

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 115

June 2026

Captain's Log

Welcome Fellow Cachalots to my Captain's Log. I've really tried hard not to add, (and failed) "Star Date 2026." (Trekkies will understand).

I'm now nearly a third of the way through my tenure as your Captain and still feel incredibly honoured to have been asked. As your Club Captain, I have attended three events since the Sea Pie Supper: the Cachalots Spring Golf Day on the 30th April, an event to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Senior Royal Naval Officers Association (RNAOA) on the 1st May, and the Club Supper on the 13th May.

The Spring Golf Day has been reported on elsewhere, so I will only add that I'm not a golfer but was made very welcome, and I don't think I embarrassed myself or the Club too much with my rudimentary knowledge of golf. At least I was able to nod sagely and say how wonderful it was that that Northern Irishman was able to wear a green jacket, (again).

The invitation to the 60th Anniversary of the RNAOA was a welcome surprise. Flis and I attended a lunch on the Britannia, (the cruise ship, not the old royal yacht). The whole operation was very slick from free parking to being escorted onboard, and we were warmly welcomed. Initially we were guided to the Crow's Nest Bar for an aperitif, before a splendid meal in one of the restaurants. Of course, being a Royal Navy event, I probably only mentioned the Red Ensign a dozen times!

The Staff Captain of Britannia and some of the officers were there to greet us. I was so pleased to see the Staff Captain and one of the officers again. They were students of mine when I used to teach at Warsash. Good to see them doing so well! And they were too gracious to tease me. Which is more than be said for some of my friends. I have, shall I say, been slightly caustic about cruise vessels on occasion. As a committed tanker man, I used to say they weren't proper ships! Needless to say, the attached photograph showing me enjoying myself, is even more ammunition for my erstwhile friends and colleagues!



The last event was the Club Supper. Excellent food, (thank you Chef Sam), and excellent company. A presentation was made to both Ian and Lesley Odd for their sterling service to the Club over many years. I'll be a little contentious and regret that more people didn't attend. Still, they were saved listening to my presentation on Piloting in Two Ports. As I mentioned in my talk, my youngest daughter is only too happy to state that I just enjoy talking ship.

I wish you all well for the coming months and hope to see as many of you as possible at one or more of the forthcoming Club events.

Bill



Boatsteerer's Locker

Functions - Terry Clark and I are still co-ordinating events for the time being while Julia Whorwood has offered to make the bookings and liaise with Everest Cuisine for the curry lunch events on Saturdays. Please drop an email to boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk and to office@cachalots.org.uk if you wish to attend.

However, no one has come forward to help in arrangements for events and functions. Please make contact if you wish to get involved.

A programme of events is posted on the noticeboard in the Club room and is available on the Cachalots website for 2026-2027. See details on the website at CACHALOTS Members Home Page

The next curry lunch will be on Saturday 20th June at Everest Cuisine.

Remember, there is a newly installed chairlift fitted to the stairway which has been a great advantage.

The Spring Cachalots Golf Day was held at Lee-on-the-Solent golf club on 30th April with eighty-eight participants!!!! See separate report in this edition. The next golf day is booked for Friday 11th September at Wellow Golf Club.

Shipping Festival Service – Thursday 11th June 2026

This event will be held at St. Michael's Church, Southampton commencing at 1900 with the ringing of the Penda bell. The Right Revd Geoff Annas, Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Winchester has agreed to attend the service. Reminders will be sent out by Cachalite ahead of the service. A post service reception will be held at George's Restaurant in Castle Way, opposite the SE corner of the church.

Southampton Shipowners Association Dinner – Friday 26th June at 1900 at The Grand, Southampton

This is an annual event in the shipping calendar of Southampton and very good evening at The Grand. Tickets are available through the SSA Secretary, Ulla Williams at SSA.secretary1963@gmail.com

Trafalgar Dinner – TBC

Cachalots – two of our Cachalots, Post Boatsteerer Ken Dagnall and Past Captain (2018) Flemming Pedersen are recovering from some experiences resulting in hospital visits. We have heard from both and we wish them well in their recovery.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE, Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk



Presentation at the Club Supper



Captains Bill and Ian with Lesley

(The Club photographer is to be sent on a re-training course)

At the Supper on the 13th May, Capt. Hargreaves presented an engraved glass plaque to Past Captain Ian Odd in recognition of his long service to the Club.

Ian joined the Club in 1996 and was appointed a Harpooner in '97 and Sea Staff-Captain during '98.

He was re-appointed Harpooner from '99 to 2005.

He took up the role of Sea Staff-Captain again in 2007 and from '09 until his retirement from sea-going in 2013. That role was discontinued in 2013 under the latest Rules.

He was Staff-Captain in 2013, Captain in '14 and Post-Captain in '15.

That year he also took on the role of Storekeeper from Barry Peck and continued in that position until this year. Going forward, he intends to offer himself for election as a Harpooner again.

So, basically 30 years service to the Club (so far) as an Officer or Committee member and long overdue a bit of thanks.

