

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 96

Digital Edition

January 2022

Captain's Log

To meet the Editor's publishing deadline I am writing this month's column before Christmas, which gives me something of a dilemma. Last night's local TV news had as its backdrop behind the presenter "*Crimbo Limbo*". Not the nicest of phrases, but it captures the moment. The Omicron variant of the COVID virus has thrown the near future into uncertainty.

During the autumn the Club was gradually returning to something approaching normality. We held a Trafalgar dinner, a Harpooners' dinner, a Christmas lunch, and at the last Management Meeting there was even talk of resuming normal opening times at the Club Room in RBL. The gods were probably chortling up their sleeves at that point, knowing that Omicron was already on its way. At least in England the government seems to be expressing a strong desire to preserve Christmas, for which no small thanks. However, beyond that all bets appear to be off. Whether your interests lie in medicine, politics, economics, diplomacy or, simply, the weather, the New Year looks like having something to pique everyone's interest. However, for the moment the social programme stands, and I very much hope to see many of you at next year's Sea Pie Supper.

Until then, best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year, whatever you might be doing.

Keep safe

Andrew Moll, Club Captain



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A slightly shorter edition as we strike sixteen bells.

Sixteen bells were traditionally struck at midnight on New Years Eve, both in the RN and on some MN ships.

The oldest hand on board would strike out the old year with the first eight bells and the youngest would strike in the new one with next eight.

Boatsteerers' Locker

Greetings to all, where does the time go. As I write this, ahead of Christmas to meet the Editor's copy deadline, I note from my records that it is one year since I compiled a joint blog from the previous holder of this role. Ken Dagnall rung 'Finished With Engines' and took his bottle of Brown Sauce off into the sunset and hopefully has been enjoying a well-earned rest and catching up with the list of jobs from Margaret.

In my first blog for January 2021 I stated, "We all find ourselves in turbulent times with Covid-19 and Brexit affecting, and likely to affect our lives for some years to come." Well it seems nothing has really changed and despite the freedom allowed by the vaccination of many, we find ourselves in a situation where the risk of further controls is very close again.

We will endeavour to keep the Club room active as far as possible and in accordance with government guidance and rules as well as any considered by the RBL.

In 2021 we did manage to get a virtual meeting place running using Zoom and a plentiful number of members took advantage of this. A change to the use of a digital monthly Cachalot has worked very well and the addition of a quarterly printed copy has gone some way to keeping in touch with those members who do not have email or who prefer to 'hold' the pages to read.

My thanks and those from the members who regularly visit the Club room are due to Captain Ian Thomson who was sharp eyed to see a Thonet style bentwood hall stand for auction recently. The existing stand was in poor shape and in need of replacement. Agreement for a budget was received from our Storekeeper and after some deft manoeuvring at the auction near Alresford by Ian, we became the new owners of the stand which is now standing in place of the old one. Please feel free to 'hang your hat'!!

Meeting's at RBL – our meetings at the RBL Club room have generally been busy. At the meeting of the Management Committee it was agreed to hold off opening again on a Thursday and review the option at the next meeting in March 2022.

Zoom gatherings – I am continuing where possible to maintain a Zoom gathering on a Thursday morning, opening from 1045. It has been good to see some new faces, and regular ones. For the most part I am free on a Thursday so not too onerous and happy to continue hosting this for members. Where I have something else on, usually golf, I will set the Zoom call up for people to join any time after 1045 but I have had issues with the system timing out. You may find yourself on your own and looking at a blank bulkhead!

250 Club – Remember, you have to be in it to win it!!!

Docklands New Year Service 2022 – despite contact with our Port Chaplain I have been unable to find out if the service will be going ahead in the early days of January.

Sea Pie Supper – Friday 4th February 2022

With a contract signed and planning moving forward, we keep our fingers crossed that our Dear Leader will not invoke any controls through the winter months and spoil our evening. Tickets went on sale on Friday 5th November and we are already approaching 350 reservations which hopefully will be converted to become fully paid for tickets soon. Please remember to contact Richard James if you wish to reserve a place and purchase a ticket(s) for the Sea Pie Supper. Members £53 and guests £65.

Meeting of Past Captains

This meeting will be held on Saturday 8th January 2022 at the RBL at 1200.

