and vehicle ferry in 1962. While General Steam's last series of sisters had all been sold by 1979, Townsend Thoresen's new concept delivered a fleet that set the trend for virtually all short sea trades. Indeed, *Free Enterprise I* had been sold to Greece but did not go to the breakers until 2013.

So how could General Steam compete in the new generation of ferries? While the UK's growing trade with the European Community undoubtedly contributed to the rising demand on the English Channel, competition was heating up thanks to a number of factors, associated with the cost-effectiveness of short sea transport and logistics. In the face of these factors, the board rooms of ferry operators had to consider how best to conduct their prime function: to maximise the yield for their investors. It was against this background, that P & O had to make some bold business decisions. They had bought the controlling interest in General Steam in 1920, which paid for the likes of the magnificent sisters *Halcyon* and *Philomel*. Now they would buy the remaining shares, that would pay for two new sisters, *Dragon* and *Eagle*. With the enormous goodwill in the brand names of P & O and General Steam, they formed consortia, that would share the cost of building and operation and started, first, with North Sea Ferries, and then on the English Channel, with Normandy Ferries, a joint venture with French company SAGA. Thus the push-button generation of cargo ships was sold off after just ten years and, in March 1976. The world's oldest steamship company got a change of name, to P & O Ferries (General European) Limited, when P & O acquired the last of the shares.



General Steams *Halcyon* by Jack Spurling

With the financial strength of P&O behind it, the Company steered Normandy Ferries into the new era of roll-on/roll-off ferries, inaugurating a new service between Southampton and Le Havre. Two identical sisters were built for the service, SAGA's *Leopard*, registered in Le Havre, and General Steam's *Dragon*, registered in Southampton. Commencing service in June 1967, *Dragon* was a streamlined vessel with a stern ramp for loading vehicles, capable of 16 knots, accommodating 846 passengers in comfort and built to compete with the very best – the rival business, Townsend Thoresen. Gordon Renshaw was appointed to be her first Master.

Gordon's career with General Steam was remarkable for the breadth of experience which he was able to enjoy, across a range of vessels in the carriage of goods and passengers. In 1949 he joined the *Golden Eagle*, a 40-year-old paddle steamer beloved of cockneys for their summer excursions to Southend and Clacton; and such experience would never be forgotten, for in his retirement years following a lifetime with the Navvies, he would maintain his certificate of competency to handle preserved paddle steamers on modern-day excursions. At the other end of the scale, Gordon also served as Master of the fourth, largest and last *Eagle* in the company's fleet, which came into service in 1971, commanded, once again, by Captain Renshaw. She was a streamlined cruise ferry for the weekly Southampton – Lisbon - Tangier run, carrying over 720 passengers along with cars and freight carried on lorries and containers. The ship required a doctor to be carried together with a fully-equipped hospital, and thereby hangs a tale. Dr Ernest Winters ran a large general practice in Harrow but he was also a great sea-lover, and offered to staff the post of ship's doctor. Gordon recalled him well:

He was rotund and jolly with an infectious laugh. He always made the Christmas trip and had a Santa Claus outfit tailor-made in the West End as well as a sledge made by the ship's carpenter. He loved children and on Christmas Day, the sledge was pulled into the main Red Room lounge by stewards. This impressive saloon with fine décor ran almost a third of the length and half the breadth of the ship. On these occasions it was filled with excited children and the hostess ensured that the arrival of Father Christmas was the highlight of the day. The noise on the appearance of a jolly, red-faced Santa atop his sleigh, with a sack-full of gifts, must have shocked the lighthouse keeper on distant Ushant.