His wife Lesley has supported him throughout and was an *ex-officio* member of the Entertainments Committee from 2008 - 20 and became a full Cachalot member in 2012. She was presented with a bouquet of flowers by the Captain's wife, Flis.

Of Containers and their lashings

Cachalot Dennis Barber is a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects and they are looking into the stowage and securing of containers. They are seeking input from mariners who have practical experience of sailing and working on container ships and Dennis has been tasked with helping to find such likely candidates. So, if you have that recent experience and would like help then contact me, the editor, and I will pass anything received on to Dennis.

Personally, I have no experience of container ships, other than piloting them, but like many mariners I do have experience of vessels rolling heavily in a seaway. On the ~10,000 ton tramp ships that I served on, we would sometimes load a full cargo of iron ore which sat in small heaps at the bottom of each hold. The subsequent passages were generally unpleasant but in those days the master did have the option of adjusting his course and speed to alleviate the problem. An option, I suspect, that is denied to the master of a modern container ship, with its strict schedule and constant supervision by shoreside land-lubbers.

I understand that the lashing arrangements are little changed from the early days of containerisation but you can't say that about the size of the ships. They are now stacking them 12 – 14 high and an estimated half of a full cargo of a 400m – 200,000t modern container ship is being carried on deck!

That's 100,000 tonnes, the equivalent of 10 of my tramp ships, fully loaded. **On deck!**

OK, the idea is to interlock and secure the cargo so that is one great block and they have all done their sums to prove it is safe and workable but to me it is no surprise when the top tier is flung over the side and the stacks collapse. The momentum and kinetic energy of a loaded 40 tonne container, rolling 35m above deck level must be considerable! Now multiply that by 24 for the number across the beam! And even if the lashings don't give then the forces involved must be enough to endanger the very fabric of the containers and of the vessel itself.

Remember when tugs got more powerful and towlines almost unbreakable then the after bits were being torn from decks which had never been designed or built to withstand such forces. Or when big ships with strong windlasses and capstans started plucking bollards from the quay.

If you increase the size and strength of lashings then they become almost impossible for crew or stevedores to man-handle. Strengthening the containers would make them heavier – less cargo capacity per container – and with in excess of 40 million containers worldwide, good luck with that one.

Perhaps they should fit out a container with appropriate living facilities, fill it with a bunch of ship-planners, stow it at the end of the top tier on a vessel crossing the North Pacific and see if their plans get modified.

I fear that the bean-counters may have already decided that accepting the occasional loss of containers and cargo over-board and the cost of delays and repairs is, in the long run, cheaper than any of the alternatives. But one day it won't be a container of plastic ducks that is lost but the ship itself. Then they can blame it on the late master because that is what he was there for. To take the blame for decisions and actions that he had no control over.

Terry Clark



Ay Aye my hearties!

I have long espoused the use of certain online maritime news outlets to keep us abreast of happenings in the marine world, my favourites being Splash 247, gCaptain and, of course, The Maritime Advocate. The first two publish daily bulletins while The Maritime Advocate is a bi-weekly production which gives me permission to reproduce selected articles by Michael Grey. Splash used to but Sam Chambers, the editor, now prefers me to précis or introduce an article and then include a link to their website. Fair enough for online sites and but it doesn't really work for printed publications like this one.

You are probably reading this online but *The Cachalot* originated as a 4, then 8 and now a 16 page printed quarterly publication and I prefer to keep it that way. The discipline of producing a pleasing looking printed magazine within the time and space restraints gives me more satisfaction than just posting a selection of articles online where they will just be lost in the internet clutter and read by few.

Anyway, back to Splash247 which is a leading provider of global maritime, shipping, and offshore news, based in Singapore. Much of it is commercial news but I usually find something of interest. Take two recent articles: the first is comment by lead columnist Andrew Craig-Bennett published on the 15 Apr. 'Four centuries of maritime freedom at stake'.

URL: <https://splash247.com/?p=237431> Andrew was also a columnist for Lloyd's List for a decade.

The second is a report, on 5th May, on a session on AI, held at the Geneva Dry commodities shipping conference in Switzerland at the end of April, 'It's The End Of The World As We Know It –'. URL: <https://splash247.com/?p=238397>

That report says the shipping industry is adopting AI rapidly but still grappling with accountability, regulation and trust. Speakers agreed that AI should support human expertise rather than replace it, while warning that over reliance on technology could weaken future knowledge and decision-making. Overall, the message was one of cautious optimism: AI is here to stay, and the challenge is learning to use it effectively.

The actual report is over a thousand words long and the twist at the end is that it was actually written by Claude, an AI chatbot. And the next twist is that the paragraph above is a synopsis of it written for me by ChatGPT. So we have one chatbot analysing a report written by another chatbot! Who says I am not keeping up with modern technology?

But I would urge you to subscribe to these websites and get these bulletins delivered free straight to your inbox.

