The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 106 **March 2024**

Post Captain's Log

Thank you, Cachalots, for selecting me as Captain of the Club for 2023. I have had a very enjoyable year attending all the various events and functions that I have written about in this worthy journal.

Since the December issue, there have been a few more to write about. In November, I was pleased to represent the Cachalots at the Lord-Lieutenant's' lunch party at Spithead House, hosted by the Naval Base Commander. It was held for the Princess Royal to meet her Hampshire Affiliations, of which I was one of 8, invited because she is a Stowaway member of the Club.

In December, 32 of us gathered at the RBL for the club Christmas Lunch, another fine meal prepared by Chef Sam, enhanced by most of us donning pink crowns (!).

The New Year started off well when about 30 revellers, including many Cachalots, met for a drink in the White Star Tavern, an evening arranged by the Southampton Wardroom.

It goes without saying that my final duty was to host the first two thirds of this year's Sea Pie Supper (what a great evening that was!) before handing over to David Carter for 2024. I wish him every success as the Captain of the Cachalots and hope that he has as much fun as I have had. During the past year, I have been pleased to progress some of the ideas proposed over recent years but stymied by Covid and the like. We now have a visible presence on social media (FaceBook and LinkedIn), which has paid dividends in raising the club profile. We have joined forces with the NI and Southampton Wardroom to connect with local mariners, a consequence of which has been to recruit several new members. This affiliation is continuing, with events already planned for the first half of the year. In March David Carter is arranging an evening at Collingwood. There will be another convivial evening on the Shieldhall on April 26th and a Wardroom Event on May 17th. Do please join us for these events.

Finally, thank you to all those who have either contributed or facilitated events that have helped raise **£1295.22** for my chosen charity, Solent Dolphin.

Noel Becket, Post Captain

Introducing your new Captain

Lt Cdr David Carter MNM LL.B RNR AFNI Master MN

Lt Cdr David Carter RNR is the **Royal Navy's Merchant Navy Liaison Officer**

Captain David Carter joined Shell Tankers (U.K.) Ltd as Deck Cadet in 1980, gained his Master Mariner's certificate in 1992, command in 1998 and continued with Shell as Master until 2012. He was lead class master of the QatarGas LNG fleet, having stood by, delivered and carried the first cargo on the flagship Q-Max LNG carrier *MOZAH*, the largest gas carrier ever built. He subsequently served in ice class LNG carriers with Dynagas and trained for Northern Sea Route transits with his last command being the LNG carrier *ARCTIC AURORA* in 2014. He is a Bachelor of Laws, Younger Brother of Trinity House, Chairman of the Trinity House Yeomen Scheme, a member of the Trinity House Management Committee, Vice Chairman of the Maritime Advisory Board to the Confidential Hazardous Incident Reporting Scheme (CHIRP) and Associate Fellow of the Nautical Institute. He is a Royal Naval Reservist since 1996. He was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service in 2018 and has received two Royal Navy commendations.

Through his Royal Navy's MNLO role he is active in a range of maritime committees in dual RN and MN hat roles. He was made a Main Board member of the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and following RN membership of the IfATE apprenticeship trailblazer for OOW500, to be delivered to the Royal Navy, he was invited to Chair the current Master500 apprenticeship trailblazer with intent to deliver MCA Master Mariner certification to Royal Navy command qualification CQ1. Next steps being establishing a Master200 trailblazer for Army workboat coxswains, Royal Marine Landing Craftsmen and an eye on RN Vahanna coxswain training outcomes. Following ahead up the tonnage ladder for OOW3000 for Royal Navy Warfare Officers. He is a member of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association. He has a seat on the UK Shipping Defence Advisory Council (SDAC) as well as the Maritime Skills Alliance (MSA) and the Maritime UK People & Skills Forum. He is the Course Officer for the twice annual UK MOD/RN/UK Chamber of Shipping One Day Maritime Security Forum in London and one week RN Maritime Engagement Forums held in HMS COLLINGWOOD.

