

# ***The CACHALOT***

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

**No 104**

**September 2023**

## Captain's Log

The title of this piece is 'Log', so might be seen as a place to record my activities over the past 3 months. I shall just stick to the major events.... I have piloted 29 ships, walked 68 miles of the South Downs Way, attended 4 SMMC meetings, been on a Danube cruise, endured a Pilot Ladder training course, joined in with 2 Cachalot events, represented the club at a further 3 and generally enjoyed myself.



Members will probably be more interested in the Cachalot related items.....

In May, Debbie and I were made extremely welcome at the RAF Yacht Club Club Commodore's reception.

That was quickly followed by the Shipping Festival Service, which will no doubt be reported on elsewhere in this edition. Bishop Geoff Annas was delighted to have been asked to lead the service and it was great to see many Cachalots and their partners in the congregation, to have various organisations involved in the service and to have the City of Southampton (Albion) band providing the music.



The club was represented by 6 Cachalots and 4 partners at the Southampton Shipowners' Ball – another great evening at The Grand.

In July, the social evening on the Shieldhall was a great success, with 75 mariners from around the Solent attending. This was the first of a series of collaborative events organised by the Cachalots, Southampton Wardroom and the local branch of the Nautical Institute. They will be advertised in this journal, by Cachalite and on our Facebook and LinkedIn pages.

By the time that this magazine is published, there will have been an evening organised by The Southampton Wardroom at The Maritimo Lounge. This will be followed by a repeat evening on Shieldhall on September 15th. The aim of these events is to promote the 3 organisations and to give those members of the Master Mariner's Club who are rarely seen at club events a different opportunity to join in.

The final event that Debbie and I joined other Cachalots and their partners for was the July curry lunch at Everest Cuisine. These are very sociable events which offer another opportunity to meet and chat with other club members and their partners.

I do hope that you will join in one of the events that have been arranged for club members, notably the Trafalgar Night Dinner in October, the Shieldhall event in September, the curry lunches and a planned social evening in the wardroom of HMS Collingwood in November (date to be announced) that is being planned by the Staff Captain.



Noel Becket, Captain of the Club

## Boatsteerer's Locker

**G**reetings to all and hope you are enjoying the summer weather. In my last blog for June I asked, will there be a flaming June?

Well, there was! Temperatures were above average in all areas, with daytime temperatures well above normal, most especially in western areas, parts of western Scotland having mean maximum temperatures as much as 4 °C above average. The provisional UK mean temperature for June was 15.8 °C, which is 2.5 °C above average, making it the warmest June in a series from 1884. Rainfall was slightly above average in parts of the English Midlands and some north-western areas, but below normal in most other areas, with East Anglia and south Wales particularly dry, and for the UK overall rainfall was 68% of average. Sunshine was above normal everywhere, especially in northern and western areas, with 144% of average overall, making it provisionally the fourth sunniest June in a series since 1910, and the sunniest since 1957. *Information from the Met Office monthly weather report for June.*

Of course it couldn't last with an unsettled July and start of August leading to one of my golf competitions being abandoned although we had completed nine holes in torrential rain. When the hooter went, the rain stopped and the weather improved for a few hours. Sod's law. My clothing and equipment is still drying out as I write this.

### **Zoom gatherings**

A small group of 'zoomers' appear each Thursday for a chat and for the time being we will look to continue these gatherings. Please drop me a line if you wish to join us.

### **250 Club**

We continue to make a draw for two shares on the last Friday of each month when we are in the Club room. A list of winners is shown on the 'noticeboard' in this edition of The Cachalot.

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.

### **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](mailto:functions@cachalot.org.uk)

### **Shipping Festival Service**

The Shipping Festival Service was held at St. Michael's Church in Southampton on Thursday 8th June and a report is included in this edition.

### **Cachalot Golf Day(s)!!!**

With great assistance from one of our Cachalots and Southampton Pilot, Bruce Thomas, we are running two golf days this year. We have already completed one at Lee-on-the-Solent with wonderful support from David Ayres (Cachalot) and Svitzer Marine Limited as sponsor. See report in this Cachalot.

Our next day will be Thursday 28th September 2023 at Corhampton Golf Club with prizes being sponsored by DP World for which we thank our Cachalot, Mark Hooper. We expect to have 32 players for the event at Corhampton. Please contact the Boatsteerer in the first instance if you are interested in joining us.

### **Trafalgar Dinner at The Grand**

The Cachalots are hosting a dinner at The Grand, Southampton on Friday 20th October 2023. The Right Worshipful Mayor of Southampton and Admiral of the Ports will be attending along with guests from various maritime organisations around Southampton. There will be a prize draw with proceeds going to the Southampton Sea Cadets. Please contact me or the office by email if you wish to join us. We would welcome your support.