One Christmas, the company decided to have a comic Neptune instead, giving out gifts alongside the swimming pool bar. They chose a pompous, ex-Cunard purser of enormous proportions, who surprisingly liked the idea and refused to step down in favour of the old procedure as the sea staff had suggested. Ernest was very hurt, but pretended that he did not expect to be Father Christmas every year. The vessel sailed two days before Christmas, but early on Christmas morning, the purser, perhaps having a hangover, foolishly went up to the surgery and asked Ernest for some aspirin. He was immediately clapped into the two-berth cabin, the most awful diseases suspected. He was released the morning after, only after the children and staff had enjoyed an unusually ebullient traditional party with Ernest as Santa distributing the presents. Ernest, by a strange coincidence, had brought his outfit any way.

Gordon recalled that he first heard of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club in the early 1950's, when inward bound from Tonnyay Charente with brandy, and their diminutive vessel of 500-odd tons thumped the Town Pier rather hard. The pilot was most annoyed, as his previous job had been the *Queen Mary*, so he promised the old man he would atone for the dent by buying him a pint at the club. Gordon served as Captain of the Master Mariners' Club for the year 1987. He had still not retired from seafaring, though, for he continued to skipper paddle steamer excursion cruises around the coast. Gordon died in November 2011, aged 91.



My Wartime Years

Thurstan Holmes

Part 2 of the previously unpublished wartime memoirs of Thurstan Holmes (not Thurston) which came to us courtesy of Cachalot Peter Giles.

We sailed from Liverpool, the ship having been very quickly repaired, on 4th August 1941 to South America -very much a repeat of the first trip. On return, as Uboats were now operating further into the Atlantic, we had to go to Halifax in Nova Scotia to pick up a convoy. This was autumn and bitterly cold with snow and frost in Halifax.

Liverpool again on 6th December 1941. There had been a very severe blitz on Liverpool whilst we were away a much of the Town and parts of the Dock area were very badly damaged.

Voyage three again from Liverpool on 24th January 1942 to South America as before. By this time in the War Uboats were operating in wolf packs and sinking a great deal of shipping. Luckily we were unscathed. Because of the Uboat threat and also from surface raiders such as the Graf Spee, on leaving the Caribbean to catch convoy we were directed to hug the American coast as closely as possible. First to Key West in Florida then up the coast via Newport News to New York. Off the coast was a great deal of naval activity with many ships including Blimps. These were small inflatables rather like barrage balloons. The approach to New York past the Statue Liberty was most impressive and the skyline beyond belief. After anchoring in the river for the night we proceeded under many bridges into Long Island Sound and on to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Back to Liverpool on 3 July 1942 and home on leave.

Arriving home to find that Father had a very severe attack on impetigo and of course in no time I too had Impetigo. I had to inform PSNC and they said that I was not to return until I was cured. The only treatment, in those days, seemed to be the repeated applications of Gentian Violet which, being on my face was very disfiguring. It took some five months for this wretched infection to go away. On getting in touch with PSNC I was directed to join the *Reina del Pacifico* at the Tail of the Bank in the Clyde. This was the Company's large Mail and Passenger liner and I was indeed honoured although a little apprehensive. However those were the orders so I caught the next available train from Banbury to Glasgow — a tedious and long journey. As I was no due to join the ship until the next day it was necessary to find a bed for the night. The whole of the accommodation in Glasgow seemed to be totally booked up and there was none to be had. However I appealed to a kind receptionist in a hotel and explained my predicament. After some consultation they said they would screen off a corner of the main diningroom, which was laid out for a wedding reception the following day, and put up bed for me, for which I was very grateful. My trunk which had been in the luggage van appeared to be lost and could not be found so I only had a small overnight case



Reina del Pacifico at her berth in Liverpool

After an evening meal I thought I would pass the time in a local cinema. Going up the stairs I got into conversation with a man (a complete stranger) and we sat together for the performance. During conversation I told this chap about my lost luggage and he offered to find it for me and arrange for it to be sent home. This was extremely kind and my trunk duly arrived back home. However I was without much clothing and could not purchase replacements because of clothing coupons. Being under orders, and venturing somewhat into the unknown, I thought the best thing to do was join the ship and hope for the best.

