

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 105

December 2023

Captain's Log

December is always a month of interest for seafarers. Will I be home for Christmas/New Year? Is my relief going to come down with a 'Christmas cold' just before changeover day etc.? In my case there was always the birthday question as well (check the name!). My family soon learned to accept that these events would be marked whenever I was available. The events which follow are fixed!....



I have been pleased to represent the Cachalots at several remembrance events over the last few months. The first was the hoisting of the Red Ensign at the Civic Centre to mark Merchant Navy Day. This was followed by a short reception in the Lord Mayor's chambers where I had a chance to see the latest Lord Mayor's selection of artworks from the Southampton depository.

A few days later, I was at Holyrood Church with the MNA and representatives of other nautical organisations for a service led by Revd. James Mosher. The Sea Cadets formed a guard of honour for the Lord Mayor and one of them played the last post.

The third event was the City of Southampton Remembrance Day Service. This was led by Bishop Geoff Annas and has grown in support since I last attended when my children were in the Sea Cadets 15 years ago. There were lots more organisations represented for wreath laying, more uniformed organisations and a larger 'congregation'.

I have attended four fine social events. Together with Southampton Wardroom and the Solent branch of the Nautical Institute, we held another successful social evening for Solent Mariners on the Shieldhall in the middle of September (there will have been a third by the time that you read this).

Then there was a very well attended Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar night Dinner where £1,175 was raised for the Southampton Sea Cadets. This is advertised as being organised by the Cachalots, whereas in reality it is mainly Robin and Terry – thanks to them once again. Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey gave an amusing speech before proposing the Immortal Memory. This was followed by a few Sea Shanties, led by an ad hoc group of Shantymen, one from each table.



In November, the Harpooners, past and present, met in the RBL for their annual dinner and then there was a convivial evening in the White Star, organised by the Southampton Wardroom.

Wishing you and all your families a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Noel Becket, Captain of the Club



Boatsteerer's Locker

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

Cachalot Golf Day(s)!!!

With great assistance from one of our Cachalots and Southampton Pilot, Bruce Thomas, we completed our second golf day of the year at Corhampton Golf Club in September. See report in this Cachalot.

We are running two golf days in 2024. The first scheduled for Thursday 25th April at Lee-on-the-Solent and the second on Thursday 19th September at a venue to be decided and confirmed.

Please contact the Boatsteerer in the first instance if you are interested in joining us or providing sponsorship for prizes.

The Cachalots, Southampton Facebook and LinkedIn Groups

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 and LinkedIn. The FB group 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 | Facebook](#) Or [Cachalots | Groups | LinkedIn](#)

Club Management

In accordance with Rule 12, a meeting of the management committee was held on 30 November.

Past Captains' Meeting

In accordance with Rule 6, there will be a meeting of the Past Captains to discuss the election of the Captain for 2024-25 at the RBL Club Room on Saturday 6th January 2024.

AGM

In accordance with Rule 11, the AGM will be held in the Club room at the RBL, in person and by zoom, on Thursday 11th January 2024. Please contact the Boatsteerer by email if you wish to join the AGM by zoom and I will send out the joining identity etc. The following Harpooners come to the end of their two year term and are up for re-election at the AGM:

- Terry Clark (Editor and Webmaster)
- Douglas Gates (Club Membership Secretary)
- Leslie Morris
- Mark Oakley
- Julia Whorwood (Functions Officer)

Applications to become a Harpooner and member of the management committee are welcome and encouraged. Please contact the Boatsteerer for further information if you are interested.

Please note, Cachalot members are only able to vote and/or apply to become a Harpooner if their subscription for the current year, 2024, has been paid.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk



Apologies all round

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 843 November 18th 2023

By *Michael Grey MBE*



Not before time, there is something of a backlash manifesting itself over the issue of ethical investments, as some investors are discovering that one can tolerate just so many sermons when it seems that the ethical alternatives fail to cut the financial mustard. It is one thing for your bank to be sending you helpful messages about failings in your lifestyle and hints for environmental improvement. It is arguably going a bit far when you find that the managers retained to improve your finances have decided to disinvest from funds linked to sectors that the sensitive among us find “problematical.”

This includes oil and gas or the defence industries. Somebody has dared to point out that without drilling for hydrocarbons, all the lights will go out, and in a dangerous and unstable world, you need something more substantial than well-meaning, if infantile, thoughts. Well-funded and profitable energy and defence industries matter, if an industrial nation is not to be beholden to others, or in the worst case, destroyed. The shipping industry is, as usual, rather behind the curve in any fight-back against the sheer nonsense eructed by the high priests of environmental, social and governance matters. There is, of course, no cost whatever when a prominent shipper declares righteously that it intends to favour only sustainable ships for the carriage of its goods. It burnishes its reputation in the market place and furrows the brows of those operating ships, who regard this as just another set of hoops they are forced to jump through, as they provide the means for feeding the world and keeping its lights alight.