### **The Cachalots, Southampton Facebook Group**

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

### **Centenary Year of The Cachalots**

The 15th February 2028 will be the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Southampton Master Mariners' Club. There is a chapter named **Founding Fathers**, in the booklet produced by Simon Daniels for the 75th Anniversary. The booklet is titled '**The Master Mariners of Southampton**' or '**The Seaman's Secrets wherein is taught the three kinds of Sayling, Horizontal, Paradoxical and Sayling upon a Great Circle**'. Copies are available from the Club.

I intend to put forward an item into the next meeting of the management committee suggesting and requesting ideas as to how we may wish to celebrate and recognise this milestone. The thoughts and ideas of all Cachalots would be welcomed.

### **Shipping Festival Service 2024**

The intention is to hold the service on Thursday 6th June 2024 at St. Michael's Church, Southampton. You will recognise the date which will be the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings. How would Cachalots like to recognise this event? Please pass any thoughts and ideas you may have to me for consideration in our planning.

Many thanks to all and I wish you a pleasant autumn.

Robin  
Captain Robin Plumley MBE  
Boatsteerer  
[boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk)





**SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE**  
**St. Michael's Church,**  
**Southampton**  
**Thursday 8th June 2023**

Approximately 104 people attended the service including distinguished guests, the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mr Nigel Atkinson Esq and The Lord Mayor of Southampton, Cllr Valerie Laurent and the Sheriff of Southampton, Cllr Dave Shields. We were also pleased to welcome the Commanding Officer Portsmouth Naval Base, Commodore John Voyce OBE and Commanding Officer RFA, Commodore David Eagles as well as various representatives from maritime businesses and entities around the port of Southampton. The Southampton Sea Cadets provided hands to carry the shipping flags and three cadets in training from Warsash Maritime School carried the Red Ensign. A Blue Ensign was paraded by the RFA, arranged by Barrie Henderson, SO2, Leadership Events and Development, RFA. Musical accompaniment was provided by the Southampton (Albion) Band under the guidance of Musical Director, Nick Dawson.

The service was led by the Bishop Geoff Annas, retired Bishop of Stafford and Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Winchester Diocese assisted by Fr. James Mosher (Mission to Seafarers), Fran Sahetapy (Sailors' Society) and Revd Phil Hand, Assistant Priest of St. Michael's.

A small reception was held in the Stella Maris Hall afterwards.



Commodore Voyce inspects the SSC contingent



Bishop Annas, Fr Mosher and Revd Hand

## In the case of:

### Pensioner pilots in the dock

**B**ack in 2010 I had the pleasure of being sued by my pension provider. I say pleasure because I had actually volunteered, or more accurately, been volunteered, to be put in the dock. Let me try to explain.

After the turn of the century it was becoming evident that there was a huge deficit forming in the Pilots' National Pension Fund. The Trustees of the fund considered that it was within their rights, under the rules, to direct the contributors to the fund, that's the employers (port authorities) and the pilots themselves, to address this deficit. Because of the size of the deficit, some £285 million, the employers, who as in most pension schemes are the major contributors but not the beneficiaries, contested this right, saying they would only pay any extra if so directed by a judge.

So in 2008 preparations were made to take the very complex case to court. Complex because there was no national uniformity in how pilots were employed or remunerated although a National Agreement dated 1980 had divided the 35 pilotage districts into five groups with recommended levels of earnings which varied some 60% between the smaller and larger ports.

Prior to the Pilotage Act of 1987 and its enactment in 1988 most pilots were authorised by Trinity House but not employed by them. Trinity House provided the pilot boats and services but the pilots ran their own administration through their Pilot Associations and were considered to be self employed, particularly for tax purposes.

Under the new Act, commercial ports were deemed to be Competent Harbour Authorities and, for the first time in over a thousand years, became responsible for the provision of pilotage services and the authorisation of pilots.

Just how this was to be achieved was down to agreement between the CHAs and the pilots.

Some ports continued to contract the services of a pilotage company wherein the pilots were deemed to be self employed (SCHAs) while others, such as Southampton, began to employ pilots directly (ECHAs). These new employees, independently-minded professionals, were difficult to fit into the existing managerial hierarchies and, worse still, when on a ship and conducting an act of pilotage, were legally the servant of that ship, not the CHA. *One man, Two Guvnors.*

By 2008, in some ports where the pilots had initially opted to be employed they had returned to self-employment and in others vice-versa. Some ports had only employed PNPF members for a short time but were still liable for them, pension-wise (Cessation CHAs).

In Southampton the initial agreement was for a non-contributory, final salary based pension but ABP, along with other ports, were keen to have their pilots join their own, less beneficial, pension schemes and although resisted by the pilot associations this soon became a condition of employment for new intake. This divide and rule policy has caused some jealousy between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' among the pilots as the employers consistently erode the benefits of their schemes.