Ay Aye
Terry Clark

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

Thursday 30th April 2026

Annually now from September 2021, we have presented a golf day for Cachalots and like-minded mariners with hosting by Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club. Cachalot, Pilot Bruce Thomas has organised these events with me giving support and encouragement. The first event attracted about 36 players from the Cachalots, maritime community and other guests. From 2022, the event was moved to April, and we started hosting a second event in September at another course. These events have become very popular and this year we saw 88 players start in 22 teams of four commence from a Shotgun start in a Texas Scramble across the 18 tees of the course.

We are very grateful for the support and donations provided for the day by Svitzer Towage and ABP Southampton. Thanks also to the support from Red Funnel, Portico, Williams Shipping and all the individual golfers.

Good weather had been forecast and did not disappoint although a brisk wind made playing conditions interesting. The day started with bacon-butties and coffee and introductions for all followed by a stream of players to the practice ground and putting green before heading out to the allotted start tee.

Play started at the sound of the klaxon, at 1000.



The players were from DP World, ABP Pilots, SERCO, Svitzer Marine, Southampton Shipping Golfing Society (SSGS), Denholm, Solent Stevedores, Exxon Fawley, BMT Group, GAC, Portico and other guests to swell the numbers. A significant number of these were also Cachalots. Each player received a sleeve of golf balls to play with, lose or keep for posterity!! 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 outside bar was open where all enjoyed a refreshing drink before heading upstairs to the dining room for the meal and presentations and raffle.



Post round drinks with the Cachalots Captain, Bill Hargreaves.



Players then gathered in the dining area for a two-course meal and prize-giving.

Prizes are awarded for lowest score for three teams, three nearest the pin and longest drive. One of the nearest the pin holes was against the club Pro for a donation of £5!! This raised £425 towards the Captain's Charity. Money raised from the raffle and additional generous donations were also collated towards the Cachalot Captain's Charity, The Marine Society.

Prizes were awarded by our Captain, Bill Hargreaves and me!

The Results

Winning team with a score of Nett 51

*Dave Lewis, Mike Savaria, Trevor Neal
and Robin Plumley*



Runners up with a score of Nett 53

*Ryan Reece, Jon Deveril, Jonathon
Williams, Lewis Wilson*

Third place with a score of Nett 54

*David Ardley, Justin Galloway, Rex
Taylor, Andrew Dogherty.*



Prizes were also awarded for nearest the pin at the five par 3 holes.

7th	Steve Williams
9th	Andy Young
13th	Paul Cross
14th	Dave Lewis
17th	Neil Dunn.

Longest Drive Ben Pritchard (off the back of the green 435 yards!).

Beat the Pro on the 13th

Rex Taylor, Chris Hollis, Gemma Coutts, Wesley Ditchfield, Paul Cross, Andy House, James Severn, Lewis Wilson, David Salter, Martyn Dunn and Mark Hooper.

An enjoyable and successful day in great company with **£1345.10**, after costs being raised towards the Captain's Charity. Many thanks to all who came along and supported us on the day. Special thanks to Charlie the Pro in the shop at Lee-on-the-Solent for organising the par 3 competition and that of the club management, ground staff and the bar and catering staff for a great meal.

Well done and many thanks to Bruce Thomas for the excellent arrangements and organisation.

Our next event will be the Autumn golf day for the Charles Webb Cup at Wellow Golf Club on Friday 11th September 2026.

Robin

No freedom yet

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 907 May 8th 2026

By Michael Grey MBE



Amid a salvo of ferocious two-way threats and imprecations, accompanied by a token barrage of missiles from Iran and the obliteration (the word of the year?) of some speedboats, Project Freedom has been put on hold. Two US-flag ships have made an escorted escape, but for the rest of the crews aboard the trapped fleet, it is back to business as usual; keeping their ships operational, trying to maintain morale and hoping that any incoming ordnance does not have their co-ordinates inputted. It could be a long, hope-sapping wait, but by now, expectations will surely be low, which may mitigate the inevitable disappointments, when the trumpeted “deal” fails to emerge. Nothing happens in a hurry in these turgid negotiations between parties which, with good reason, do not trust each other an inch. For the operators of these ships, it is now a matter of trying to keep the ships adequately supplied with food and water, arranging reliefs, if this is humanly possible, and trying to reassure their employees that they have not been forgotten.

There are already abandoned crews which the Mission to Seafarers and other welfare organisations are supporting, so there is an increasing need for everyone to support these wonderful helpers. Project Freedom was surely always a matter of hope over expectation. Whatever encouraging noises were coming from the US military, no responsible shipmaster is going to risk an exit through the Straits of Hormuz, if there is the slightest risk of an attack. Merchant mariners, whose war this definitely is not, are not paid to be heroic, while shipmasters know the priority of their duties, which revolve around the safety of their ships and all aboard them. And for the present, of the choices on offer, it is safer to stay. In practical terms, they know that they operate large, slow-moving targets, with neither the sea room nor the time to manoeuvre to avoid incoming ordnance.