His hobbies include classic car restoration, model railways, walking and a need for a long lie down in a dark room with managing all of the above.

From your Captain…. Lt Cdr David Carter MNM

It was indeed a humbling pleasure to be asked and to be installed as the Cachalots Captain for the coming year at this year's Sea Pie Supper. An excellent evening in all respects for all I hope.

It is my very first duty and priority to thank Captain Noel Becket for his super year as Captain last year. Noel has taken the Southampton Master Mariners' Club in a rejuvenating direction where we are now driving to diversify our membership with particular attention to young up and coming mariners to join us. This as I am sure you will know is our need and also our pleasure seeing the next generation take forward our experience and shape their own futures as seamen in the broadest and most honourable respect of that word. Well done Noel…. A first class job done.

In this respect your new Captain shares Noel's direction very much. It will continue to be the direction I pursue for our club in the year ahead. We have made a notable start with new young members and first lessons learned give much promise. We will take this forward within the management committee but also our Social Mariners working group. The bi-monthly Shieldhall socials and supper have been an excellent start and we are supplementing these with Southampton Wardroom meet for a monthly drink Friday evenings with a very mixed maritime attendance. Joining forces with the Solent Branch of the Nautical Institute is another contributing dynamic. My intention this year is to further pool this dynamic to share a social agenda that will lead to growing appetite from fellow mariners to join the Cachalots. We are of course the most prestigious club of salts in the Solent region with our pedigree dating to 1928 in the days of square-rigged Masters…. "In Omnia Paratus"…. In all things prepared…. A true seaman's motto. We must continue to be so.

So much promise for more of the same. To achieve this we will welcome new ideas, self test our achievements to date, tweak for targeting moving forward. To quote a favourite saying of mine…. Stand the "So What" test. Your support as fellow Cachalots is very important for our growth. All ideas will be made very welcome. It is just super what we have. The challenge for us, and many other experience based groups, is to sustain it so we may continue to enjoy it for ourselves and for those that will follow.

We have also installed a new Stowaway this year. What a fitting stowaway Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE is. Those of you who heard my words of introduction at The Sea Pie Supper will know of the respect he has had in the Royal Navy as a true Seaman and of course rose to being in charge of all personnel as Second Sea Lord. Also as Head of the MCA he most certainly helped myself out in sticky moment in your of national need when action from the top was needed to unbung for the greater good. A thank you from us all Sir Alan for your service and a true recognition of this is to be installed as a Stowaway with the Cachalots.

May I take this opportunity to thank two venerable Cachalots who without them we would not be what we are. Every organisation has a backbone of stalwarts. There are of course many that we can thank and all contribute in a positive way. I think you may all wish to join me in particularly thanking both Robin and Terry for their huge contribution. For myself they are the go to Cachalots for the what's what. A very personal thank you both.

So much to take forward ahead. Onwards the Cachalots. More of the same will suit us all well as we welcome new members to enjoy and sustain the same camaraderie of shared experiences ahead. May 2024 and into 2025 be a happy year for us all.

For my Captain's charity for the year I have chosen the Maritime Volunteer Service.

New Members

Michael Hammond is a Master Mariner with a Harbour Masters Certificate and a BSc in Sustainable Maritime Operations. He is also a qualified (C0103-2) VTS Supervisor and is currently Assistant Harbour Master at the VTS at ABP Southampton.
His leisure interests include dingy sailing, yachting, powerboating and paddleboarding. He joins us to meet those with similar interests, for networking opportunities and to improve his knowledge through communication.