For some reason the SCHAs were not obliged to make any contribution to the pension fund but this did not absolve them from the responsibilities of keeping it afloat.

So no wonder, with so many variables and the response from the ports being along the lines of, "nothing to do with us, Guv" the PNPF had gone from no deficit in 1988 to one of £285m in 20 years. The trustees were resolved to get it sorted, at whatever cost.

In the defence equivalent of a class action, I was asked, by the Trustees of the PNPF, to be a 'Representative Beneficiary', representing the interests of a certain class of defendants, in my case retired employed pilots. In all there were eight defendants:

- D1: A retired Tees pilot representing Formerly Active Self-Employed Members
- D2: Me, a retired Southampton pilot representing Formerly Active Employed Members.
- D3: Milford Haven Port Authority, representing Active ECHAs
- D4: Port of London Authority, representing Cessation CHAs and Formerly Active ECHAs
- D5: Shoreham Port Authority, representing Formerly Active CHAs
- D6: Port of Tyne Authority, representing Formerly Active SCHAs
- D7: The Bristol Port Company, representing Active SCHAs, and
- D8: PD Teesport Ltd, an active SCHAs representing themselves.

The PNPF, who had 'suggested' and then allocated legal firms to each defendant, were picking up the entire bill and had unsuccessfully opposed the inclusion of Teesport on the grounds of increased costs and that they were already represented elsewhere (by D7).

The eight defendants and the PNPF were representing a total of 53 participating bodies.

The case was held in the High Court at the Royal Courts of Justice, that imposing building which seems to feature almost daily on our screens. It was scheduled to last for three weeks and was held in Court 73, not a very impressive room, no oak





panelling or such, just emulsioned walls. It was where they held the Hutton enquiry a couple of years previously and was large enough to fit in the nine legal teams and all their paper work.

Each defendants team consisted of a QC, a barrister and an assistant, so with the claimant's (PNPF) team that made 18 wigs in the court room, the most that anyone could remember.

There was one female QC and one female barrister.

The teams took up the first two rows and there was a third row of around 14 solicitors and helpers. At the back were observers such as myself and other interested parties. So, with Judge Warren, the clerk of the court and the transcriber, there were about fifty people present in that court.

Adjacent to each team was a bank of large cardboard boxes (R-Kives) housing identically marked A4 or A5 lever-arch files. There were files marked A through to J, including F1 to F8. Other files were numbered 1 to 12. As learned counsel would refer to, say, "D – 51" around 14 hands would reach in perfect unison for 14 files D and turn to page 51. One could have set it to music. As a defendant I was party to all the paperwork and when similar bulky files had been delivered to my door I had originally thought that they were a rather out-moded form of filing but seeing them in use I could appreciate how easily and quickly the information could be accessed, usually with just a single hand, and then returned to its nest. There were also about 10 laptops in use, mainly among those at the back rather than the main protagonists, but these did not seem to have any speed advantage over the paper files in locating the appropriate references. A lot less bulky and more portable though. And, to introduce that magic modern word, "greener", replacing acres of print. I suspect that in the thirteen years since then, laptops will by now have replaced many of those paper files, but at the expense of the theatrical choreography of the page turners.

Court timetable was quite strict; at 1030 sharp all would rise for the judge and the QC "on watch" would remain standing and launch straight into his spiel with no introduction or preamble. There would be a break of exactly one hour at a suitable juncture around 1300 and the court would then sit through the afternoon until 1630.

There was little to-ing and fro-ing and if anyone did leave they would try and creep, head down, to the door before turning and bowing to the judge.

There was no conversation, maybe a few whispers between counsel. Most communication seemed to be via post-it notes.

What humour there was was generally in the form of "in" jokes reflecting previous cases and the QCs' individual presentational styles. This was the cream of the legal professionals of the pension world and they are no stranger to each other or to the complexities of the word "employer". They spent at least three days debating, deliberating and defining that point, and it was obvious from their arguments and their references to many previous cases: *Camex v MNOPF*, *Harn v Dobson*, *British Vita etc, etc*, that it is a nice little earner. There was some hope that this case might clear up some of the anomalies but I somehow doubt it. The word seems to be construed differently in every case.

And it is an important point. In our case we contended that the SCHAs were indeed employers under the various employment acts, some of which have come into force since 1988; indeed since some of the defendants ceased to contract (employ?) self employed PNPF members.

And it still goes on as evidenced in the recent cases of Uber and Deliveroo. How can organisations deny that they are employers when they dictate the working conditions and remuneration of their 'self-employed' operatives?

I was not actually required to appear in the dock or say anything, the case for my 'Class' being expertly made by my legal team, CMS Cameron McKenna LLP, but I did manage to attend court on five of the days, mindful of the expenses that I was incurring when I could no longer add anything much to our case. My first class rail tickets were, perhaps, just a drop in the ocean compared to the £9M that the case is rumoured to have cost.