After passing quite a good night in my makeshift bed I caught a train to Gourock. There, in wartime grey, where quite obviously the *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth* and many other ships including the *Reina del Pacifico* looking quite small. However I managed to get a lift in a launch to the Reina and, entering through a sallyport in the side of the ship made my way up to the boatdeck and the Officer's accommodation. On explaining my predicament of the lost luggage I was told that it was likely that our voyage would be quite short and I would probably be able to manage.

In my previous three voyages in the *Loreto*, uniform was only worn on very special occasions and day to day wear was dungarees or working clothes. In Reina a Cadet was an officer and expected to wear proper uniform at all times so I was quite able to manage. She was a grand big passenger liner, compared with my previous experiences, with many decks and I really began to wonder if I should ever find my way around. Although of course we were a troop carrier most of the passenger staterooms were still intact. Our cabin, although small, was on the Officer's alleyway just below the bridge and the Master's palatial suite nearby. There were many more officers and we were under the control of the Staff Captain who turned out to be very strict and quick to impose punishment. The other three cadets were very friendly and soon put me at my ease and explained what was to be done.

The *Reina del Pacifico* had been built in the thirties, was of some 17,000 tons, twin funnels and with four engines capable of some 18 knots. Totally different from my previous experience. Meals were taken at our own table in the main dining

room and were extremely good without any appearance of rationing the ship having been victualled abroad. In a few days we set off in a fast convoy with about seven other similar ships to an unknown destination travelling far out into the Atlantic then turning east into the Mediterranean and so to Oran in North Africa. The convoy speed was about eighteen knots and zigzagging at all times.

As the junior cadet I was told that it was my job to install the log. This was a device inserted through the ship's bottom and connected to the bridge to gauge the ship's speed and distance travelled. With some apprehension I was told to change, in the forward dummy funnel, into some dirty old overalls and to take the lift down to the engine room accompanied by one of the other cadets. In the engine room, which was vast and noisy, we were shown by an engineer through electrically operated watertight doors to a small compartment deep in the bowels of the ship. There a hatch was opened and I was told to get down inside and there standing on the very bottom of the ship to open a valve, operated by the engineer, and insert the log into the sea below. Whilst the log was half in and I was crouching down alongside it (out in the Atlantic) it occurred to me that if there was a torpedo or other event such as electricity failure, I was caught like a rat in a trap. In the event all was well and we went back to the engine room and into the lift and up to the funnel and a hot bath.

This wretched log was a constant worry to all four of us as it had to be inserted and recovered every trip. I was pleased when later on I became senior cadet and could delegate to others.

In Oran we collected 4000 Jerry prisoners, guarded by their American captors, who were accommodated in the cargo holds. We returned without incident to Liverpool discharging our prisoners and then back to the Clyde arriving on 10th February 1943.

Thankfully I had managed for clothing fairly well. In the Clyde the ship was put into dry dock for cleaning, all the lifeboats were removed and replaced with landing craft so evidently we were in for something different. We were sent on two weeks' leave.

When returning from leave I was told that the ship would be in King George V dock in Glasgow. She was undergoing extensive alterations. All the passenger accommodation was ripped out making large troop accommodation with additional washing and WCs on each deck. The swimming pool on the Promenade deck was removed and replaced with huge mess rooms. The sides and rear of the bridge were reinforced with concrete walls. A 4" naval gun was fitted on the poop, over a machine gun on either side of the bridge and 12 pounders on platforms either side of the foredeck. The landing craft provided instead of lifeboats were LCAs (landing craft attack). These had apparently been made in large numbers all over the country. There was a drop down ramp at the bow and a small enclosed compartment for the driver with engine controls.