One does not have to probe too deeply to discover a great deal of hypocrisy behind the façade of corporate righteousness. How many of the shippers who wag their fingers at the shipping industry about their need for better ESG will stand close scrutiny about the way in which they treat their own workforces, export their own emissions and manage to trade with exceedingly nasty regimes? How can banks, which let us remind ourselves, through their greed and incompetence, caused an economic disaster of epic proportions in 2008, dare to lecture shipowners about environmental issues, well beyond their technical expertise?

Their only duty to their shareholders is to ensure that their lending is sound, not pandering to the noisy activist minority who want industry to cease and all to happily eat their locally grown root vegetables. It is worth pointing out that the causes embraced by the ethically inclined are highly selective, sometimes fluid, according to the trends determined largely by social media.

Now we have history, or at least a highly selective version of it, being manufactured to embrace the exciting opportunities for reparations. There is clearly plenty to be ashamed about in our history with the world’s premier insurer to the fore, heaping ashes on its corporate head, apologising and doling out substantial sums in recompense for all that business they wrote for the slave ships and cargoes which last sailed 200 years ago.

Quite what will be achieved by pandering to the modern cult of historical victimhood, it is hard to determine. There is no logic to an apology when it is made by somebody who is at least five generations away from those who participated in these heinous, but legal acts. And where will it all end, for the millions contributed, from the well-meaning, to those who may, or may not, be descendants of the victims will never be enough? It will only encourage a new generation of specialist lawyers, representing victim groups that have yet to discover their disadvantage thus facilitating the mining of rich seams of past crimes.

The descendants of the “shippers,” which provided the human cargoes from those they enslaved in sub-Saharan Africa, will be unlikely to support the cause of reparations. They probably won’t apologise, either. There are no shipping companies left which could possibly be connected by even the most devious historian to the dark days of the Atlantic triangular trades. There are probably sufficient matters on the maritime agenda, which merit apologies, in the eyes of the perpetually offended. Just keep them to yourselves.

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

Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar Dinner

In Aid of the Southampton Sea Cadets

Friday 20th October 2023

Earlier in the year, past Captain Andrew Moll OBE, was keen for the Cachalots to host another Trafalgar Dinner at The Grand, Southampton. The event required one hundred and twenty covers as a minimum to ensure we covered our costs.

We highlighted the event to Cachalot members and contacted various maritime organisations associated with the port of Southampton. Our primary guest was to be the Lord Mayor of Southampton and Admiral of the Port, Cllr Valerie Laurent and our guest speaker was Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE.



The Ensigns (*left*) and the Admiral of the Port's flag (*above*)

Cachalot members and their wives assisted in preparing the tables ahead of the evening. With help from our host manager, Justina, we managed to achieve a neutral colour lighting scheme this year without the pink tinge of previous years



On the evening we welcomed 129 guests through a guard of honour provided by the Southampton Sea Cadets, with a drinks reception ahead of the meal in the wonderful lobby of the former hotel. A senior Sea Cadet provided a superb pipe salute to encourage the guests into the dining room ahead of the primary table party, hosted by our Club Captain, Noel Becket.

The procession of the Admiral of the Port was led by the Town Sergeant with the silver 'Oar of Admiralty' and the Admiral of the Port's Ensign carried by the senior Sea Cadet and placed adjacent to the primary table.

Following a welcome from Captain Becket and the Admiral of the Port, Captain Moll made an appeal on behalf of the Southampton Sea Cadets for guests to 'dig deep' into their pockets for the Prize Draw of a modern communication device (iPad).

Sadly, the Rev'd Reg Sweet, RN was unable to join us due to ill health, but Captain Becket provided the Grace ahead of the serving of the victuals, Breaking the Line, Mizzen Main and Victory Dessert followed by Hardy's Finale.

The Second Grace was read by our Staff Captain, David Carter and The King proposed by Captain Noel Becket.

After a short interval and the collecting of envelopes with place cards and money, our Guest Speaker, Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE provided an interesting address as the Immortal Memory with the traditional toast made in silence.

The Staff Captain announced the result of the draw takings as £1,175 plus €5 before the Admiral of the Port drew the winning place card which, I believe, came from the table of the Southampton Sea Cadets! The money was handed directly to the Treasurer of the Southampton Sea Cadets.

After the success of our 'audience participation' last year, the evening was drawn to a close by the singing of three sea shanties, *Spanish Ladies*, *South Australia* and *Drunken Sailor*, led by the Boatsteerer and two willing assistants. A member of each table was nominated to join us on the steps to lead the singing and was a great success.

The evening finished with the National Anthem.

Overall, a very successful evening in good company and one which we have hopefully managed to cover our costs.

Robin Plumley MBE
Boatsteerer



Cachalots Golf Day
Corhampton Golf Club
Thursday 28th September 2023

Following our successful golf days in 2021, 2022 and April of 2023, the second gold day was held in generally fine weather at Corhampton Golf Club. My thanks to Past Captain and Boatsteerer George Angas for assisting in setting up the day and to the club team for providing an excellent conditioned course and facilities with meal afterwards.