The case, expected to last three weeks, finished two days early because, by luck of the draw, the appointed judge was an expert in pension law. He would often interrupt counsel by saying, "Yes, I've read that," and push on. This was not a case to be judged by a jury but by the judge himself. He went off to a darkened room to deliberate and three months later delivered, in 165 pages, a long and complicated judgement on what had been a long and complicated case.

Basically the judge decided that yes, the PNPF could direct the interested parties to make up the shortfall and, true to form, Teesport appealed. Rather than go through the whole thing again, a financial 'accommodation' was reached between the PNPF and Teesport which was what they were probably angling for in the first case. Their argument all along had been that because there was a shortfall then it must be the fault of the Trustees anyway. Simple. It must have been particularly galling for the PNPF to not only finance this argument against themselves but to have to pay them off afterwards as well. But that's the way in the dog eat dog world of the big business bean counters today.

I enjoyed my role as a defendant in the High Court and the opportunity to experience the majesty and solemnity of the Royal Courts of Justice without the jeopardy of ending up behind bars. I am now the reluctant custodian of crates of R-Kives containing the history of UK pilots and their pension schemes which will have the house-clearers of tomorrow scratching their heads when I am called aloft, or earlier if my wife has her way.

Terry Clark, retired Southampton pilot



## In the case of: (2)

The ramifications of the PNP case described on the previous pages were huge and continue to this day. Some of the smaller ports, which may not have employed PNP members for very long, unexpectedly found themselves liable to payouts greater than what they may have anticipated while I suspect that the actuaries of the larger ports may already have made provision. Ports continued to divest themselves of PNP members but in some cases retained at least one so as not to trigger the financial penalties of becoming a 'cessation' port for as long as possible. They also continue to erode their own pension schemes.

Was this one of the reasons that in 2015 the Port of Londonderry obstructed their three existing pilots, PNP members, from performing acts of pilotage and employed improperly authorised pilots instead, admitting that it was for financial gain? This allegedly illegal act was given 'best support' by the Shipping Minister at the time and although a criminal case was opened it has never been investigated. The establishment seem to have closed ranks and refuse to acknowledge repeated calls for a proper investigation.

What has been revealed is a woeful lack of understanding of maritime law and, learning that within the realms of police administration there exists a role described formally as a "Civilian Investigator", the main accuser, Barrie Youde, a qualified Maritime Lawyer himself has, perhaps mischievously, offered himself in that position within Metpol. Don't hold your breath Barrie, the last thing they want is an insider revealing the truth. Like children holding their hands over their ears and chanting "nah, nah, nah", they have now added sea-deafness to their already shameful sea-blindness.

*I should state here that the above is my own personal interpretation and does not necessarily reflect the views of the SMMC.*

Terry Clark

## An accident of our times

**The Maritime Advocate online Issue 835 July 28th 2023**

*By Michael Grey MBE*

**T**he report into the loss of the bulker *Wakashio*, which stranded and broke up on the shores of Mauritius in July 2020, has finally been made public by the Panamanian authorities. There are few surprises in this report, the main findings having been earlier made available to the IMO, which was justifiably concerned at the devastation caused to the pristine foreshore by the ship's spilled bunkers.

It is one of those accidents which might be considered inexcusable. She was a modern, well-equipped ship, operated by a famous Japanese line and managed by one of the most reputable ship managers. Her stranding caused considerable environmental harm, cost the senior officers their liberty, everyone concerned their reputation and the subsequent removal of the wreck and the clean-up, enormous expense. There was just no reasonable excuse for such an occurrence and probably not a lot to be learned from a professional point of view, from the analysis of the events.

And yet.... The loss of the *Wakashio* might be considered an accident of its time, that just would not have occurred in another era. What was the ship, which should have passed the coast of Mauritius well clear, doing so close in the first place? The answer is clear enough – they closed the land so that they could get a signal on their mobile phones, so that the crew could speak to their nearest and dearest. The date is significant, too, with Covid raging around the world, no shore leave or reliefs and society in general expecting (if they ever even thought about seafarers for a second) shipping to keep world trade and the stuff they all needed, flowing. Crews were expected to work months beyond their contracted tour lengths, with no expectation of any change in their circumstances and additional and cumulative concerns about how their families were faring in the pandemic far away.

The chance of a telephone conversation as the vessel skirted the coasts of Mauritius was something that clearly assumed a lot of importance for this small isolated group of people. There was a birthday on board and some effort to cheer up their unenviable circumstances.