We sailed from the Clyde on 25th February 1943 to Liverpool where we embarked some 4000 troops equipped with tropical clothing. Rumours were rife as to our destination but nothing was definite. Leaving Liverpool and out into the Atlantic to meet up with a small convoy of similar troop ships, several destroyers and a small aircraft carrier. We sailed far out into the Atlantic westwards and eventually turned south. This was a fast convoy of some 18 knots and we zigzagged at all times. Clearly we were making for South Africa and at Capetown several ships left to enter this port. We, and the remainder, continued on to Durban on the eastern side of South Africa.

Nearly all our troops were disembarked and we thought they continued on to India. Whilst in Durban the ship was to be fumigated, which took about 24 hours, and we were given a mean sum of money and told to spend the day and night ashore. Durban was a very beautiful City quite hilly with a lot of shops. Tied up astern of our ship in the dock was an Indian cruiser in which I was fairly certain my cousin Oliver was serving. On enquiring if I was allowed aboard of the marine sentry at the foot of the gangway I was told to go aboard when the master at arms at the top of the gangway would see me. I explained my reasons and was taken to the gun deck and there was my cousin Oliver very surprised to see me. After some chat I was given a tour of the cruiser and Oliver came back with me to Reina for tea and cakes which he thoroughly enjoyed. Apparently their food was of poor quality.

Leaving Durban we made our way, in fast convoy, to Aden and Port Tewfik at the southern end of the Suez canal. We remained there for many weeks in company with many other similar ships. Being the senior Cadet by now it was my duty to ferry people around in the ship's motor launch. The Captain, other Officers and Army Officers were always going ashore or to other ships for conferences. Rumours as to our destination were rife but strongly in favour of a landing in Italy, the war in North Africa was by now over. There were two fast naval mine layers at anchor which had been ferrying supplies to beleaguered Malta and I had many a drink in their wardroom. We used to use the motor launch quite freely for trips to local sand banks for swimming and visits to Port Tewfik. This was a really dreadful place and very old fashioned without any modern amenities.

All the troop ships went down the Red Sea and up into the gulf of Aqaba on a practice landing. In due course we went through the canal to Port Said and on to Alexandria where we embarked our full complement of troops. Sailing westward we learned that we were on operation Husky which was the invasion of Sicily. The convoy was very well protected with a great many destroyers, cruisers and an aircraft carrier with a battle fleet of heavy ships out of sight.

A quite uneventful crossing through the Mediterranean to the approaches of Sicily. It was known that there were many U-boats in the area and an Italian battle fleet too but fortunately we did not meet any. Our landing was at Catania on the east coast of Sicily.

in the early hours of the morning. There was the sound of heavy gunfire from the battle fleet pounding the defences in Sicily and the sea was littered with American gliders whose pilots had released too soon. When day broke we could see the smoke of gunfire ashore and the cruiser Cumberland was cruising back and forth pounding the shore batteries. All our troops had been disembarked down scrambling nets into the LCAs and ashore. We had completed our part so we and the other troopers left quite quickly through the Mediterranean and Atlantic back to Glasgow arriving on 29th January 1944. We were sent on leave.

For my 6th voyage Reina sailed from Glasgow on 16th February 1944 back to Liverpool where we embarked troops and nurses all with tropical kit. Fast convoy back to the Mediterranean where we were constantly under attack from Italian planes with guided bombs. One of these hit the ship in front of causing considerable damage and loss of life. For reasons unknown the convoy completely reversed its track for several hours, reversed again and continuing its way. A Uboat must have been lurking and seen the procedure and promptly torpedoed the destroyer Lightning which sank very quickly. Barrage balloons were carried by most ships (not us) and the sky was lit up one night when a balloon was stuck by lightning. Without losing any more ships we eventually arrived at Port Said. Whilst awaiting our turn to go through the canal I learned, somehow, that an old school friend Oina Paterson was a nurse on one of the other ships. My watch keeping officer allowed me to send a signal to her which was a bit of fun.