4th hole



18th green

This autumn golf day is held for the Charles Webb Golf Trophy which was played from 1981 to 1989 and now has three new names for the past three years.

Thus, on Thursday 28th September, thirty-nine of us gathered at Corhampton 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 for the prizes from DP World Southampton arranged by our Cachalot, Mark Hooper, Director–Business Development-UK Ports & Terminals.

The thirty-nine players were from DP World, ABP Pilots, SERCO, Svitzer Marine, Southampton Shipping Golfing Society (SSGS), Denholm, Exxon Fawley, BMT Group, University Southampton and National Oceanography Centre. and other guests to swell the numbers. Eight of these were also Cachalots.

The majority of players from 2022 signed up quickly and we had nine teams of four and one team of three. Adjustments were made to allow two working pilots to join the later teams teeing off.

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 1006 led by Robin Plumley.

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

Prizes were given for the best three individual rounds and best two team scores.

Prizes were also awarded for;

- Nearest the pin in 2 shots on the 3th hole,
- Nearest the pin on the 11th hole, and
- Longest drive on the 15th hole.

In the clubhouse we enjoyed celebratory drinks and a pleasant meal. An element of the entry fee was put towards the Cachalot Captain's Charity, Solent Dolphin, which operates the Alison MacGregor from Hythe Marina

And then to the prizegiving!

The results:

Longest drive on 15th	Ian Barlow (Wallenius Wilhelmsen)
Nearest the 11th pin	Bruce Thomas (ABP Pilot)
Nearest the 3rd pin in 2	Steve McCrindle (DP World Southampton)
Team prize (First) 90 points cb	David Ardley (SSGS), Steve Wallis (Esso Rtd), George Angas (SSGS), Wesley Ditchfield (Svitzer)
Team prize (2nd) 90 points cb	Bob Ward (SSGS), Martin King (ABP Pilot), Trevor Neal (Guest), James Syme (Guest)
Individual (First) 40 points cb	David Ardley (SSGS)
Individual (2nd) 40 points cb	James Syme (Guest)
Individual (3rd) 38 points cb	Rex Taylor (Univ. Southampton)

An enjoyable and successful day in great company with about £125 being raised towards the Captain's Charity.

Biggest disappointment was that I failed to get any photos of the prizes or the presentations!! Must do better next time.

Many thanks to all who came along and supported us on the day. Special thanks to the Pro in the shop at Corhampton for selecting the excellent prizes for the day.

Robin Plumley MBE

New Members

Emmeline Payne is a Master Mariner and Marine Compliance Officer for ABP in Southampton. She is also a Liveryman & Mentor of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. She enjoys kayaking and snorkelling and joins us to socialise with other like-minded maritime professionals.

Andy Read is a Master Mariner and a Pilot for ABP in Southampton. He also joins us to socialise with like-minded maritime professionals.

James Charles Shepherd is a Master Mariner working as a Chief Officer with Red Funnel and is also a tutor with Whitehorse Maritime assisting candidates for MCA oral exams. As a deck officer he specialised in LNG vessels and he is also an HSE Superintendent specialising in dry docks. He is a member of the HCMM and says that after the success of the joint venture between The Cachalots and Southampton wardroom he looks forward to meeting more members of the Club.

James Michael Henry Willcox is a Master Mariner with a FdSc in Nautical Science and a BSc in Sustainable Maritime Operations. He is currently a First Officer with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and does some part time work as First Lieutenant on the Sea Cadets Offshore power vessels. He is a Freeman of the HCMM and a member of the Nautical Institute and Nautilus International. He is also a Careers at Sea Ambassador, interested in tackling 'sea-blindness' and promoting maritime careers to young people and raising awareness of our industry. He is currently carrying out a university research project into the recruitment and retention of seafarers in the UK shipping industry and how they are influenced by employment practices. He enjoys mountain scenery and hiking and has completed the UK 3 Peaks challenge, summited Mount Toubkal in Morocco and trekked to Everest Base Camp and Kala Patthar in Nepal. An avid supporter of Arsenal Football Club, he also enjoys playing football, squash and tennis. He would like to engage with fellow maritime industry professionals in the local area who share his interests and is keen to explore any networking and personal opportunities that may arise.



SHIELDHALL EVENT 3



A joint initiative between The Cachalots, The Southampton Wardroom
and the Solent Branch of the Nautical Institute.

You are invited to join us to make new friends, swing the
lantern, network and meet like-minded mariners at

A SOCIAL EVENING FOR PROFESSIONAL MARINERS AND PARTNERS

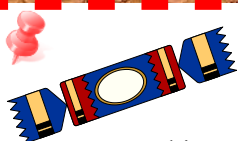
Friday December 1st from 18.00
on board SS Shieldhall
at 110 Berth Southampton SO15 0HH

There will be an optional curry (please pre-book),
priced at £13 - pay on the night

£3 of this is covers our Shieldhall costs. If you are not having a curry,
please consider donating £3 or more on the night.