The Panamanian report makes clear all the various things that went badly wrong before the ship came to grief. There was a lack of vigilance, with the watch officer apparently distracted by his phone and unsupported, forgetting the master's order regarding the closest approach to land. The chart was the wrong scale and it appeared that everybody who could have supported the navigation was



Michael Grey











# Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar Dinner

At The Grand  
South Western House  
Southampton SO14 3AS

Friday 20th October 2023

1900 for 1930

Black Tie

Tickets £65 each

Available only from

Southampton Master Mariners' Club  
First Floor, Southampton Royal British Legion Club,  
Eastgate Street, Southampton. SO14 3HB (sae please)  
Tel: 023 8022 6155 (Fridays 1130 - 1430)

Email: [office@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:office@cachalots.org.uk)

Full details on our website: [www.cachalots.org.uk](http://www.cachalots.org.uk)

**In Aid of the Southampton Sea Cadets**

## Club Christmas Lunch

**Wednesday December 13th**

This year in the downstairs room at the Royal British Legion Club again, 1200 for 1230.

*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

**£30**

max 44 on 'first come' basis





## SHIELDHALL EVENT 2

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 September 15th from 18.00  
on board SS Shieldhall  
at 110 Berth Southampton SO15 OHH

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

£3 of this 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

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/693277610997?aff=oddtcreator>



### Curry Lunches



EVEREST CUISINE

With the demise of Kuti's this is now our preferred Curry House.

It suits our palates and our pockets as well as our numbers.

The stairs may be daunting for some (no lift) but they are in three flights so you can always pause at  
Base Camp or Camp I during your ascent.

It's on the corner of Queensway and Briton Street (Some will remember it as POSH)

We have had four successful lunches there so far this year and the next one is booked for

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September**  
1230 for 1300

The price will be £24 per person, exclusive of gratuity.

The next, and last, booking for this year is on

18th November

Nearest car park is Gloucester Square, off the High Street.

Book, and pay, through the office a.s.a.p. please.

## My Wartime Years

### Thurstan Holmes

*The third and final part of the previously unpublished wartime memoirs of Thurstan Holmes which came to us courtesy of Cachalot Peter Giles.*

Voyage 7 as Third Officer began from Liverpool 30th September 1944 aboard *MV Lagarto*, a cargo boat of some 4500 tons built in the early 1900s as one of the first motor ships. There was no funnel and the twin exhausts were up the main mast making a rather unusual side view. Like *Loreto* she was well past her sell by date and but for the war would have been scrapped. All PSNC ships always shipped cargo to and from the west coast of South America but this voyage was to be the west coast of Africa which, for me, was more interesting.



*PSNCs Lagarto, built in 1915 as the Glenavy, purchased from Glen Line in 1923, scrapped in 1948*

Below the bridge, with the Captain's cabins behind, was the officers accommodation with cabins for the Chief Officer, Second Officer and myself. My cabin, near the deck entrance, was quite comfortable with a raised bunk with drawers below, a writing desk, wardrobe and washbasin. Fortunately a window was also provided for ventilation. On the deck below were other cabins, kitchen and saloon. On the boat deck were a number of passenger cabins and accommodation for the cadets and a wireless operator and wireless room. The usual ex naval gun on the stern and machine guns on either side of the bridge. Five cargo holds and their attendant derricks and winches. Crews and DEMS quarters in the poop.

After leaving Liverpool we joined a slow convoy off northern Ireland and headed south. A routine was quickly established and my watch was 8 to 12 morning and evening under the watchful eye of the Captain - the only officer ever to teach me about navigation. (He was Captain PL Hockey who, when I left, gave me a very good written reference) He taught me how to take sun and star sights and how to work out the ship's position always insisting on sharp pencils and really neat work. There was no awful log to be inserted through the bowels of the hull and a rotator was streamed from the poop coupled electrically to the bridge. The rotor was occasionally lost and it was assumed that it had been taken by a large fish.

A fairly uneventful journey south and into the Mediterranean. By this stage of the war there were many more escorts available and the Uboat menace largely controlled. We called at Alexandria in Egypt and stayed for a few days. Local leave was given and I had a nice swim in the sea. Onwards to Haifa in Israel where several of us took a trip up into the Holy Land visiting Bethlehem and the Mosque of Oman and the church with Christ's tomb in Jerusalem.

On our return voyage we called at Port Said in Egypt and then in convoy back to the Clyde. Leaving without convoy but close to the coast at all times via Mull of Kyntyre, Sound of Mull, Minches, round the north of Scotland through the Pentland Firth, where in the mill race, we travelled at great speed. Calling at Methill Road: and eventually to the River Thames and into the Surrey Commercial docks to discharge cargo arriving on 6th September 1944.

I remained with the ship for a while and it was in the period when London was being heavily attacked by VI Flying bombs (doodle bugs) We used to watch them come up the river and hoped that the engine would not stop and the thing descend near us. The docks and surrounding area had suffered very heavy blitzes and there were many streets with scarcely a habitable house remaining. I remember being in the West End one day and hearing the most huge explosion in broad daylight without a warning air raid siren and being told that this was one of the new V2s.