Functions

A Burn's Night Supper is being planned for Thursday 20th January 2022, to be held in the lower room at the RBL. Costing is still to be determined and a call for attendees and the cost will be issued soon. Numbers will be limited to forty-one.

The Club room will be resume again on Friday 7th January.

I hope your turkey/duck/goose/beef/other (delete as appropriate) and all the trimmings are all used up and you are ready to enjoy the delights that 2022 has to offer.

Enjoy your January.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

1830 Thursday 13th January 2022

As indicated in my last couple of reports, subject to any possible Covid controls being introduced by our Dear Leader, the AGM for 2022 will be held in person at the RBL with an option for a link by Zoom. This arrangement has been tested on the Smart TV in the Club room and we reckon this will work provided we ensure a strict protocol for contributing to the meeting is in place and applied. Please advise me if you wish to attend in person or by Zoom. Please be reminded only members whose subscriptions are paid on 1st January 2022 are eligible to attend, in person or by Zoom.

Rule 3(b) of the Cachalot Rules 2013 state 'at least six Committee Members (Harpooners) shall be elected at an AGM' and serve a term of two years. Further, Rule 8 states 'Harpooners will retire after two years but will be eligible for re-election'.

The following six Harpooners are coming to the end of their term:

Noel Becket, Terry Clark, Douglas Gates, Peter Gould, Les Morris, and Mark Oakley.

Five of these have indicated their desire to stand again.

All members whose subscription are fully paid at the date of the AGM are encouraged to stand for election, providing a proposer and seconder. Where necessary a ballot will be held at the AGM. As we already have one Harpooner in place, we only need to fill five places although the Rules allow for 'at least six Harpooners'.

In 'normal' times, any vote of candidates would be completed by those members attending the AGM in person. We will allow votes to be cast by indicating their vote using the Chat facility to Robin Plumley, available on the Zoom application.

If you wish to continue in your role as a Harpooner, or seek to become a Harpooner, please submit your proposal with the name of your proposer and seconder to the Boatsteerer no later than 31st December 2021.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

Some Seasonal Cheer at last

In another return to 'new normal' times, 41 Cachalots and guests were able to enjoy a Christmas lunch in the main room of the Royal British Legion club. Our super 'mobile chef' Sam and his sister Danielle provided a three course meal of Prawn Cocktail, Roast Turkey with all the trimmings followed by a choice of Christmas Pudding with custard sauce or Cheese and Biscuits.

Captain Moll provided the Grace before the meal and we all drank a toast to the Queen at the end.

A raffle with a good selection of prizes donated by members and a basket provided by Louise Noble was held raising a healthy **£208** for the Captain's Charity. Thank you to all who attended for your support and generosity.

A very enjoyable lunchtime in great company.



And how about Burns too?



Further to the success of the Christmas Lunch (and none of us are reported to have yet succumbed to you know what) and lack, to date, of any Scottish style you know what restrictions being imposed here in the deep south, it is proposed to go ahead with our traditional Burns Supper on **Thursday 20th January. 1900 for 1930**, in the main room at the RBL

That's traditional with a few changes:

We will try and stick to the usual programme as closely as possible but there will be no special theme to the Sangs and Clatter this year and we may have to do without a piper. Prepare for improvisation.

As for the menu:

We will start with '*Cullen Skink*', which we understand to be a thick Scottish soup made of smoked haddock, potatoes and onions, which sounds a lot better than the name implies.

The main course will be *Haggis & Clapshaw*, (neeps and tatties) followed by *Tipsy Lady* (trifle) and *Kebbuck & Oatcakes* (cheese & biscuits)

For those of you not too keen on the tasty minced innards we expect that Chef Sam can be prevailed upon to provide a veggie option but we will have to be advised at time of booking.

Final price has yet to be determined but expect something around £35.

Names to the office soonest please so we have an idea of numbers which will be limited to a max. of 41.

All of the above subject to whatever restrictions apply at the time and, we would hope, some common sense.



Hogmanay thoughts

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 794 Jan. 1st 2022

By Michael Grey



It's New Year's Eve, when people of kindly disposition wish each other the hope that the coming twelve months might be happy, or even prosperous. So let me begin with such a wish for our readers, despite most of the evidence suggesting that much of what made 2021 such a miserable experience may well emigrate smoothly into its successor. But hope, as they say, springs eternal, so we can only hope for the best that the virus, which has caused so much misery around the world, will dissolve its lethal character to become no more than a societal nuisance.