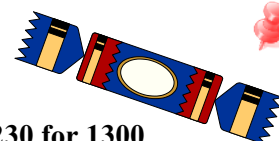
Dress code: Informal/relaxed

To let us know that you are coming and/or
to book a curry, please visit
The Eventbrite page [Here](#)



Club Christmas Lunch

Wednesday December 13th



This year in the downstairs room at the Royal British Legion Club again, **1230 for 1300.**

Curried Parsnip Soup Topped with Root Vegetable Crisps

Or, Smoked Salmon terrine filled with Prawn Mouseline finished with Sour dough Tuille & Pea shoots

Roast Turkey served with Sage & Cranberry 'Baubel', Pig in Blanket, Rich Red wine Gravy

Or, Caramelised Onion and Brie Tartlet All Served with 'Best of British' seasonal Vegetables & Roast potatoes



Traditional Christmas Pudding finished with Brandy Sauce

Or, Fresh fruit salad filled Melon Bowl



Catering by Chef Sam

£32.50

max 40 on 'first come' basis

Please note the revised price and starting time and advise us of your menu choices at time of booking.

Cut off date Friday 8th December

Annual General Meeting

Friday 11th January 2024 at 1830

The AGM for 2023 will be held in person at the RBL with an option for a link by Zoom.

There are five Harpooners positions up for election

See the Boatsteerers Locker on page 2

Burns Supper

Our Caledonian Cultural Experience will be held downstairs at the RBL again, on

Wednesday, 24th January



Expect the traditional fare and entertainment

1900 for 1930

Black Tie & Miniatures

Price yet to be determined

Sea Pie Supper 2024

St. Mary's Stadium

Friday 2nd February

Plans are well advanced for the SPS next year and tickets are now on sale.

To members only
and through the office please.

Members £69 Guests £79
02380 226155

office@cachalots.org.uk

Subs are due

Subscriptions are due at the end of the year and you should find a form with this edition

The cut-off date for the next edition
(#106) will be on
Friday 16th February '24

250 Club

Aug	D J B Dunn	J J Jones
Sept	C R Kelso	Emma Tiller
Oct	Lesley Odd	Kevin Williams
Nov	S J Lawrence	I Odd

Steam Tug NAJA

My interest in this tug and the events of its sad demise, were prompted by an enquiry to the Cachalot website. The gentlemen concerned, Alfred, was born in London and is compiling a Roll of Honour of the names of all people lost in the London Metropolitan boroughs during WW2. He was asking to see if we had any knowledge of names associated with the tug, and if they were held in the MN Roll of Honour. A quick search of the online record at the National Archives indicated they were not and so my search for more information commenced.



The *ST Naja* was a London based tug working the river Thames in the mid-20th Century.

www.thamestugs.co.uk

Photo: G Lane coll'n

The vessel, official number 148526, was built in 1924 by Alexander Hall & Co Ltd, Aberdeen for the company of Gaselee & Son Ltd, London at a cost of £6,150.

She had a length of 72ft, Breadth of 18.1ft and depth of 8.5ft. At 72GRT she had a steam engine of 300IHP and was delivered to the owner in 1925.

Sadly, she suffered two incidents in which she received damage, the first during the blitz of 1941 and again during a bombing raid by V1 rockets in 1944. With assistance from Alfred and contact with Nigel Parks, the grandson of one of the casualties, I have gained an interest in researching the name of the sixth crew member killed in 1944.

The link to the grandson of George Parks was quite fortuitous. I had looked for information about the Naja on a Facebook group called The Liquid Highway. Among some comments, I interrogated the name of Parks and found that the person was a Facebook 'friend' of my brother. They worked together in Hong Kong for Dennis Specialist Vehicles.

In the first incident, on 16th January 1941, Naja suffered damage following a near miss by a bomb at Tower Bridge. One of the crew, George Henry Carter, age 18, of Poplar, was killed at the time whilst another, James Richard Reeves, age 64, of Bermondsey, died later in hospital.

The tug was repaired and continued in service.

On 12th July 1944, while changing crews, she suffered severe damage and sank due to a near direct hit from a V1 rocket, when approximately 100 yards west from Tower Bridge. The bridge itself was partially damaged.

In the London Fire Brigade Air-Raid Incidents Report Book for that date the incident is recorded (call no. 3785) and says 6 were killed and 7 injured, but it does not give the names of the casualties.

The record of WW2 Civilian Deaths 1939-1945 for the Metropolitan Borough of Stepney shows the following *five* entries 'in the steam tug Naja at Tower Bridge'.

George William Parks, age 74; Home Guard. Husband of Edith Simmons Parks, of Ilford, Essex.

William Thomas Carter, age 63. Husband of Mary Carter, of Brockley.

Richard Alger Carter, age 15. Son of Mary Carter, of Brockley.

Alan Gerald Murray, age 15. Son of Ernest Reid Murray and Mona Ivy Murray, of Manor Park, Essex.