In the surrounding area were blocks of ice which the V2 had picked up in its journey through the upper atmosphere. Home to Sibford for a short leave.

Voyage 8 from London started on 30th September 1944 with a Pilot locking out of the docks into the river and down to Gravesend and then on our own to Milford Haven to join a convoy travelling south to Freetown in Sierra Leone. There was a small village on the edge of the very big bay of Freetown. Going ashore there I bought, for £3, a native dugout canoe about 14 feet long but very narrow into which I could only just squeeze. However, much to the amusement of the officers and crew, I spent many free hours messing about in this canoe. I had to make an outrigger to attach to the canoe to prevent it from capsizing and the ship's carpenter (chippy) often came to my aid. This was later abandoned on the beach at Falmouth.

Leaving Freetown we caught the inevitable convoy and onwards to Takoradi and Lagos in Ghana. There we loaded 5000 tons of coffee for France which doubtless would be very welcome. We collected a number of passengers, mainly French, in Casablanca and enjoyed a happy Christmas celebration on our way to Le Havre: France. This port had been very badly damaged and the docks were virtually non-existent. We anchored in the river as near as possible and were unloaded by American service-men equipped with DUKWs. These were amphibious vehicles about as big as a large lorry with a propeller run off the engine. Our coffee, all in sacks, was unloaded into these DUKWs and taken ashore where after years of war it would be very welcome. In the



devastated town of Le Havre I spent my 21st birthday wandering in the ruins. After leaving Le Havre we went to Falmouth. Only local leave was granted as we were to be on our way again quite soon.

So began my last voyage, the 9th, in the Merchant Service in war time. The war in Europe was clearly reaching an end and all preparations were being made to take troops and supplies to the Far East for the war against Japan. We joined a convoy, bound for India, and headed out into the Bay of Biscay suffering a viscous and severe gale.

The ship was very badly damaged by enormous seas during the afternoon when the super structure of the bridge and one of the cadets was washed overboard. All the lifeboats on one side of the ship were ripped out of their davits leaving large holes in the decks.

It was in the afternoon during the Second Officer's watch that the onslaught occurred. He was injured, and had to go below. The Captain, being somewhat worse for drink, directed survival operations and the Chief Officer organised the crew to cover the holes in the deck with canvas. I was asleep in my bunk at the time and awoke to water sloshing about in my cabin. I hurriedly dressed and went to what was left of the bridge. This was just a platform without protection from the extreme weather. There was no hope of rescuing the poor cadet who had been washed overboard. From what was left of the bridge one could look right up to the tops of huge waves obscuring all other ships.

The Captain told me to signal to the nearest destroyer to advise of our plight and this I tried to do using the Aldis lamp only to receive shocks on every operation of the trigger. The destroyer instructed us to endeavour to turn round and return to Falmouth. The destroyer took up station in front and dropped oil in an effort to prevent the heavy seas from breaking over us. This was successful and we made our way slowly back to Falmouth.

Many of the ships in the convoy were towing LCTs (Landing ships for troops and vehicles) on long chains astern. All these LCTs were lost together with their crews and cargoes in what was reputed to be the worst gale in living memory. The ship went into dock in Falmouth for extensive repairs and I left service with the Company and the Merchant Service.

Having missed out on the purchase of an Austin 7 car for £25 I was successful in buying a rather ancient Morris for £50 and loading my gear set off for home at Sibford, having managed, by devious methods, to obtain sufficient petrol for the journey. In the middle of Exeter the car broke down suffering some problem with the autovac petrol pump. A very helpful bus driver helped to push the car to the side and insisted that I come home with him whilst repairs were made. I, at that time, was no mechanic and did not understand the autovac pump and had to go to a local garage for the car to be repaired.

As the repairs could not be carried out until the next day the kindly bus driver insisted that I go home with him and his wife would put me up for the night. They were such nice people and would not accept any payment whatsoever. The next day repairs were made and I continued my way home suffering further pump problems on the way but managing to finally complete my journey. So ended the wartime chapter of my life.



*“Soon after the end of the war Thurstan, pictured left as an indentured apprentice, married Elizabeth Greaves and joined the family firm of Land Agents, Fernie Greaves Holland and Co in Sheffield. His interest in the sea and sailing remained with him all his life and he combined this with his love of woodworking. He fitted out an Enterprise and Mirror dinghy in his garage and enjoyed sailing them locally. “*

In my follow-up piece to the previous episode I mentioned that, on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1957, the *Reina del Pacifico*, on which Thurstan had served during the war, had gone aground on Devil's Flat in Bermuda but had come off two days later without incurring any damage.

Well, just to prove that you shouldn't believe everything you read on the internet, nor even here, Cachalot Roy Martin was quick to put me right.