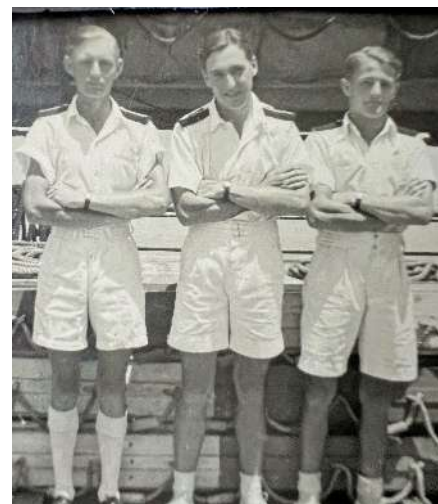
Through the Suez canal and out into the Red Sea in very hot and sticky weather - very trying for the poor troop cooped up below. We Cadets were under the control of the Staff Captain who kept a large telescope on the bridge. One day whilst on watch with this Officer he suddenly called out "long glass" I thought he said "long blast" so proceeded to operate the ship's siren for a "long blast" only to be blasted myself for the error. By way of punishment, we Cadets were put on watches four hours on and four hours off day and night for ten days. This meant no more than about three hours sleep at a stretch. I was not popular although it was well laughed about.

Eventually we arrived, without incident, at Bombay in India where we remained for about a week. Shore leave was given and we were able to go into the town. I had my first taste of real curry at the English Cricket Club and thoroughly enjoyed it. I wandered through many little back streets watching a large variety of objects being made.

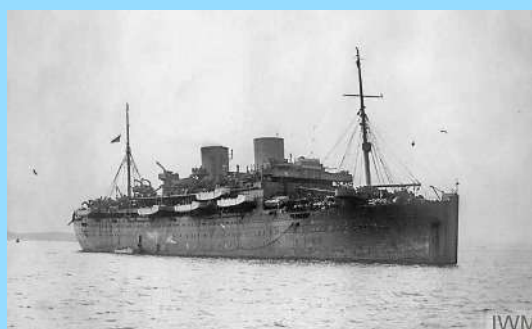
All very interesting but I was warned that this could be dangerous and not to do it again. I took the opportunity I have several pairs of white shorts and a full white uniform made, almost over night, at very reasonable cost.

Leaving India we went to Aden (then a British protectorate) and whilst anchoring and being on duty on the focastle got a real bout of sunstroke or heat stroke. I was confined to my bunk with a severe headache. Back through the Red Sea through the Suez canal and the Mediterranean to Gibraltar for a brief stop and back to Liverpool. Here I left the Reina after many happy and exciting voyages and attended at the Company's offices where my indentures were cancelled, having completed my four years. Before going on leave I was asked if I would accept a posting as Third Officer at a salary of £21 per month. This was manna from heaven after £7 to £1 per year and I accepted with alacrity. After leaving the office I made my way to a naval tailors and had one gold stripe sewn on my sleeve and caught the train in jubilation. So ended my four years as a Cadet

To be continued



Taken during a Suez transit, three cadets, with Thurstan on the left, and Baxter and Griffith, standing in front of a lifeboat and what looks like stacked life-rafts/floats.



In wartime livery, with LCAs instead of lifeboats

The Reina del Pacifico

Completed in 1931 by Harland & Wolff, Belfast, she was a quadrupal screw motor ship, the largest and fastest at that time.

Her main prewar claim to fame was in 1937 when the former Prime Minister and founder of the the Labour Party, James Ramsey MacDonald, died onboard of a heart attack while on a holiday trip to South America.

At the beginning of the Second World War she was converted to a troopship, serving in several campaigns including the Sicily landings. She was attacked several times by the Luftwaffe but survived unscathed.

After the war she was refurbished by her makers, her original fittings, removed when she was converted, having been destroyed in wartime bombings. On 11th September 1947, while on trials following the refit, there was an engine explosion which killed 28 of her crew and PSNC technical staff.

On 8th July 1957 she went aground on Devil's Flat, Bermuda and came off two days later without incurring any damage.