Henry Hill, age 16. Son of E. Hill and of the late Joseph Hill, of Prusom Street, Wapping.

The Civil Registration Death Index 1916-2007 and the record of WW2 Civilian Deaths 1939-1945 for the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey show the following name.

Frederick Albert Callahan, age 18. Home Guard. Son of Mr and Mrs J.H. Callahan, of Millwall. 12 July 1944, at Tower Bridge.

F.A. Callahan was also the sixth name provided by the archivist at Thames Tugs.

So, George Parks was the Captain; F.A. Callahan and A. Murray were the Mate's; W.J. Carter was the Engineer and the Firemen were R.A. Carter and N. Hill.

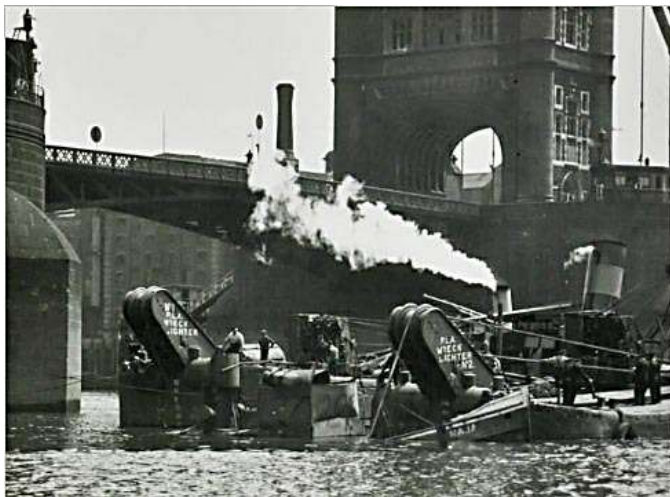
William and Richard Carter were the father and brother of George Carter who was killed in the first incident and therefore Mary Carter lost her husband and two sons in the two incidents.

It is possible the bodies were not recovered until the wreck of the tug was recovered by the Port of London Authority wreck vessel as shown in the images which follow.

This comment is based on the record of probate for George Parks which stated:

PARKS George William of 108 Craven-gardens Barkingside Essex who is believed to have been killed through war operations on 12 July 1944 aboard the steam tug Maja (*sic*) off Tower Gardens Stepney London E.14 and whose dead body was found on 18 July 1944. Probate Llandudno 30 August to Edith Simmonds Parks widow. Effects £274 11s. 1d.

The images below are from the Facebook group page The Liquid Highway and show the ST Naja being lifted from the riverbed by a Port of London Authority recovery vessel.



There is also an image which is copyrighted but can be viewed at the following web link [Tower Bridge - London Picture Archive](#)

All the images are freely available on the Facebook group at [NAJA V1 Raising the Gaselees tug NAJA 12th... - The Liquid Highway | Facebook](#)

The V1 Rocket attacks on London (generated by Bing Chat-GPT4)

During World War II, the V-1 flying bomb was developed by Nazi Germany as an early cruise missile. The V-1 was the first of the Vergeltungswaffen (V-weapons) deployed for the terror bombing of London. The V-1 was launched from launch facilities along the French and Dutch coasts, and the Wehrmacht first launched the V-1s against London on June 13, 1944, one week after the successful Allied landings in France. At peak, more than one hundred V-1s a day were fired at southeast England, 9,521 in total, decreasing in number as sites were overrun until October 1944, when the last V-1 site in range of Britain was overrun by Allied forces. After this, the Germans directed V-1s at the port of Antwerp and at other targets in Belgium, launching a further 2,448 V-1s. The attacks stopped only a month before the war in Europe ended, when the last launch site in the Low Countries was overrun on March 29, 1945

Compiled by Captain Robin Plumley MBE
With grateful assistance from Alfred and Nigel.
16 November 2023

It is of interest to note that the tug was manned by two elderly men and four boys, a reflection perhaps of the workforce available during the war. We can speculate that the seven injured may have been the other crew, coming on or off watch.....Ed



Captain Ken

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

One particular pleasure received from my quite long sea career has been the variety of really interesting people I have been privileged to befriend.

Outstanding amongst these must surely be **Dr. James McIlroy**.

It was in the 1960's, when I was Second Mate of the cargo passenger ship 'Glenroy', and Dr. McIlroy, in his late eighties, was enjoying a retirement voyage with us.



Glenroy

Nobody on board 'Glenroy' knew who this very pleasant elderly passenger was and it was only when enjoying a drink together and discussing Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, that I realized he was the surgeon of the wrecked 'Endurance' and then stranded with the crew on Elephant Island while Shackleton and two officers sailed an epic small boat passage to South Georgia whaling station to enable a rescue of the remaining crew while McIlroy was having to cut off some of the men's frost bitten toes.