What guarantees could ever be given that some trigger-happy Revolutionary Guard outpost, whatever Tehran might have decreed, could not resist the prospect of martyrdom, with a deep-laden VLCC in their sights. And surely, even the most enthusiastic proponents of Project Freedom knew that all it would take is for a single missile or drone to hit a departing laden tanker, for the futility of the scheme to be exposed. And to do the shipping industry justice, it too has rejected any moves that increases the threat level to their hard-pressed and anxious crews. At the same time, as the weeks extend into months, and in the absence of any sort of realistic peace plan that will not leave the stranded ships and their crews as some sort of sacrificial pawns on the great diplomatic chess-board, the worries increase.

It is a long time ago, but it would be surprising if some more thoughtful operators have not recollected the miserable fate of the 60-odd merchant ships which were cut off in the waters of the Shatt al Arab in the early 80s, as Iran and Iraq struggled for sovereignty over the delta in their gruesome war. The ships found themselves targeted by both sides, weeks went by with the crews increasingly demoralised and terrorised. Ships were hit, and abandoned; others were left with skeleton crews to keep them running in the hope that they could escape. Eventually it became obvious to all that there was no hope of the war raging around them ceasing, and the last crews made their escape overland, often in hair-raising circumstances. Some of the ships were left in the hands of local watchmen, but there was nothing they could do to prevent them gradually being wrecked, looted, or blown to pieces by the artillery of both warring parties.

They pretty well all ended up in the Constructive Total Loss ledgers of their insurers, raw material, when the war eventually ended, for the local scrap-merchants. One would like to think that we are a long way from this grim sort of scenario, as the circumstances are somewhat different. But wars in this region, tend to drag on, consume a vast amount of humanity and material and it is probably wise to keep expectations of meaningful resolution realistically low. As for those afloat, one can only hope that they stay safe.

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



NARVIK SEAMENS' MISSION

During a recent cruise to Northern Norway one of our ports of call was Narvik with a two day stay. For anyone unfamiliar with the area, Narvik became the export port for Swedish iron ore as the border is not far away and the terrain allowed a good rail link from the mine to the port at the beginning of the 20th century. It therefore became a busy harbour, with ships from many countries calling. Sweden therefore set up a mission for the visiting seafarers. As internal Norwegian communications improved the Norwegians took over the operation of the mission, but to this day it remains called the Swedish Church.



The mission consists of a chapel which is modern but still very peaceful, with the cross in the end wall lit at night and looking straight down onto the harbour where it is immediately visible. The recreation room serves light snacks and warm drinks and has greetings in about a dozen languages and clocks showing the time round the world. It also has a video screen with a succession of pictures and descriptions of various aspects of Norway, including inevitably an account of what trolls are and where to find them! Vitally these days it has good free wi-fi.

As a warm and welcoming place for any seafarer it is a model for anywhere.

Barry Peck

The heights some people will go to for charity

Cachalot **Julia Whorwood** intends to abseil down **The Spinnaker Tower** at **16:00 on Sunday 14th June** in aid of the **Southampton Maritime Volunteer Service**. She will be accompanied by her friend and fellow MVS volunteer Kathy Collins, whose husband Steve is Head of the Unit and also a Cachalot. They will abseil about 100 metres (328 ft) down from the viewing platform. That's more than twice the height of the tallest mast on the 'Cutty Sark' (46.3m).

They aim to raise £3000 towards the upkeep of their launch '**The Hound**' for the next year. You can, and really **should** support this intrepid duo by visiting their JustGiving page and donating generously:

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/julia-whorwood-1?utm_medium=CF&utm_source=CL



Spinnaker Tower



The intrepid duo, Julia on the right



The Hound

SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE



St. Michael's Church,
Southampton

Thursday 11th June 2026
1900

The Service will be led by The Rt Revd Geoff Annas, Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Winchester, and attended by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, the Lord Mayor of Southampton and other dignitaries

Please aim to be seated by 1830 when the flag parties will be assembling at the West door. The Service will commence at 1900 sharp with the striking of the Penda Bell.

Post Service reception

All guests, clergy, Cachalots, flag bearers and escorts are invited to join the Cachalots for a selection of sandwiches, cocktail snacks and drinks in the nearby George's restaurant where we will have exclusive use.

If you intend to come to the Service and reception, please advise the Boatsteerer beforehand to aid planning.

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

**A SOCIAL EVENING**
on
**STEAMSHIP
SHIELDHALL**

**DATE & TIME**
05 JUNE 2026
FROM 1800 ONWARDS

**LOCATION**
SS SHIELDHALL
110 BERTH, WESTERN DOCKS
SOUTHAMPTON SO15 0HH

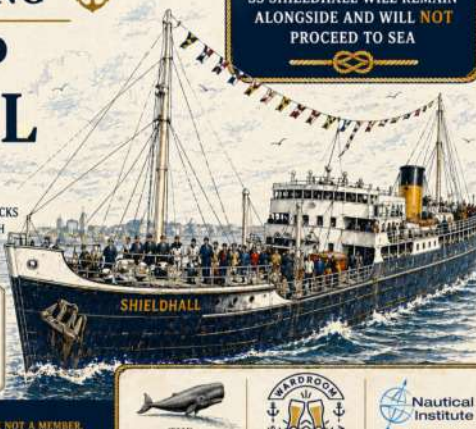
As a joint initiative between The Cachalots,
The Southampton Wardroom and the Solent Branch
of the Nautical Institute.