In April 1958 she sailed on her last voyage before being withdrawn from service and subsequent scrapping at the ship-breaking yard of John Cashmore at Newport in Monmouthshire.

Much more interesting information about the *Reina del Pacifico* can be found on several online sites including:
http://www.liverpoolships.org/reina_del_pacifico_pacific_steam_navigation.html



Captain Ken

Here is another contribution from Ken Owen that appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" of March 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/>

Just as I was about to retire my good friend, the late Mark Singleton, Landlord of the 'Ring'O Bells' in Marple, purchased the 'Bell', a 72 foot passenger narrowboat. He asked if I would help to train and qualify his crew for the 49 passenger boat.

Interestingly, Mark's father Ron, who was once landlord of the 'Navigation' pub in Marple was the only member of the late Blue Funnel Association who had actually sailed as a crew member of the famous S.S. 'Nestor', Blue Funnel Line's tall funnelled passenger ship that had dictated the road height of the Sydney Harbour Bridge when it was built.

I contacted the Government's Maritime and Coast Guard Agency regarding my application to be captain of a canal barge. I was pleased to discover that the Examiner of Masters and Mates, to whom I was referred, had once been my Second Mate on a large Container Ship (and a very good one too, I might add). He said, 'Ken, you are totally qualified to take command of the 'Q.E.2' or the largest ocean going ship, but if you want to take more than 12 passengers on the Macciesfield Canal, you will have to be examined for a 'Boat Master's certificate. This I duly did, after attending Malcolm Allcard's very efficient canal boat school at Top Lock. Demonstrating an ability to turn the boat round in the very limited winding holes, and for the 'Search and Rescue' part, knowing the numbers of the nearest road bridges so ambulances could be summoned in the event of emergency.

I thought that while the examiner was in Marple Bridge he might be interested to see the remains of the water wheel driven corn mill, by the river, as it was once owned by Captain Flowerdew who was a master in the Elder Dempster shipping Company. He had died at sea, and was buried in Takorady, West Africa, and in his will he left a prize for the best cadet of the year. It was a sextant and called the Flowerdew Memorial Prize. 'Good Heavens', said the Examiner, 'I actually won the Flowerdew prize sextant and never knew anything of it's history'.

Some amusement was caused in London, at the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, of which I am a Livery Member, and particularly when my colleague, was appointed Master of the Queen's Barge, and although a Captain and a Senior Thames Pilot, also had to be examined for a Boat Master's Certificate.

I must add that the 'Bell' cruises between Marple and Whaley Bridge were very pleasant and several thousand people enjoyed them. I recollect one particularly memorable cruise. A lovely evening, black tie gathering with beautiful music, and a female singer, and a gorgeous view towards the peak district hills. Then it started to rain and as all the hatch doors had to be closed, I was left alone outside in the rain, steering the boat.

I had been quite amused when the Maritime and Coastguard Examiner had said I could take the 'Q.E.2' tomorrow, because it reminded me of an incident several years before when I was Captain of the 'Liverpool Bay' then one of the largest Container ships in the world, and we were calling at Keelung, at a new container berth for Taipei in Taiwan. We could only just fit in. As we were leaving the berth I asked the Pilot to proceed out stern first and then swing the ship round, with the assistance of a tug. He said 'Yes that's OK but the only other Captain that's asked to do it that way, was on the 'Q.E.2' who had just made a maiden call on a world cruise'. Strangely we were the exact same dimensions as the 'Q.E.2', the maximum size allowed for the Panama Canal.