What have we learned during the previous twelve months, beside frustration, impatience and resignation? Something, perhaps, that we can carry forward into 2022 as this new year evolves?

In our maritime world we ought to focus on the lives lived by the seafaring population, which has kept the blood flowing through the arteries of world trade, but at a pretty awful cost. Amid all the panic and pandemonium in so many of the countries around the world, the ships have kept sailing and the general public has been made more aware of them, perhaps on account of the spectacular blockage of Suez or subsequent supply chain interruptions. But very few seemed to realise that while the ships indeed steamed on, those aboard them never managed to set foot ashore for months on end, were unable to get home at the end of their contracts, while their reliefs were stuck at home and unable to earn.

It was if all the ships that came and went, bringing and taking all the stuff to sustain the world, were operated by robots and without the agency of human beings. Despite all the earnest injunctions for seafarers to be declared special workers, when it came to the practicalities with obstructive immigration and quarantine officials, it took superhuman efforts by heroic ship agents, welfare agencies and others to mitigate the misery and facilitate crew exchanges, often with fantastic complexity. And with each successive wave of the virus, two steps forward were so often followed by one step back, I'm afraid I got very impatient as our priests and politicians alike would offer prayers and thanks for the brave and selfless health workers, supermarket staff, refuse collectors, bus drivers etc. etc.


who were keeping us fed and healthy. “What about the b.... seafarers, who keep world trade flowing and never get any recognition for it?” I found myself muttering under my breath in church, or yelling at the radio. Perhaps I should have done the opposite – muttered at the radio and yelled in church.

Because we have seen, on so many fronts, that these days policy is so often a reaction to the loud noises made by activists, armed to the teeth with social media and a keen understanding of public relations and the workings of government and law. Wise old buffers used to say that you never get anywhere by diverting from the paths of democratic debate, painstaking research and sober discussion around the proper channels and there was no place for yelling in a decent and civilised advanced society.

I’m afraid we have discovered that all this well-meaning advice is largely nonsense and that it is the fanatics, who campaign in the most extreme fashion, for every conceivable cause, employing everything from megaphone diplomacy to violence, who tend to get noticed and influence policy makers who themselves court public approval and our votes. From monomaniacal individuals blocking trunk roads and oblivious to any humanitarian pleas, green demonstrators preventing legitimate commerce, to adherents of one particular school of science or academia which will seek to destroy the careers or employment of those of a contrary persuasion, this is indeed the age of the fanatic.

There is no reasoning with these people as they pour their buckets of oil on the pavement outside the IMO building or deface public buildings; the mobs shrieking their abuse at anyone who might disagree with them and extruding their on-line bile. The “science is settled!” they yell, in what must be an expression of breath-taking arrogance, in an age of extraordinary scientific discovery.

And there is no doubting the fact that fanaticism wins, witness the way that democratic governments are increasingly swayed by the noise they hear, and which they believe reflects a majority view. So maybe sensible people in shipping ought to be rather more fanatical in 2022 in supporting causes they believe to be important. Sweet reason, as has been demonstrated, doesn’t cut the mustard.

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Poet's Corner

Cachalot Captain Stuart Lawrence MBE suggests that had our twenty-one founding members not chosen the name 'Cachalots' then they might well have opted for 'Albatrosses' instead, a name well suited to reflect Stuart's own Southern Ocean and Antarctic service. He has submitted this poem by Sara Vial, translated from the original Spanish.

I am the albatross who waits for you
at the end of the world.
I am the forgotten soul of the dead sailors
who passed Cape Horn
from all the seas of the earth.
But they did not die
in the furious waves,
Today they fly on my wings,
towards eternity,
in the last gust
of the Antarctic winds.

It is one of several translations of the poem which appears on a marble plaque on the approach to a memorial statue on a small island in Chile. This stylistic silhouetted albatross in flight stands seven metres high on a hill top 50 m above sea level on Isla de Hornos near Cape Horn. The steel Monumento Cabo de Hornos (Cape Horn Memorial) was made by the sculptor José Balcells and was inaugurated in December 1992. It was erected through the initiative of the Chilean Section of the Brotherhood of Cape Horners "in memory of the men of the sea from every nation that lost their lives fighting against the merciless forces of nature of the Southern Ocean that prevail in the vicinity of the legendary Cape Horn".