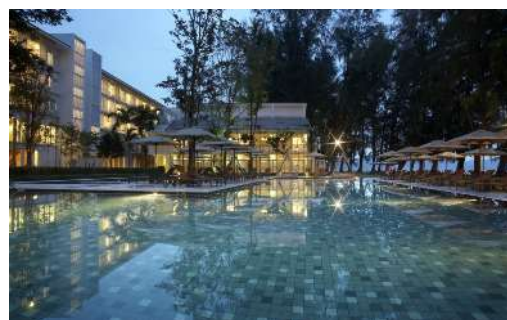


As we frequently enjoyed conversation together, I realized Jim had been to the South Pole twice, the North Pole once, fought and been captured in two World Wars. He was the surgeon on the Orient Line's 'Oronsay' when she was torpedoed off West Africa and spent several days in a life boat before being captured.

When he claimed to have visited every country in the world except Mexico, I did think he was exaggerating, but later learned that he had in fact accompanied Prince Louis Battenberg, as medical advisor, on his World trip.

Together with explorer Frank Wild, he owned a cotton plantation in Nyasaland until they were both persuaded to join Shackleton on his final expedition where sadly Shackleton suffered a heart attack and actually died in McIlroy's arms.

As Dr. McIlroy was the most travelled person I ever met, I did ask him where was the nicest place in the world. And he said, "Well I've only discovered it on this trip and it is 'The Lone Pine Hotel' on Penang Island, Malaysia".



The Lone Pine Hotel in Batu Ferringhi, Penang.

Greatly changed since the 1960's it is now a 5 Star 'boutique' hotel run by Marriott - Ed



Mount McIlroy is identified with the arrow.

Many years after he died, the British Admiralty made a new survey of South Georgia and named one of the mountain peaks Mount McIlroy.

I have never sailed near South Georgia, so was very pleased some years later when I heard that Maggie, our 'Mellor Birds' contributor, was taking an Atlantic Bird Watching cruise. I asked if she could identify the relevant mountain peak on South Georgia which she kindly did, and this is the picture.



Dr. James McIlroy

In shipping, when in doubt, don't doubt

Andrew Craig-Bennett on what lessons we can learn from the fall of the house that Alfred Holt built.

When Alfred Holt invented the steeple compound steam engine, he didn't build one ship fitted with his invention; he ordered three sisters, and immediately began a line of steam ships. No half measures: he had carried out his experiments; he knew his engine worked and he knew that merchants would prefer steam ships to sailing ships. And so began one of the world's most admired shipping companies. Its influence lives on in odd ways. I have more than once opened the Fleet Instructions Book of a great Asian line and found that, as I picked my way cautiously through pages in Chinese and Japanese, I recognised the paragraphs, the layout, and the principles set out despite the language being quite different. A very large part of the world fleet is being operated on the principles set out in the Blue Funnel Line operating instructions, although the Blue Funnel Line is no more.



Holt didn't just build ships with an engine efficient enough carry cargo across the oceans of the world without a government subsidy, he put together a system, from the way the agents reported to the way in which officers were trained, which ran almost flawlessly for 100 years. In this he was helped by his friendship with the shipbuilder John Scott and his family and the shipowner and agent John Samuel Swire, and his family. It is remarkable that these friendships were carried down through generations. We see the same sort of thing in some Asian shipping lines and some European ones.

And then the Blue Funnel Line fell apart, slowly, quietly, and always paying its bills, but fall apart it did, starting, in the opinion of most right-thinking people, in 1967 when the company "went public" and ceased to be a family driven concern. The reasons for this were of course that the descendants of the original owners wanted to do other things than run a shipping company, but the managers who took over presumably – presumably – did want to run a shipping company. Their trouble was that they could not decide what to do.

The 1960s were the dawn of containerisation and with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight – once described to me by Tony Siciliano of the New York Society of Maritime Arbitrators as "the cheapest thing in shipping" – we can all look back in time and tell them what to do: containerise, ruthlessly. They did put some effort and assets into containerising – they were one quarter of Overseas Containers Ltd (OCL) but they did not put all their eggs in that basket. For some reason they decided to build a big tanker, a big ore carrier, and a big LNG carrier, all ships aimed at trades they knew nothing about. The LNG carrier – the Nestor – was a particular fiasco. They bought Cory Brothers, known for tugs and lighterage. They bought Cooks' shipyard in Wivenhoe, which built coasters. They seem to have bought just about anything except containers, terminals and containerships. They were absolutely terrified of being taken over, and a good deal of their thinking revolved around how to avoid this. And of course, they went in for forwarding. It was all very 'business school' and 'management consultancy'.

I have heard it said that the biggest blunder of the lot was the sale of Holt's Wharf in Kowloon, Hong Kong, in 1971. New World Development bought it and built what was one of the world's biggest commercial complexes – residential, office towers, hotels, shopping malls – on the site.

And gradually, without scandal, without fuss, the whole of the empire subsided. The last bit to go was a forwarding company.

Containerisation has eaten its children.

Holts, or as their professional managers named them, Ocean Transport and Trading – were panicked by containerisation, as indeed most European liner companies were. The one European liner outfit to get it right was Maersk, who was once smaller than Blue Funnel.