You are invited to join us to:

- MAKE NEW FRIENDS
- SWING THE LANTERN
- NETWORK
- MEET LIKE-MINDED MARINERS

**FOOD WILL BE AVAILABLE**
more information nearer the time

**DRESS CODE:**
Informal / Relaxed



SHIELDHALL

PLEASE NOTE:
SS SHIELDHALL WILL REMAIN
ALONGSIDE AND WILL **NOT**
PROCEED TO SEA

**TO LET US KNOW THAT YOU ARE COMING**
PLEASE VISIT
SHIELDHALL EVENT 9

**OR, IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER,**
PLEASE EMAIL
admin@cachalots.org.uk



There is an optional chilli (please pre-book), priced at £13 - pay on the night
£3 of this covers our Shieldhall costs. If you are not having a chilli, please consider donating £3 or more

<https://www.cachalots.org.uk/?eventid=3265>



EVEREST CUISINE

9th December - Christmas Lunch - RBL

Alison MacGregor relaunched!

*Post Captain Nick Jeffery MNM is on the management team at Solent Dolphin, the charity that operates the **Alison MacGregor**, which takes people with disabilities out for free trips on Southampton Water. It was his chosen charity for his year in office as Captain, during which **£1690.12** was raised towards this popular charity. Here, he reports on the latest refit.*

Following a busy winter maintenance period, which included the installation of two new engines and gearboxes, Alison MacGregor has been relaunched and is ready for the 2026 sailing season.



Port engine
being removed

Old engines on
their way
ashore



With the old engines removed we took the opportunity to clean and re-insulate the engine spaces. We also modified the fire suppression and battery charging systems. New stern seals, fuel lines and control cables were also installed.



Colin in his favourite place, checking bilge alarms!



New insulation being fitted. Jeremy in charge of cutting!



New engines arrive

Squeezing the starboard engine in!



It's like nothing has happened!

Happy boys!



Relaunch on March 31st

Whilst still in the slings, Marlin Marine had the honour of starting their new engines for the first time since installation. We headed out into perfect conditions in Southampton Water and under the watchful eyes of Marlin's engineers, she was put through her paces, ultimately winding up to full speed. With no water or exhaust leaks and running sweetly throughout, sea trials were declared a success.



Fresh coats of paint on the main deck and accommodation, plus all the usual cleaning, polishing and safety inspections have prepared her for the 2026 season which commenced on May 1st.

During April our crews undertook their pre-season re-familiarisation training.

We would like to thank all those who have supported this winter's maintenance period – Marlin Marine and FPT, Colin Bridle Marine Services, Mumford Marine, MDL Hythe and Steve Rumbold from C.A.M.S



Navigating in Nasty Weather

This article by Capt. Bill Hargreaves recently appeared in the RIN's Navigation News

Just before Christmas 1990 I swallowed the anchor. (For the non-mariners, I retired from the sea and came ashore). I'd been sailing as master for a couple of years, really enjoyed the role, but five-month trips were not conducive to a good family life, and I wanted to be part of seeing my kids grow up. Plus, and this will resonate with many merchant seafarers, job security was not what it had been, and I was looking for more stable employment.

But I hadn't got my love of the sea completely out of my system and during the course of the following year I made enquiries about volunteering on the Tall Ships. So it was, on a beautiful Spring morning in April 1992, that I found myself on the quayside in Poole looking at the Sir Winston Churchill. Still sailing, (now as a luxury charter yacht), the Sir Winston Churchill is a 41 metre three-masted topsail schooner, (45.7 metres with the bowsprit). It was built for the Sail Training Association, (now the Tall Ships Youth Trust), in 1966. It was designed to have 39 trainees, 5 permanent crew members and 11 volunteers, the latter known as the afterguard.

I was the volunteer navigator and for the next two weeks this was going to be my home. Introducing myself, I was shown my quarters. Basically, a cupboard above the steering gear, I shared a space about two metres by three with three others. At least we all had our own bunks. Bit of a change from my last ship. My dayroom alone must have been at least 64 square metres. (In the Arabian Gulf, during Desert Shield, we'd had a visitation by helicopter from a Royal Naval vessel. Nothing sinister, they'd just wanted to pick my brains. But when the officers entered my dayroom, I'm sure it gave them agoraphobia. But that's another story for another day).

During that first day all the trainees arrived, and I was busy assisting in showing them the ropes, (literally!). They were divided into watches, and their duties were explained to them. (A common response was: "What!? We've got to get up in the middle of the night! Doesn't the ship just stop when it's dark".)