[From http://www.caphorniers.cl/CH_monument.htm](http://www.caphorniers.cl/CH_monument.htm)

Sara Vial was born and lived in Valpariso, Chile, which was the place that inspired her work as a poet.

She won the Gabriela Mistral Prize in 1976 and was a great friend of the famous Pablo Naruda, who in 1971 had won the Nobel Prize for Literature and wrote many poems and odes to the wandering albatross.

Another such South American poet who has written movingly of albatrosses is Eduardo Langagne and you can find translations and recitations of their poems online. You could start by clicking [here](#)



Here is the setting of the monument and if you zoom in to where the horizon meets the land in the background you might see an indistinct white blob which is one of the two lights on Isla de Hornos, the Southernmost Point on the world. The other lighthouse, complete with a resident keeper, is behind us in the photograph. *I hope that Ms Hipple will forgive us the use of her evocative picture.*

New Member

Philippa Langton, BA, PG Dip, is a qualified Solicitor and is a Partner at law firm Lester Aldridge Marine. She has worked in the shipping industry for her entire career, previously with Ince & Co and then the UK P&I Club. She is a hobby sailor and having recently moved to the area she hopes to participate in and support industry events. She will be our main contact at LA Law, replacing the current one as he approaches retirement.

Will there be any sea left?

The Maritime *Advocate* online
Issue 792 Dec. 3rd 2021

By Michael Grey

As the governmental delegates to Cop26, safely delivered home after their Scottish excursion, start to work out how they can deliver their extravagant zero- carbon pledges by the due date, it is becoming manifestly clear that it will be neither cheap, nor easy. It is very easy for politicians and environmental interests to talk about “clean, renewable energy” but providing it in sufficient quantities to power up our technological world is a colossal task that puts a strain on our imagination, as only a tiny proportion of what will be needed currently exists.

It has been suggested that green ammonia or green methanol, or perhaps even synthetic LNG will end up as the fuel of choice to power the world fleet, assuming we see a value in maintaining world trade. But has anyone really considered the amazing amount of “renewable” electrical power that will be required to provide the hydrogen feedstock from electrolysis to produce this quantity of bunkers? And bear in mind that just as the marine industry has been accustomed to fuel its ships using the “bottom of the barrel” filth nobody else wanted, it will probably be at the back of the queue for all this lovely green fuel, as others will be better able to pay for it.

But let’s not be too depressed. The immediate future is blown in the wind and it is clear that anyone involved in the offshore (or even onshore) wind business can look forward to plenty of activity. Old-fashioned folk who drive ships around for a living have long become used to being diverted from their traditional tracks from A to B, because somebody has insisted on planting a huge windfarm array on the seabed over which they used to track. We might expect a lot more of this activity as the number of turbines grows tenfold, or twentyfold, depending on what you might have been reading.

It is probably not much use protesting about all the additional miles you are going to have to steam to circumvent these obstacles safely, because the rights of those who want to obstruct your passage will invariably trump the needs of navigation. It’s a habit the energetic energy lobby got

into all those years ago, when they wanted to plonk oil rigs in your way and the precedent will live on into the renewable era.

While the North Sea is affording a delightful planting spot for wind turbines, with the Dogger Bank field soon to be the world's biggest array, where once only herrings thrived, and the Heligoland Bight affording only narrow channels between the windmills into the German ports, the rest of the world is intent on catching up. If you have been reading your maritime press assiduously, you will have been aware that the coasts of California have been swarming with anchored or drifting containerships impatiently awaiting their berths.

They had better sort out their stevedoring soon, because those "advancing clean energy development" are seeking to fence off a huge area of sea, twenty miles off the coast upon which it is hoped to plant a giant wind farm. According to the useful Millers' Maritime Newsletter which keeps us informed of US developments, the proposed Morro Bay Wind Energy Area of 240,898 acres or 376 square miles (it is so much more user-friendly than horrible hectares) is now seeking permission to start planting. And if we are going to even partly match the ambitions of those requiring clean, green fuel for power, industry and transportation, many more acres of sea are going to be converted to electrical production, with all their turbines, underwater cables and associated paraphernalia. There is not even a need for shallow water, either, as floating devices have been trialled and found perfectly practical, only requiring a decent mooring.

