

**Captain Stephen Taylor RN**, who joined the Club in 1992 when he was Director, Maritime Tactical School at HMS Dryad, died peacefully at home on the 21st May, aged 81, as a result of CLL and mesothelioma.

He always enjoyed and valued his involvement with the Club, particularly the Shipping Festival Services and the Sea Pie Suppers and would always respond to club missives and bulletins.

Stephen was educated at Pangbourne before joining the RN aged 18 and passed out top of his entry at Dartmouth and was awarded the Queen's sword.



His first command was of the minesweeper HMS Belton on fishery protection duties. In 1971 while anchored in Lochmaddy, North Uist, the vessel started to drag her anchor. Taylor decided to weigh anchor and leave but Belton ran aground in 75-knot winds and was badly damaged. Though found guilty at court martial and reprimanded, Taylor and his ship's company were sent to Gibraltar to bring HMS Chawton out of mothballs, and to rejoin the Fishery Protection Squadron.

Promoted to commander in 1978, during the Falklands War Taylor was on the staff at Northwood where his role as Fleet Missile and Gunnery Officer included developing the tactics and equipment to defeat the Argentinians.

He went on to command three destroyers and a destroyer squadron and also claimed an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for the furthest-travelled barrel of beer, carrying a barrel of Ballards Brewery's winter ale from his home village, Rogate, West Sussex, to drink in Port Stanley on Christmas Day 1984.

In September 1988, one month after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Taylor was in command of HMS Southampton, on Armillo Patrol escort in the Gulf. Tasked with escorting *OCL Tor Bay*, the two vessels collided at rendezvous resulting in extensive damage to the Southampton's port side forward of the bridge. Luckily there were no serious injuries. Tony Radakin, then a young midshipman on vacation from reading law at Southampton University and now Chief of the Defence Staff, learnt many sound lessons from Taylor – about leadership, management in crisis and damage control. "Taylor was a picture of calmness and clarity," Radakin recalled. Southampton returned to the UK aboard a semi-submersible heavy lift ship, her repairs costing some £45m. The board of inquiry held that Taylor, who had been in his cabin at the time of the incident, discussing the night's operations with his first lieutenant, had "placed unjustifiable trust in his officer of the watch and failed to acquire the information necessary to ensure his ship's safety" and that this amounted to negligence. He was tried by court martial and found guilty, but given another command, Southampton's sister ship Exeter. In 1990-91 Taylor ran the Maritime Tactical School, where in the run-up to the first Gulf War he war-gamed scenarios, liaised with the US Navy and wrote a concept of operations for naval operations in the Gulf. His final appointment was as Commodore Naval Ship Acceptance, responsible for seeing that shipbuilders deliver new ships according to contract.

Retiring from the Navy aged 52, for the next 25 years he was consultant to companies involved in maritime security and safety.

He was on the technical board of the Nautical Institute, was chairman of Lloyd's Register's Naval Ship Rules (NSR), president of The Anchorites and a senior member of the court of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

Our condolences to his wife Diana and their two daughters and a son.

*Taken mainly from his obituary in the Daily Telegraph of 3 July 2023, which you can read [Here](#)*