The next day we sailed for Liverpool. Well, not exactly. The schooner was scheduled to be in Liverpool at the end of two weeks where the next group of trainees and volunteers would be embarked. Where the vessel voyaged in the interim was entirely at the discretion of the Captain and the weather. His general intentions were to head west, stopping at one or two points along the south coast of England. Probably visit the Scilly Islands before turning into the Irish Sea and visiting some Welsh harbours. Maybe even the Isle of Man. Of course, this all depended on the vagaries of the wind. Although the vessel was fitted with two engines, sailing was prioritised over motor sailing.

That was the plan. As we headed west, the weather began to deteriorate. So much so that we found ourselves stormbound in Penzance with a restive group of trainees and an even more restless master. The crew were bored – there's only so much you can do in Penzance on wet days in April. (I spent a few happy hours in the National Lighthouse Museum, and I'd like to recommend it but unfortunately it has subsequently closed). And the master not only wanted to give the crew some sailing experience but wanted to make progress. The time to get to Liverpool was getting ever shorter.

As the weather reports began to show signs of the storm abating, the Captain and I discussed what to do. To me it was obvious. Assuming the wind stayed south westerly, and all the weather reports seemed to indicate this, then we could sail on a beam reach to Cork in Ireland and then it'd be a broad reach up the Irish Sea. At first the Captain was reluctant. Ireland and Sir Winston Churchill the person have, as they say, history. But I had lived in Ireland all through my teens and I was able to reassure him that that was indeed history, and we'd be made very welcome.

So, we set sail with nothing set other than a storm jib and a storm trysail. (It was still very windy). The voyage was to say the least uncomfortable. But, for me, it was highlighted by a conversation I had with one of the trainees. Looking very green about the gills, she nevertheless not dispirited and asked me what she could do. I asked her to make sure she was clipped on and to take the starboard lookout. She volunteered that she'd just vomited and that it must be alright for me because I was a seasoned seafarer. When I told her that I'd just puked up over the leeside, it really seemed to help. It wasn't intentional, but I think my comment really helped her. We truly were in the same boat and it's the best thing I could have said.

We made landfall after sunset, and it was raining hard. It was 1992 and the vessel had no satellite navigator, no electronic chart, a fairly rudimentary radar, magnetic compass, paper charts, parallel ruler, and a pencil. The approach to the Sound, the entrance to Cork harbour, was straight forward enough. The coastline provides a good radar target. But the buoyed channel has a few turns and the radar was hardly up to the task. Yes, I'd done a passage plan but the most effective form of navigating was buoy hopping. And it was still in the pouring rain. The compass binnacle was on the coach house roof, the chart table in the cabin. It was inevitable I was going to get wet, and as I dripped on the chart it got soggy and soggy. Any line I drew on the chart with my trusty pencil became a blurred line of graphite. Plotting our position called on all my reserves of resilience and fortitude, and all my skills as a navigator, (skills which had probably atrophied as I rose through the ranks during my career at sea).

Daylight brought a change of weather. No wind, no rain and clear blue skies. When I came out on deck, I was so pleased to see the beautiful seafront of Cobh where it should have been. And in daylight, those navigational buoys are much further away than they seem to be when it's dark.

Today, the schooner would have been fitted with an electronic chart and making our arrival in Cobh Roads would have been no way near as stressful. Yes, of course, positions would have to be confirmed by sight or with radar. But I doubt if I would have gained the satisfaction of a job well done if we'd made our approach using an electronic chart.

And yes, we were made most welcome in Ireland. A pilot took us into the centre of Cork, and we were moored astern of Asgard II where I spent a very boozy afternoon. And that is definitely another story for another day!

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE 1978 STCW CONVENTION AND CODE

Four submissions to the STCW review propose a reduction in seagoing service prior to the issue of STCW II/1 certification. The proposals seek to change the seagoing service requirements from 12 months at sea, to a minimum of 9 months seagoing service supplemented by up to 3 months (shoreside) simulator-based training.

In response, the advice of The Nautical Institute is that any reduction in seagoing service requirements for STCW II/1 certification should only be considered if fully supported by safety related evidence, presented to and accepted by the IMO. Such evidence should quantify that any change in seagoing service requirements for STCW II/1 certification does not lead to any reduction in maritime safety, especially during the first few months of unsupervised watchkeeping and working onboard vessels as a newly qualified Officer.

The Warsash Association has written the following letter to Lars Lippuner, Director of UK Customer Maritime Services, Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Dear Lars,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Warsash Association.

It is with alarm that we note the decision at IMO sub-committee level to reduce the required sea-time for STCW II/1 candidates from 12 months to 9 months with simulator training allowed to substitute for part of that period.