I was reading that the coasts of China will soon have the largest conglomeration of offshore turbines in the world, which will make the sanity of those navigating the South China Sea, whose lives are already traumatised by gigantic fleets of suicidal fishing boats, problematical. It is enough to push them over the edge.

But the ambitions of the renewable energy interests are only half of the story, as hundreds of square miles of once usable sea are fenced off for "marine parks" or environmental reserves, where marine life will not be troubled by propeller noise, or people dropping anchors on the sea bottom, trawlers or worst of all – dredgers. There was once a sort of freedom that you felt when the last mooring line had been cast off and the bow of the ship was turned seawards. The next generation, one suspects, as they weave

their way around all the obstructions in their tortuous way to what bits of open ocean that remain, are going to feel rather like trespassers.



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WORLD SHIPSOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meeting

Of the Dorset branch of the World Ship Society

2.30pm, Saturday, January 8th 2022

**~ In the Wake of the Intermediates ~ with Andy Skarstein ~
...Via Suez to East & South Africa ...**

**A voyage on Clan MacIndoe in early 1978 from London to
Cape Town via Suez, Aqaba, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania and
Mozambique.**

**Andy is an ex B&C Radio Officer from 1970-1978 with a
lifelong interest in ships and shipping history.**

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

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

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

See our 2021/22 programme via www.shipsdorset.org/events

What's going wrong with lifeboats?

Seatrade Maritime Analysis and Opinion December 2021

By Michael Grey

Seafarers really shouldn't be afraid of equipment that is supposed to save them, but this is all too often the case, as news of accidents involving lifeboats filters around the seagoing workforce. Lifeboat drills, which are mandated by regulation, ought to be routine, but all too often are an ordeal for those taking part and a source of some apprehension. And while it is too easy to blame the seamanship of those involved in accidents, it is not too hard to suggest that there are other factors at play.

There is a lack of any form of standardisation of lifeboat equipment, while many shipbuilders are guilty of sourcing any components on the sole basis of its cost, with the owner not always involved in the specification. Experts who have looked closely at the equipment often discover components that are incorporated into the launching and recovery equipment that have been installed without any apparent comprehension that they will exist in a corrosive atmosphere, or are difficult to maintain.

Then there is plain awful design, with recovery of enclosed boats notoriously difficult after a drill, with crew typically trying to re-attach the suspension links and reset the hook-release gear through a small access hatch at the ends of the boat, while the boat might be moving about in a swell. Free-fall boats are frightening enough to launch, but even more of a nightmare to recover.

"Why are we still producing sub-standard equipment that kills people?"- asks InterManager's Secretary General Captain Kuba Szymanski, who has been campaigning on this scandal for some years and gathering data on lifeboat accidents. It was the lack of any comprehensive picture into the frequency of these accidents which first drove the ship manager's organisation to undertake its own research into the problem. It is a requirement for members of the International Maritime Organisation that they report serious accidents to IMO, but this tends to be honoured in the breach. Captain Szymanski suggests that only some 35% of actual accidents are to be found in the IMO database, which leaves 65% unreported. The consequence is that the full measure of a tragedy which has caused death

and injury to some 500 people since enclosed boats were widely introduced in the 1980s, fails to properly register.

The InterManager data on lifeboat accidents goes back to 1980, is international and has been properly verified to discover what really happened in tragedies which seriously injured some 325 people and killed 117. Now the organisation has taken their aggregated data to Lloyd's Register, which has used machine learning technology to identify the main causes, hazards and trends and produced a number of important insights. It has concluded that human beings were not the primary cause of these accidents, with almost a quarter directly caused by issues relating to equipment, such as release mechanism, davits and wire rope failure.

Most accidents involved enclosed boats or free-fall equipment, with fewer of the older open-boat type. As to when accidents happen, by far the greatest number took place in drills, although a substantial number involved incidents during inspection or survey. Few were found to have occurred during operational use. The data also reveals that one in every five accidents involved the boat and crew falling into the water and one in every 13 took place with the boat stowed. Cruise ships (which use their boats more often) record the most accidents.