There was a follow-up piece by the editors (Maggie Williams and Margaret Leng) in the April edition:

.....We think Ken was quite disappointed we hadn't accompanied his article by a photograph. This was because, even though I had surfed (scuse the pun) the internet, I couldn't find one anywhere. So this month I started again To cut a very long story short - on Sunday night, 19th March, I was told there was a picture of the boat in the pub. 4 days later I was about to give up and had been walking along the canal trying to decide if The Bell was actually in the water. I entered the pub for the third and final time and was immediately shown the picture.! Two guys knew all about its life story. Ken saw it 4 years ago and the brewery had put a high price on it. This time the accountants just wanted it out of the pub. Peter Williams smarted it up and Maggie and I delivered it to Ken on Thursday the 22ndEds



Happiness – it's all relative

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 829 May 5th 2023

By Michael Grey MBE

When I was at sea, or afterwards, in shore-side employment, nobody ever asked me whether I was happy. If this unexpected inquiry had been made, I would have been instantly suspicious, anticipating that this was a preliminary to some unwanted bad news. It probably was inculcated very early on – during my first trip I was trained always to walk about the ship briskly (never sauntering) and if possible, carrying a spanner or a bucket, as if on an urgent mission, to demonstrate to any passing officer one's unavailability for further employment. It is not a bad tip for life in general, I have found.

But happiness – surely it is a relative state of mind, which has always made the Seafarers' Happiness Index, which evolved some years ago as an initiative of the Mission to Seafarers and the Standard P&I Club, an object of personal fascination. It has been carefully thought through, taking the measure of severely practical matters that make a seafarer's life better or worse and has refrained from anything resembling a sociological study. And without going too deeply into the methodology, the product of a measurable index tells employers, recruiters and seafarers themselves something about what seafarers are thinking, at a moment in time, which can be easily compared with previous indices.


You probably didn't need an index or even to ask questions about what the workforce was feeling throughout the pandemic, when everything was at a low ebb, with no shore leave, no reliefs or even the prospect of the voyage ending and getting either home or away. Last year, unsurprisingly, things were much better, the index rose substantially although I wondered whether from such a low ebb, we maybe should not have read too much into this apparent improvement. The latest index, by comparison, was disappointingly down again, which one would like to think was just something of a return to more normal (and modest) expectations, although there were suggestions that some employers might have lost a bit of interest in improving their employees' lot.

It also seems obvious that there are still far too many restrictions on shore leave and access to ships which have been retained by port and terminal authorities, as they have found that they rather like the convenience of just saying "no" that they learned during the pandemic and just don't want to reinstate previous and more liberal arrangements. That is something that really ought to be robustly confronted. A bit of naming and shaming would be quite a useful strategy. It would be also helpful if some agency could bring itself to rate ports for their general pleasantness for the crews of visiting ships. As leopards do not change their spots, it might be asking too much for any improvement in some awful places, but at least it might give people going to unfamiliar ports some advance warning, on the grounds of "here there be b.....s". You probably cannot publish such a rating in the sailing directions, but social media might be useful in this respect.

Seafarers today are not asking for the earth. It is not unreasonable to be presented with proper contracts, paid on time and relieved when the contract period has elapsed. These days, when good communications are readily available and getting more affordable all the time, they should be able to easily and regularly be in communication with their homes. As for shore leave, they know that ships never stop work, but a brief excursion to the shops should not be out of the question.

Does the employer show that the workforce is valued by the provision of good food and accommodation that is better than the sort of institutionalised offering that will emerge from shipyards, without somebody being interested enough to improve it? It does make a difference if that is the case. All too often you get the impression that the requirements of the crew are a complete afterthought that will result in insufficient space, inconvenience, or very uncomfortable accommodation in the eyes of the ship, being used as a breakwater or perched aft of the stern frame, in a vibrating tower block without a square metre of open deck space.

It is also quite clear from what seafarers say, that on most ships at sea today, there are barely enough bodies to cope with the routine operations, let alone any emergencies. A couple more hands would obviously make people a lot happier. It is also obvious that "attitudes" matter, in the way that the ship's people are treated by folk who march aboard in port, or communicate with them by email from ashore. The "we fail to understand" message from the office needs to adopt a more considerate and conciliatory tone! That would be a help toward happiness.