Since the reduction of sea-time to 12 months members serving at sea have found that it is difficult for Cadets to develop the necessary practical seamanship skills and nautical sagacity in the time available. This inevitably produces junior officers who will often initially lack these qualities and reducing qualifying sea-time still further will worsen an unsatisfactory situation. This in no way reflects poorly on the training conducted on board or the cadets themselves – rather it is an inevitable consequence of limited time and the need to prioritise between the different training tasks that must be undertaken.

With regards to the use of simulators to reduce qualifying sea-time we have the following comments made on the strength of members experiences both as instructors and students.

Modern simulators are undoubtedly realistic and allow a wide variety of scenarios and exercises to be conducted. They are a valuable resource for a wide range of training tasks including Bridge Resource Management, Emergency Response, Bridge Equipment Training, Ship-handling and Continued Proficiency Assessment. They are also successfully utilised for Port Assessments and Manoeuvre Planning. There are however limitations not the least of which being that most exercises are of limited time duration and that no simulator no matter how sophisticated can fully replicate the experience of being on a ship with all that entails such as accumulated fatigue, commercial pressure and so forth.

It is not clear how it is proposed to utilise simulators for the proposed purpose of substituting sea-time. The consensus within the Warsash Association is that simulators cannot adequately replicate the experience that cadets might be expected to gain onboard ship. They could certainly have an application for the assessment of candidates during examination and for some elements of training but their use as a substitute for sea-time is dubious at best. In the aviation industry pilots learn to fly before they go near a simulator.

In summary the proposed reduction of sea-time and the substitution of simulators for part of this is potentially dangerous. With the present 12 months sea-time many cadets are qualifying as officers without the necessary practical skill set and require careful mentoring and monitoring. It is questionable whether simulators can adequately replace the experience gained on ships.

The Warsash Association can understand the reasons why this proposal is attractive. The question should be asked – what are we trying to produce? The answer must be well educated officers able to operate modern ships and equipment but with sufficient practical skills and judgement to command them at sea.

We very much hope that the MCA will be able to assist in preventing the intended reduction in sea time.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Roger Holt, Chairman, Warsash Association

A Criminal Pilotage Investigation drags on

This is what I wrote in *The Cachalot*, issue 102 in March 2023:

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

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

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

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

A fuller report was published in *The Cachalot* no.99 of June '22 and can be read on our website.

Since then, little has changed other than Youde's MP has been replaced by a less supportive one, the DfT has three times denied that it has any power to inspect the records and Youde himself, through his unrelenting pursuit of a satisfactory outcome, is being treated as a vexatious litigant by most of the other players in the case, including the Met and the MCA.

Here is his latest letter to me.

Re: Pilotage Act 1987, IMO Resolution A960 of December 2003 and Transport Select Committee Report of 7th March 2013. State Protection of the General Public.

In the course of the inquiry by the TSC before its publication of its Report of 7th March 2013 into Marine Pilotage, questions were raised by the Committee as to the frequency of inspections which are carried out by the Department for Transport of the pilotage records maintained at any harbour authority. The published Report concluded that a policy of light touch regulation in the DfT had been taken too far and that corrective action was therefore necessary.

More recently, the DfT has announced to Members of Parliament that it has no power to inspect any pilotage records, including those records which relate to the maintenance of standards in pilotage. The consequence of the recent announcement by the DfT is that the protection of the general public, as created by the provisions of the 1987 Act, is no longer of any effect. This is because the pilotage records maintained by any harbour authority are no longer inspected by anybody holding any state authority and are now subject merely to the vicissitudes of commercial activity, the uncertainties of which are notorious. The state authority for public safety in marine pilotage has been abnegated altogether and is no longer exercised.

The further consequence is that the co-operation of HM government in the maintenance of pilotage standards as required and obligated by IMO Resolution A960 is no longer fulfilled, because fulfilment is no longer possible by HM government. The announcement by the DfT rules out any co-operation in the maintenance of relevant standards.

A Report was sent to the International Maritime Organization on 1st May 2026 and further reports will be dispatched as might appear necessary.

Barrie Youde
17 May 2026

I continue to support him because I believe that what occurred was wrong, both morally and legally. You cannot learn Pilotage (or seamanship, see the previous page) other than from experience. I wonder how many of them who sit on those committees, whether at the IMO, the DfT, the MCA etc, have any seagoing experience. I exclude the TSC which, I suspect, is made up of MP's mainly devoid of any real world experience other than politics.

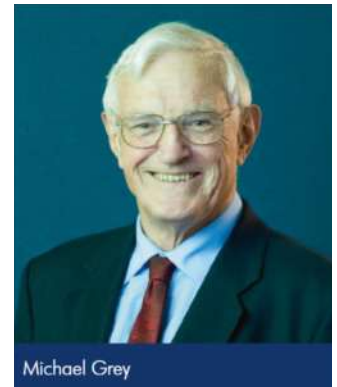
I should say that all of the above is my own personal opinion and not necessarily that of the SMMC.