There are often problems with port authorities prohibiting ships from conducting drills and putting boats in the water as regulations require, and InterManager has taken the matter up with the International Association of Ports & Harbors to find some resolution. It appears that those operating ports are equally as apprehensive of the difficulties of recovering free-fall boats, once they have been launched onto their water in a drill.

The data has also made it possible to assess the effects of the various attempts to improve safety through regulations, some of which appear to have made matters worse. However, since a peak around 2009, there has been something of an improvement, although hook release problems, wire and brake failures still take place. The accident to a lifeboat on the brand-new research ship *Sir David Attenborough* was a recent example. These sad, eminently preventable accidents still frighten seafarers, which itself is a scandal that needs to be resolved.

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www.seatrade-maritime.com and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey.
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Captain Ken

Another contribution from Ken Owen which appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" of December 2021.

At most of the ports we called in the old Blue Funnel Line, English was the usual second language, so we had no difficulty organising the safe stowage of the cargo we loaded. This was very important, as our reputation depended on the extreme care we took of all the many varieties of our cargo.

Indonesia was an exception, as their second language was Dutch, after many years as a Colony of Holland. This was the reason that Blue Funnel Midshipmen were encouraged to become familiar with Malay, the main Indonesian language. Indeed those who managed to speak it reasonably were awarded a small monetary bonus.

On one occasion our Company Cadet ship 'Calchas' (her Deck and Engine crew comprised some 35 trainees.) was anchored in Bohian, a small port in Borneo.

We were loading large heavy logs, which were towed out to the ship, not long since they had been beautiful standing trees. (I hate to think of my part in deforestation.)

After a very busy day, it seemed bliss to dive off the logs in to the clear blue sea. and most people were doing just that. However a local fisherman I was talking to, seemed rather alarmed and said to me. 'Ikan Yoo' I knew ikan meant fish, but consulted my phrase book to discover that Ikan Yoo', meant SHARKS.

When I announced this to the swimmers, Every one jumped out quicker than they had dived in.

On a later voyage when I was a junior officer, we called at Surabaya, the second city of Java. The British were very unpopular at the time , as we had just invaded Egypt to capture the Suez Canal, and the Russians were unpopular for invading Hungary.

It seemed risky to go ashore, but it was normally a friendly town with friendly bars. So, my Engineer friend and I hired a trishaw, one with

those hot oil lamps on each arm rest. with a friendly driver, and headed for town.

After calling at a couple of bars and were feeling no pain, we suddenly realised we were surrounded by a huge number of anti British demonstrators. They asked if we were British, and of course we said 'No', and assured them we were Norwegian (always a safe bet)

Then where do you live ? they said.

Unperturbed, we said 'Omsk' and began to sing to the tune of 'I belong to Glasgow'. We sang 'I belong to Omsk, dear old Omsk town'

Fortunately, their geography was as bad as ours as I later discovered Omsk was in Russia. They seemed satisfied, and we made our way safely back to our ship.

It should have been quite frightening, specially as we later learned that the same mob went on to burn down the British Embassy.

Captain Reg Kelso MBE

Practice and Progress

Captain Reg Kelso, President of the Club, suffered a stroke, following a fall at his home on the morning of Saturday 27th Nov.. He was admitted into the Hyper Acute Stroke Ward at Southampton General Hospital and after assessment and an MRI scan he was awarded four out of five which is considered quite good.

The stroke was on the left side of the brain and affected his right side, He was moved to the Rehab ward on the 1st December.

Following speech and physio therapies he was discharged from hospital on the 20th December and is now at home recuperating.

His latest dispatch, on 27th, says: *just perfecting left hand typing...it gets easier by the day. Still have leg weakness and dizziness but it's early days.*

He was quite overwhelmed by all the messages they have received and he and June send their thanks to everybody.

A dedicated web page has been set up on our website for those wishing to follow Reg's progress:

[Captain Reg Kelso](#)

Ship shapes

The Maritime Advocate online
Issue 793 Dec. 18th 2021

By Michael Grey



In the compromise that dictates the design of a ship, you don't have to be cynical to observe that the needs of the crew come last, after the cargo, machinery and anything else that might remunerate the owner. The crew, it might be said "just fit in where they can". It has been the same throughout history, and you might think of Vikings crossing the Atlantic, sheltering under the thwarts, or sitting in the lee of their captives, to the grim dormitories of stokers and stewards in the trans-Atlantic liners, in the eyes of the ship or below the waterline, far from the madding crowd of happy passengers upstairs.