Historian Roy, our Honorary Archivist and chronicler of all things Risdon Beazley, provides us with yet another fascinating tale of the exploits of RB's Southampton salvage team and the re-floating of the *Reina del Pacifico*.

RB had been engaged to clear the wreck of the *Trongate*, in Halifax. *Trongate* had been scuttled during the war, after a fire, and still had a part cargo of ammunition onboard. Using the newly converted *Topmast 16* that had been towed across the North Atlantic, with the crew crossing on passenger ships, Allan Crothall's team succeeded in completing the delicate removal operation and then the *Topmast 16* was towed to Bermuda by the tug *Joseph H. Moran* where they then cut down the wreck of the *Wychwood* that had sunk after grounding in 1955.

Read Roy's account on the next page. It comes from 'Risdon Beazley, Marine Salvor', which Roy co-wrote with Lyle Craigie-Halkett. Ed

## Sewed up and beyond self-help

On the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1957 the *Topmast 16* was lifting her moorings after the *Wychwood* clearance had been verified, when the British liner *R.M.S Reina del Pacifico*, the former flagship of the Pacific Steam Navigation Co., ran hard aground at speed on a coral reef. (Charles Cooper, who was at that time a diver on the *Topmast 16* recalls that it was on a Sunday – therefore the 7th)



*RMS Reina del Pacifico and Topmast 16* photo A C Crothall

The *Reina del Pacifico* had 533 passengers on board and a cargo that included 2,770 tons of copper bars. Richard Farge, who lived on Bermuda, was on his way to the UK for a three-month stay; he and his brothers were in the bows of the ship enjoying the thrill of being on a liner that was threading her way through the coral reefs when the ship suddenly lurched and took an 11° list. The vessel had hit the Devil's Flat Reef and she was "sewed up and beyond self-help" as Lloyd's Arbitrators say.

Tugs had failed to re-float the vessel when Allan Crothall arrived from his little salvage ship offering to do the work on a Lloyd's Form 'No Cure – No Pay'. There would have been many doubters when he said that he could succeed where tugs had failed. One of the *Topmast 16's* crew, Tommy Thompson, says that one of the tugs came within hailing distance saying "surely you don't hope to pull that great ship off the reef with that small craft?" Allan Crothall replied "I think we will, with our tackle". But his ship was equipped for wreck clearance work and that all-important tackle was in the yard in Southampton.

The Lloyd's Form was signed on the same day and the company chartered two aircraft to fly the 15 tons of equipment that were needed. They had the seats removed and the 1,260 feet of 6 inch circumference wire was flaked in the cabin of one, a Super Constellation chartered from BOAC. The second aircraft, from KLM, brought out the pumps and blocks etc. The equipment arrived in Bermuda on the Tuesday. Here it was found that no truck on the Island was big enough to take all of the wire; coiling half of the wire on the biggest available truck and reeling the balance on a transporter that the truck towed, solved the problem.

On Thursday afternoon, 'Davy' Crothall allowed his crew, and himself, to get a four hours sleep, their first since Sunday.

Whilst waiting for the wire the *Topmast 16* had laid out her ground tackles and the casualty had been lightened by discharging some of the cargo. On the evening of the 11th as High Water approached (2016 local time) the tackles were hove taut and the liner moved back so gently into deeper water that those passengers who had remained on board were at first unaware that the ship had been re-floated. Well after the ship was afloat an American male passenger was still telling all who would listen that the little Limey ship could never re-float such a big liner.

Once clear of the reef she was reloaded and resumed her voyage, with the only damage being a few sprung rivets. Ken Young, one of the *Topmast's* engineers sailed back to Liverpool with the liner to tend the two 6" pumps that the salvors had supplied; he remembered a beautiful old ship that was "on her last legs". Allan Crothall, every bit as modest as Don Brackenbury (a former Cachalot), said that it was "just a little matter of being in the right place at the right time".

Later the OTS tug *Marina* towed the salvage vessel back to Southampton, whilst the crew were flown back for a well-earned leave, and the ship a much needed refit; she had earned over a quarter of a million pounds in the two and a half year voyage. (*That's the equivalent of 6 million pounds in 2023 - Ed*)

It would have been almost two years later the Arbitrator published his award and RB were paid for a job that they accomplished in only five days, but using know-how they had built up over many years. Old age and a hard war caught up with the *Reina del Pacifico*, she only made one more voyage to South America; so she was in the scrap yard by the time that the award was made.



### Topmast 16

A wartime Mark 3 Landing Craft, built in 1943, she was converted by Risdon Beazley for wreck clearance and salvage work.

She had twin screws but both were right handed and she would have been a beast to handle.

Sold on to the Greeks in 1975, she lasted until 2011





## Captain Ken

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

The recent enthusiasm for Liverpool's Eurovision brought back many happy memories. We never imagined that the time would come when Liverpool would become more famous for its music than its shipping. The main reason for this was that, in the immediate post war period, the BBC were not so enthusiastic about current American Rock & Roll, but the musicians and crews on the Atlantic passenger liners were keen to introduce it.

