

## Gone Aloft



Ken Edwards, who died on the 24th July from renal failure and heart complications, was born in Burley in the New Forest on 5th August 1940. His family moved back to a Surrey village and Ken enjoyed the freedom of country life.

At the age of fourteen, due to the lack of local employment prospects, he joined the Training ship 'Arethusa' which at that time was still preparing young boys for life in the RN or MN and had a reputation as a hard berth. He was trained as a radio operator but wanted to be on deck so joined King Edwards Nautical College in London with a view to taking up an apprenticeship/cadetship as a deck officer. When it came to joining his first ship, an RFA supply vessel, Ken saw that the lad ahead of him was signing on as a deck boy at greater wages so he too signed on as a deck boy. That winter his ship sailed through the Arctic supporting the RN and US fleets on exercise when nearly the whole fleet went down with Asian Flu. The Captain asked Ken if he could read signals and when he said 'yes', he then became the signalman with his wage tripling!

Ken continued in the RFA, serving in the Mediterranean, Far East, West Indies and Pacific Ocean and was stationed at Christmas Island for the nuclear tests. He wrote an account of his time on the Beira Patrol (circa 1966) which appeared in *Cachalot 78* of July '20. He kept studying hard and working on ships all round the world, gradually climbing the ranks. He was always very proud of the fact that he had worked his way up from deck boy and therefore had a good understanding of all the roles on board a ship. He met his wife, Betty, in Malta and she sailed with him to Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Aden and The Seychelles. He obtained his Master's ticket in 1967 and was then the youngest person in the shortest time, to serve in all ranks in the RFA up to Master. His last vessel in the RFA was the *Orangeleaf* and he applied for Pilotage in the Southampton Isle of Wight district but there were no vacancies and he was advised to stay local in case one came up. Meanwhile, Red Funnel asked if he would take command of their new hydrofoil which was being built in Italy. He stayed with Red Funnel and was similarly involved with their new drive through ferry 'Netley Castle'. He was a well liked and respected senior master for many years until taking up 'part time' retirement and finally finishing in 2016.

Ken joined the Club in 1992 and was Staff Captain in 2020 which would normally lead to Captain the following year but with the advent of Covid he declined to take up that position in respect for the health of his wife who was deemed to be very vulnerable. Ken's son Robin predeceased him and we give our condolences to Betty, his daughter Tanya and his grandchildren.