I sailed in a few old ships that were built in the 1920s, with forecastle accommodation for the ratings and it was a fact that thirty years on, very few of the best seafarers were willing to sail in them. They knew that they could find some more desirable residence aboard vessels with pleasant and spacious accommodation amidships, where you didn't have to cope with damp, foul air and violent motion in heavy weather. And for some years, no sensible designer would think of sticking human beings in such locations aboard ship.

It's funny how expediency changes convention. Until about the 1970s naval architects had been trained to design ships with certain unarguable characteristics, like a rise of floor that differentiated between a

ship and a barge, a shapely sheer, or camber that helped to shed boarding water, a cruiser or counter stern, a forecastle and poop to help to keep the sea stay where it should. Ships had to be manoeuvred in restricted waters and it was thought that the bridge ought to be around amidships, near the longitudinal centre of gravity or “pivot point”. Even tankers in those days, with the machinery aft, still retained a midship bridge.

Then, almost without anyone noticing, all these conventions were swept away. It was found far easier by shipbuilders to forget about the rise of floor or sheer and construct the ship on a flat building dock and camber was dismissed as unimportant. Three-dimensional curved plate was judged to be far too expensive and we saw ships emerging with a great flat backside, which only an imaginative naval architect would consider an improvement to seakeeping. There were flares that wouldn’t have disgraced an angle-decked aircraft carrier, both forward and aft, such was the demand for deck space to park boxes.

And just like the old days, the crew found themselves having to “fit in where they can”, away from the revenue-earning locations. A shipmaster of some experience summed it up really quite well, describing various ships he had sailed where, within a few years, he lived amidships aboard a reefer; so far aft on a container ship that he actually resided abaft the stern frame in a towering steel island; and then right forward in a car carrier, where he overlooked the windlass.


Old sailors used to say about a ship – “if it looked right, then it probably was seaworthy”, but I have often wondered what their reaction might have been to some of the strange designs that have emerged in recent years. “X-bows”, extreme bulbs, “ram-bows”, wedges and other strange shapes have emerged from the hydrodynamic box of tricks, competing for the owners’ attention. There was a rather good cartoon a few years ago, the caption noting, about one of these funny looking ships – “I can’t tell whether she is going ahead or astern, or submerging!” I suppose you can only tell whether these designs live up to their extravagant claims when they get to sea and you ask those who have served in them.

Now we have an exciting video from Maersk in which they reveal the design of their latest ultra-sustainable 16,000teu container series, which will consume green methanol and aboard which the crew will serve as a sort of breakwater on the bow for the nine-high deck stow of boxes abaft the

bridge. The video, introduced by a sonorous blast from its siren, is somewhat short of detail, but with the exception of this accommodation island perched on the forecastle, every metre of length is usefully employed for the stowage of containers. Even the single offset funnel is so far aft you could hang the ensign on it. The machinery is so far away from the engineers' accommodation that they will have to be very fit when the alarms go off in the middle of the night. The first ship handling operations in tight places might be quite exciting, as they whirl around their "pivot point"!



I guess we will just have to wait and see whether these revolutionary ships are a success, and represent the first of a new era in box ship design which will sweep the world. If you sail on them, you will at least get a nice sea view, rather than being forced to peer at the back end of a container for months on end. And it would be nice to think that the designers will come up with something equally exciting to address currently pressing issues of cargo securing or fire safety. But there can surely be no argument that the crew of these dramatic ships have surely been "fitted in" where they can, on the only available space.

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



Gone Aloft

Captain Henry Frank Forse.

17th July 1935 - 18th December 2021.

Henry Forse was born in Paignton, Devon and, as his parents separated and divorced while he was still a small child, he was brought up by his mother and his grandmother in Brixham. His mother married a Belgian fisherman after the war and Henry lived and was educated for a time in Belgium before returning to Brixham where his mother and step father owned a fishing boat. Henry loved to fish and soon grew to love the sea.