Terry Clark

The vanishing right to shore leave

The Maritime *Advocate* online Issue 902 February 28th 2026

By Michael Grey MBE



Amid all the talk about autonomy and artificial intelligence offering a wonderful future for the marine industry, it is sometimes hard to remember that a crew of humans still operate just about every ship on the planet. They will do so well into the distant future, perhaps with rather different skills, because old-fashioned requirements like judgement, seamanship, experience, and common sense can never be replaced, despite the extravagant claims of the techies. If this is the case, and we will still need clever people capable of sea-sense to run the ships of today and tomorrow, we ought to start thinking about how we can make their working lives rather more pleasant.

We can think of a whole list of items for improvement, such as making their living conditions less “institutionalised,” less economising on the furniture and fittings, looking at the length of tours, the need for better connectivity and the like. But one important item, continually raised but then consigned to the “too-hard basket” is that of shore leave, and specifically, its lack. The latest edition of the Flying Angel News, published for the supporters of the Mission to Seafarers contains some frank words from the Mission’s Director of Programme Ben Bailey about this deterioration in what ought to be a right to get ashore occasionally, when a ship gets to port.

The chaplains of the Mission, confirmed by welfare workers and ship visitors all around the world are probably better placed than most to measure the contentment of the crews they meet in their centres, but more often aboard ship. Ben Bailey sums up their observations very well; “Shore leave is not a perk; it is a pressure valve. If the maritime workforce is expected to remain competent, alert and motivated, it must be given the basic conditions necessary for healthy living.” There is absolutely no mystery about why this has become a point of serious concern in any measure of seafarers’ “happiness” – Bailey suggests that “Brutally short port stays, ramped up security protocols and expensive or non-existent transport options mean that disembarking has become an elusive privilege, rather than an expected part of the job.” There can be no argument about this, and of course, it is the easiest thing in the world to summon up a whole raft of reasons why, in any particular port, the crew of a visiting ship cannot be given a few hours of liberty from their confinement.

The immigration authorities will not permit it. The visa necessary to land is too difficult to obtain and far too expensive for the average seafaring visitor. Umpteen safety considerations can be brought into play, citing the hazards of working terminals and the distance to the gate. Then, there is no getting away from the sheer intensity of activities in port that require the attention of those aboard. Every new development in cargo-handling, from ship-loaders that move mountains in minutes, to huge investments in container terminal equipment that will turn a big ship around in ever shorter times, militate against time off for the crew. There is the queue of well-rested, shore-side officials (enjoying their five-day working weeks), surveyors, inspectors, repairers, and others, who demand their instant access to the ship and its senior officers, interrupting their sleep, mealtimes and certainly any leisure, to address their important requirements.

There simply is not the space or time for shore leave, even if it was permitted. “Go-on, stop-on” is the modus operandi, with a ship in port. Ben Bailey says that “the maritime community must reclaim shore leave as a right grounded in safety, wellbeing and dignity.” He goes on to suggest that there should be means of “scheduling operational windows, that guarantee disembarkation time”, with ports ensuring that there are safe and affordable access routes for crew. And maybe this means confronting the ridiculous pace of maritime operations, which we know causes ships to be run by increasingly fatigued human beings, who would occasionally like a break. It may not be an entirely fair comparison, but if navies think it important to divert warships worth billions into port for a couple of days R&R, could not the commercial world ease up a little on their human component? It is not as if they are asking for the earth.

In Rose George’s insightful book “Deep Sea and Foreign Going” she records an interview with the delightful priest running the Immingham Seafarers’ Centre. Father Colum Kelly recalled a Master who told him that rather than a visit to a shopping centre, he and his crew would like to walk on “green, green grass” for a while, rather than unforgiving steel. He took them to a churchyard near Hull airport – “And they all took off their shoes and walked barefoot on the grass for an hour, then they went back to the ship.”

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

Gone Aloft

Lyn (Len) Sherriff, suddenly, at home, on the 15th May' after a prolonged period of ill health.

Len went to sea as an Electrical Engineer Officer and served with Fyffes and London & Overseas Freighters.

He joined the Club in 1999 and he and his wife Kay were keen supporters of the club functions and dDuring their retirement they kept several boats on the Itchen.

Club email addresses

The club proxy email addresses allocated to the officers of the club incur a cost per address per month. Some were little used so they have been culled to reduce those costs. Apart from office@cachalots.org.uk we have retained [boatsteerer@](mailto:boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk), [storekeeper@](mailto:storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk) and [membership@](mailto:membership@cachalots.org.uk). (See the box below, right).

One of the casualties was [editor@](mailto:editor@cachalots.org.uk) but you can easily contact the editor through the office or the membership address.



WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meetings

The Dorset Branch has finished their current season of talks and, after the summer break, will resume in September with one by our own Boatsteerer

12th September 2026

The Lavender Hull Mob !!

with Robin Plumley

A personal perspective of the Union-Castle Line

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our events ... everyone on our circulation list will be sent a Zoom Invitation Link about a week beforehand.

for more information, visit their website shipsdorset.org

The CACHALOTS

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The Club room is currently open on just one day of the week, Friday, 1130 - 1500. 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.