Although the Beatles started their music in Liverpool, it was in the dockland area of Hamburg they became well known. John Lennon's father himself was in the Merchant Navy.

However, it was in the late sixties, when Liverpool shipping was at its peak, when the Blue Funnel and Ocean group were still based there. We were the main carriers to and from the Far East and so extremely important to the British economy.

Two of our companies, the Blue Funnel Line and Glen Line, had been running to China for a hundred years, and we were keen to continue the trade despite many difficulties posed by the worsening political situation in China. Once the Cultural Revolution was in full force, our crews' conditions became very difficult indeed. We were often required to attend gatherings ashore and wave our copies of Mao's little red books, before some poor local soul was taken off to be executed.

I had in fact been enticed into one of these rallies myself when Chief Officer of the *Autolytus*. When I asked the Agent accompanying me what the accused was guilty of, he replied, 'He is a Capitalist,' to which I replied, 'Well so am I. I think we had better leave,' and we did.

The management of our Company were very understanding and appreciative of our tolerance. One of our ships, the 'Glengarry' of London, commanded by Canadian Bob Paterson, had endured a particularly rough time of which our Management was well aware.



When the ship returned to London, everyone being relieved was of course anxious to go home on leave but were astonished to be told, "You are not returning home, you are booked into the Dorchester Hotel where your wives or girlfriends are already awaiting you." Also joining them were the Chairman, Sir John Nicholson (also at the time Chairman of the Institute of Bankers and Chairman of the Institute of Chartered Accountants) and also Mr George Holt, head of Alfred Holt and Company, affectionately known in

Liverpool as 'Alfie Holt'.

But the big thank you and surprise was yet to come. The top of the bill at the evening cabaret was Cilla Black, and she announced that she was dedicating her top song to the boys of the 'Glengarry', adding, "Only they will know what I am talking about."

The song was, 'What's it all about, Alfie?'



## The Provenance

When our regular contributor Barrie Youde, in a rare moment of idleness, started to muse on the origins of the Cole Porter song 'Begin the Beguine', his online investigations revealed that Porter had written the song while on a Pacific cruise onboard the Cunarder *Franconia* in 1935. Now, by chance Barrie had purchased from Cunard, in 1969, four armchairs from the Smoke Room of the by then scrapped *Franconia* and still had two of them. They had been made by noted English furniture makers, Waring & Gillow, and cost him £3 each. *Cue more verse:*

Did Cole Porter write in the Smoke Room?  
Unlikely he wrote on the Bridge  
Unlikely he wrote in the Engine Room  
And still less the Galley or fridge.

Unlikely he wrote on the Fo'c'sle Head.  
Vibration too much on the Poop;  
The churn of propeller distracts any feller  
Composing a romantic scoop.

Did he write Beguine in his Cabin?  
Alone? With no music about him?  
That he hit the spot with his romantic plot  
Is a certainty. No man could doubt him.

The Dining Saloon would be busy,  
Or otherwise closed for the night.  
For pure inspiration he'd need some libation.  
I'm guessing that's probably right.

Where else could it be but the Smoke Room?  
A piano to tinkle at will?  
When composing a tune by a tropical moon,  
Where else could requirements fulfil?

He drew up a chair at a table,  
With paper and something to write.  
The Beguine then Began, with its rhythm and scan,  
There and then, on that tropical night.

And what of the chair that he sat in?  
He hardly would write standing up?  
Here Waring and Gillow gave all but a pillow  
In comfort, with saucer and cup,  
Of coffee, to go with the brandy.  
The rhythm was starting to sway,  
The atmosphere all very handy,  
And I have the chair still, today!



BY  
07.08.23



## Gone Aloft

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

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

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



**Captain Stephen Taylor RN**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Gone Aloft



**Captain K T V Edwards**

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

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

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

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



**WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH**

### Zoom Meeting

After their summer break Dorset Branch resume on

**2.30pm, Saturday September 9th 2023**

**Stories of British India ships in the Gulf  
with Kevin Patience**

**Kevin's involvement with British India's Mulbera,  
Dwarka and Dara are all uncovered,  
from passenger to diver!**

**Kevin's time in the Gulf and being part of the  
regions "shipping scene" allows us to enjoy his  
stories, images and historical research.**

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](http://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](http://www.cachalots.org.uk)

E-mail: [office@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:office@cachalots.org.uk)

[captain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:captain@cachalots.org.uk)

[staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)

[boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk)

[storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk)

[postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:postcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)

[functions@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:functions@cachalots.org.uk)

[membership@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:membership@cachalots.org.uk)

[editor@cachalots.org.uk](mailto: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.