Aged 14, it was his choice to join the training ship *Arethusa* which was moored off Upnor in Kent. He spent over 2 years there between 1949-1951 having a nautical education. *Arethusa* taught young men the skills of seamanship, swimming, gunnery, gymnastics and signalling hand in hand with a formal education. One of Henry's special duties was 'Captains Quarters Boy' and as the Captain's wife was Dutch and Henry speaking some Flemish could converse with her. He did very well and his final report commented "A quiet superior type of boy who will work hard and strive for promotion".

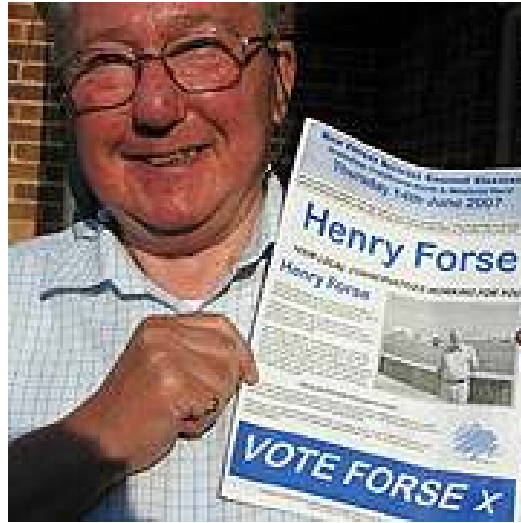
Having graduated from *Arethusa*, Henry's first ship was Union Castle's *Bloemfontein Castle* in 1951 where he was a Deck Boy. By the time he was 18, he had sailed around the world twice. He worked his way up through the ranks to 3rd Mate, serving on ships which included *Pipriki & Tekoa* (both NZS) and *Barton Grange* (Holders). He then served with the *RFA Fort Dunvegan* before taking a short break in 1958 to marry and raise a family. For about 2 years, Henry and his wife Ann became launderette owners in Ashford, Middlesex. Henry went back to sea in the early 1960s, serving on more ships which included *Africa Palm* (Palm Line) *Tilapa*, *Camito* and *Changuinola* (all Elders & Fyffes). More exams, his first ship as 2nd Mate was the *SS Turrialba* (Fyffes again) in 1963 and then he was 1st Mate on the *MV Tillerman* (Rowbothams) in the mid 1960s when he also gained his Master's Ticket. Henry worked for all sorts of companies which included Union Castle, Fyffes, ESSO and Westminster Dredging where commanded the *Seastone*.

In the late 1960s Henry got jobs in the Port of Southampton, he worked for Killick Martin followed by Solent Container Services handling cargo where he worked for a number of years. Although he was in the twilight of his career, he

was tempted back to sea by Red Funnel in the 1990s where he was the Relief Master. Henry retired from the sea in 1999.

In 2007 Henry stood as the Conservative candidate for the New Forest District Council and came up with a winning election slogan, albeit unintentionally.

He hadn't noticed the unfortunate (?) juxtaposition of the X with his name when he started to deliver his leaflets. They were received with some amusement, if not hilarity, by bemused locals and even the National media got in on the act.



Initially, Henry was upset at the *faux pas* but New Forest MP Julian Lewis assured him that it was all great publicity.

With a message like that Henry was duly elected, *nem con* we would think, and he made many friends serving one term for the people of part of the Forest where he lived for many years.

Henry had become a member of the Club in 1967 when he was a Shift Manager at Solent Container Services and he was one of our longest serving Cachalots, only three other surviving members outdating him.

Henry was married twice, and leaves his wife Freda. He had 3 children, Jonathan, Lorna and Emma by his first marriage and will be terribly missed by all his family. Henry was 86.

The funeral will take place at the Test Vale Crematorium, Ridge Lane, Romsey, SO51 6AA, at 1300 on Friday 14th January. with a reception afterwards at the Green Dragon, Brook, SO43 7HE

Would those wishing to attend please contact Freda beforehand so she has an idea of numbers freda.forse@me.com

Thanks to Jonathan Forse for his help with this obituary

The CACHALOTS

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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.

The cut-off date for the next edition will be
21st January 2022

250 Club

The 250 Club draws were resumed in December, the draws now taking place in the Club room at the end of each month.

October	Margaret Grant	J M M Noble
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November	D P Neaves	G Thornton
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December (£100)	J Lockhead	L R Morris
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