The particular horror of containers was not so much that they were American (though that was bad enough!); it was that containers destroyed that thing of great beauty and complexity, (if you were in it) or that monstrous system of cartels (if you were not in it), the liner conference system, itself largely the invention of Mr Holt and Mr Swire, but adopted by all liner shipping companies because without it liners compete to the death. Conference tariffs were built on the idea that different items could 'bear' different freight rates between the same ports, depending on how awkward they were and how valuable they were. Once you put everything into identical grey boxes, this idea becomes immediately nonsensical. To generations of liner shipping people, this was terrifying. And they were right – as I have said before, containerisation has eaten its children. There are almost no liner companies in the container trades that go back more than sixty years, the exceptions being Maersk and the three Japanese lines who are now ONE.

Sic transit gloria mundi

There is a moral here. In shipping, when in doubt, don't doubt! Bet the farm rather than fritter it away into insignificance.

Feel free to draw an implication for the crisis of our day. Don't waste time with half measures. Stop oxidising hydrocarbons. Nuclear, wind, and batteries storing electricity made by nuclear plants and by wind and solar farms are going to be the future.

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Gone Aloft

William Wilson McCrea MNM

The Reverend Bill McCrea was called aloft on the 31st October after suffering with heart problems for a prolonged period.

Born in Belfast on 10th May 1941 he was the eldest of nine children and had an early interest in ships and the sea, wishing that one day he would be Captain of a ship. His faith, however, took him into the Church and in 1969 he started working with the Sailors' Society, a relationship that would last over 50 years. He served as full-time Chaplain in London, Kent, Belfast, Jamaica, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Houston and finally Southampton before retiring, officially, in 2006. But he continued as a volunteer and ship visitor until 2021.

Perhaps best known for his work related to the 'Herald of Free Enterprise' disaster in March 1987, when he was based in Kent as chaplain to the Merchant Navy and sea training colleges at Greenhithe. Bill took the funerals of four crew members and cared for their families in the aftermath of the disaster.

In June 2009 Bill was made an Honorary Life Member of the Club and he and his wife Rosaleen were entertained at a Club Supper in his honour. After receiving his certificate from then Captain of the Club John Mileusnic, he then, of course, entertained us in return with several jaunty renditions on the harmonica that he invariably carried with him.

In 2010 he was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal *in honoris causa* for 'Services to the welfare of retired seafarers, especially alumni of the National Sea Training School/College/Centre, Gravesend'. It was presented to him at Trinity House by another member of the Club, Stowaway Admiral Lord West of Spithead. We don't know if he similarly entertained them, but it wouldn't surprise us.

In January 2020 the Sailors' Society honoured Bill's 50 years of service at a special event in Southampton.

A very likeable man and a true friend to the Club, who lit up the Clubroom every time he visited. He will be sadly missed and well remembered not only in Southampton but in other ports as well.

His funeral Service was held on 20th November at Farnham Baptist Church followed by his committal at Whitehill Cemetery in Borden. Over 100 attended the service and many more followed it online.

Our thoughts go to his wife, Rosaleen, their daughter Elisabeth, son Jonathan and their families.

Donations in Bill's memory can be made to the **Sailors' Society** via williammccrea.muchloved.com



A photo-opportunity lost

We were in the club room for our regular Friday get-together when Past Captain Ian Thomson popped in for a fleeting visit, having left wife Joanne in the car outside. They are moving to a retirement village shortly and trying to divest themselves of a house full of accumulated memorabilia. Ian had brought in, for our Boatsteerer, some items that he thought Robin would be interested in. They were two old nautical volumes: 'The Voyage of the Discovery' by Scott and one of Basil Lubbock's books, 'Round the Horn Before the Mast', plus four teeth from a toothed whale.

So, - Club setting - two senior Cachalots - four Cachalot teeth - two antique nautical books - and I didn't have the nous to take a photograph! I would never make a good journalist.

Ian had acquired the teeth while he was 3rd Officer on the SS Jason in 1963. They had loaded 1000 tons of whale oil into no.3 deep tank while anchored at Frenchman's Bay, Albany, in the south west of Australia, where there was a whaling station. The oil was loaded through a buoyed connection to an underwater pipeline and we don't know what sort of whale oil it was, there being several grades, including sperm oil. A very rough calculation, using information from the 'net, indicates that the 1000 tons of oil represents between 200 and 300 sperm whales which would typically produce from 25 - 40 barrels each. No wonder there were teeth aplenty for all hands to have a few 'souvenirs' each from this very cruel trade.



The two pictures above of the Jason arriving at Albany, Western Australia, on her maiden voyage on the 10th of September 1950 are from the Blue Funnel section of the Rhiw.com website [Here](#). They were taken by Delys Wright, an 18yr old secretary employed by Henry Wills & Co. (a shipping company), on her box Brownie as the vessel sailed into port. Originally in black & white the evocative image above, right, was coloured for her by a friend.