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and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey MBE greyjrm@gmail.com

ZADOK THE PRIEST.

Zadok the Priest, before the feast, the Monarch he anointed;
And warned the large expectant crowd they might be disappointed.
"For those who expect nothing, they most surely are well blessed.
Recite your prayers and live in hope and God will do the rest."

And so the crowd went forth and feasted. Pleased to have a King.
A Coronation Concert caused the rafters loud to ring.
And left behind much litter which accompanied the calling.
The Monarch he was heard to say, "It really is appalling!"

And Queen Camilla soothed his brow. The King she gently teased.
"Why Chazza, at this moment, you should be more greatly pleased,
As, underneath it all, you are. It's all so far so good.
Though you are in your dotage you are broadly understood."

And much humility is his. His patience not so much.
His wisdom is quite clear with a fine pre-scient touch.
Reality he clearly sees. Anointing came and went.
And all had the approval of his staunch Lord President.

A splendid woman, fine of figure, outhouse built of brick,
The Monarch she will well protect 'gainst any knavish trick,
Of any of our enemies. Where are they, this fine day?
It really seems that most of them have vanished in the fray.

"I wonder?" thinks King Charles " For that most surely can't be right.
We all know most of them are lurking somewhere out of sight.
I will defend the Realm as best I can, but need your oath,
That you will help me as I do so. Thus, I plight my troth."

And so it all goes on. Another Reign. Another Realm.
Intelligence continues in the figure at the helm.
A coxswain, pilot, captain at our national ship of state,
In whom we all can place our trust, for now, at any rate.

And Zadok he sat down. He knew that he could do no more.
He'd done what he was paid to do, as Priest before the Law.
Glorious and happy are the people of the time;
So long may it continue. Can it be quite so sublime?

BY
08.05.2023

New Members

Oliver Burnett is a marine engineer and Technical Superintendent with Red Funnel Ferries in Southampton. He maintains a keen interest in mechanics even in his free time, also in local history and particularly the history of Southampton Docks and Red Funnel. Having attended some of the Club events he joins us to meet like-minded people and to be more deeply involved in the South Coast shipping industry.

Steven Masters is a qualified Harbour Master and holds that position in the port of Southampton. He enjoys sailing and all things maritime and joins us to support the Club and to help main its position within Southampton and the local maritime community.

Paul Shepherd is a Master Mariner with a Bsc (Hons) in Marine Operations Management. He is Director of Whitehorse Maritime, which is a training and safety consultancy, & Whitehorse Maritime Academy which provides MCA oral exam preparation services. He is a Freeman of the HCMM and an Associate Fellow of the NI. He joins us to help foster relationships between his Southampton based networking organisation, the Southampton Wardroom, and the Club and other local groups and individuals.



Further to the Boatsteerer's note on the new Facebook page, [The Cachalots, Southampton](#) I understand that as a Private group the page is visible to all but only those members of the group can read the content or post comments. Membership of the group will be vetted by the administrators, that is the Captain, Staff Captain and Boatsteerer, and will not be restricted to just Club members. As we go to press the membership stands at 43. *Ed*

Gone Aloft



Adrian M Northover, MCIT, MCIM, on 25th April, aged 90, peacefully, at home, after a long illness.

Adrian started a career in transport straight from school, joining Thomas Meadows & Co Ltd in Royal Mail House. Called up for National Service, he was posted to Transport Command in Egypt as a Load Master, but returned to Thomas Meadows on discharge. In 1954 he joined BEA (later British Airways) working there for twenty years, first in Operations, then Marketing. In 1974 he moved to Atlantic Container Line in Southampton, rising to General Manager (Marketing Services) before retiring in 1990.

He was past Chairman and Secretary of the BA Staff Retirement Association for the Solent region.

Adrian joined the Club in 2013 and was a regular in the Club room until a couple of years ago.

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.