Travel troubles

I bring to you a report of a worrying incident that befell me on my recent trip to the Antipodes. Our outward trip called for a change of flights at Changi airport in Singapore and with only 60 minutes and yet another security check to get through - off hat - off belt - off shoes - empty pockets - all electrical devices in the tray - etc, etc, we were pushed for time.

We made it to the departure lounge with 10 minutes to spare before boarding time and after almost 18 hours travelling I thought I should avail myself of the facilities. I selected a cubicle, completed my business, adjusted my dress (as they used to say) and flushed the loo. On inspection it was not as clean as I would have liked to leave it and spying another valve alongside the pan I foolishly turned it on in the hope that it would assist in a better clean up. Whereupon a jet of water shot up from the pan, soaking my light blue slacks from crotch to knee before I had time to switch it off again. The dark blue patch gave me the appearance of one who hadn't quite made it to the toilet in time and there was no way that I could return to the departure lounge looking like that.

My only recourse was to try and dry the trousers under the single hand dryer that was there. Luckily the dryer was a downward blowing one, not the more modern dip your hands in jobs. A limbo dancer stance in front of the blower proved impracticable so, off shoes and off trousers. I am now of an age where it is more prudent to attempt such changes whilst seated but I managed it with a few hops and staggers without falling over and presented the trousers to the hand dryer. Unfortunately, like many others that I have encountered, the sensor was so temperamental that the blower would only work for maybe two or three seconds out of ten as I manoeuvred the wet material beneath it. It was going to be a long job.

As I stood there in my socks and underpants and wearing my panama travel hat, I was aware that other

continued over

passengers, some with dripping hands, were hurrying past while averting their gaze and avoiding making eye contact. I heard the call for Business Class passengers to board but the drying wasn't done yet.

Finally, when the trousers were presentable I put them back on with a few more hops and staggers but my indignities were not quite over yet. You may be aware that one's feet swell up when travelling by air and we carry a shoe horn to overcome this problem. But the shoe horn was in my wife's bag in the departure lounge and I had to hobble back to her with one heel still extant from the shoe. She was most agitated at my prolonged absence, worrying about what might have befallen me and also miffed that we had missed out on one of the perks of Business Class travel - priority boarding.

It was only when I was finally seated onboard and enjoying another of those perks - a pre-flight glass of champagne - that I had time to reflect upon my experience. Only on exiting the cubicle had I seen the sign on the door - 'Sitting pan, with bidet'. Now, in over 60 years of foreign travel I had never come across a bidet in a mens' toilet before. Would there have been other options available? Were there other cubicles marked 'Squatting Asian style - no flush', or perhaps 'Thomas Crapper, cistern with ballcock and chain - Izal paper'?

Or was this a nod to the ever growing band of transsexuals who, perhaps without the necessary bits, may have trouble using a urinal? More probably an upgrade for those who, for whatever reason, prefer to wash rather than wipe. But there are problems with that. Surely one size does not fit all. How do they determine the target area and accurately adjust the aim? I reckon that if I had remained seated and turned that valve on then all my undercarriage would have been deluged. I hadn't noticed any extra mopping up materials in the cubicle, nor any other sort of drying facility.

I understand that the Japanese have produced a Smart-Benjo which scrapes - washes - rinses - blow dries - polishes - powders - and finally pats you on the bottom and says in a sing-song girly voice, 'All done' (*I'm not really sure about that bit, I may be fantasising*). It does, however, remind you to keep seated while all this is going on, in English as well as Japanese, I hope.

Whatever, if this is going on in Singapore now, you can be sure that it will be coming to a convenience near you before long. I just hope that they think through another problem - the ambient temperature in Singapore is around 25°C, whereas here we can anticipate getting closer to being a brass monkey than one might like.

I fear we may all have to revisit our potty training.

Terry Clark



WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meeting

2.30pm, Saturday December 9th 2023

British Liners of the 1950s & '60s

~ with Bill Miller ~

Bill takes us back to the decades when Britain had the biggest passenger ship fleet in the world.

Bill takes us on a sentimental journey, a long voyage in fact, back 60-70 years ago, to the 1950s & '60s and when Britain had the largest passenger ship fleet on all the seven seas -- from Cunard & P&O, British India & Union-Castle and many more; and then a look at more contemporary British-based cruise ships. It all promises to be something of a grand fleet review.

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our September event ... everyone on our circulation list will be sent a Zoom Invitation Link about a week beforehand ... but do make sure its in your diary.

If you are not yet on that list, visit their website shipsdorset.org and follow the links.

The CACHALOTS

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club

1st Floor, Southampton Royal British

Legion Club, Eastgate Street

SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3HB

Tel: 023 8022 6155

Web site: www.cachalots.org.uk

E-mail: office@cachalots.org.uk

captain@cachalots.org.uk

staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk

postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk

functions@cachalots.org.uk

membership@cachalots.org.uk

editor@cachalots.org.uk

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

Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this newsletter will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.