Richard Charles Lewis joined the MN in 1981 as a deck cadet with United Towing on the *Salvageman,* one of the top five largest salvage vessels operating worldwide. During his first year his vessel was seconded by the UK Government to operate during and after the Falkland Islands conflict. At 17 years of age he was the youngest officer in the MN to be awarded the South Atlantic Taskforce medal. After the conflict he was involved with the beaching and subsequent scuttling, in 1985, of the Argentine submarine *Santa Fe*. By the age of 21 he was Chief Officer of the *Salvageman* and over the next few years he was involved in several notable salvage jobs worldwide before leaving United Towing when it was taken over by the Australian Towage Co. He worked for a spell on North Sea supply vessels before coming ashore at the age of 24 with a Class II certificate. He joined Geest Line where over 30 years he attained the position of General Manager, overseeing vessels and ports in the UK, Europe and the Caribbean. He is now the Operations Director of Portico Shipping at Portsmouth, overseeing the day to day operations of the Company. He joins us to be part of a historic membership which will allow him the opportunity to encourage individuals into the maritime industry.

Russell Matthews is a Master Mariner working as a Pilot for ABP in Southampton. He is a Freeman of the HCMM and a sailing instructor and assessor for the Scout Association. Also a life time supporter and fundraiser for Young Lives vs Cancer.
He joins us to meet and socialise with like minded maritime professional and support the local maritime community and seafarers of the future.

Boatsteerer's Locker

And here we are again for 2024.

AGM

A 'hybrid' AGM was held on 11th January 2024 with an option for members to join us using a Zoom link. This had worked quite well the previous year and again several members (6) joined those of us who appeared in person in the Club room (17). *The minutes can be found under 'Records' in the members' only section of our website.*

Gone Aloft

Sadly, the following members were reported 'Gone Aloft' since our last AGM.

A.M. Northover (25/4/23),
Stephen Taylor RN (21/5/23),
K.T.V. Edwards (24/7/23),
Rev'd 'Bill' McCrea MNM (31/10/23),
B.E. Simpson (10/12/23),
I.W. Stirling (22/12/23)

Sea Pie Supper 2024

Another Sea Pie Supper has passed with positive feedback. Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE was our Guest Speaker and was invested as a Stowaway Member of the Cachalots. Three-hundred and sixty-four people turned up for the evening and it was attended by sixty-nine Cachalots, including fourteen Past Captains and seven Cachalot holders of the Merchant Navy Medal. *(Images on p. 5)* We lost two tables of ten in the closing weeks which was unfortunate as this would have been very close to the number we had in 2023.

Sadly, two Stowaways, Lady Mary Fagan and Lord Alan West were also unable to attend.

Well done to all those who were able to join us and to the pre-event Helpers, Meeter's and Greeter's.

Meeting's at RBL

Our meetings at the RBL Club room on a Friday have not generally been busy. The decision to close the Club room on a Thursday due to very limited numbers seems well placed and we now concentrate on a Friday opening of the bar from 1200 to about 1430.

Zoom gatherings

I am continuing where possible to maintain a Zoom gathering on a Thursday morning, opening from 1045. This has not been so easy across the festive period but I have restarted from Thursday 11th January. It has been good to see some new faces as well as the regular ones. For the most part I am free on a Thursday so not too onerous and happy to continue hosting this for members.

250 Club

Remember, you have to be in it to win it!!!

Functions

Julia Whorwood decided to step down as Functions Officer and as a Harpooner at the AGM and we thanked her for her work in planning for a number of functions throughout the year.

I am pleased to say that Harpooner, Mark Oakley has volunteered to take on the role and a helpful handover between Julia and Mark has been completed. I understand Mark will not be alone in his role.

Mark is your point of contact as Functions Officer, and he will be delighted to receive any suggestions and ideas for events and locations through the coming year. functions@cachalots.org.uk

A programme of events is posted on the noticeboard in the Club room and is available on the Cachalots website at Programme of Events 2024 – 2025 | The Cachalots

Shipping Festival Service 2024

I have started planning to celebrate the **Shipping Festival Service** at St. Michael's Church on Thursday 13th June 2024.

Civic dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, High Sheriff of Hampshire, the Lord Mayor and Sheriff of Southampton will be invited along with representatives from organisations associated with the port of Southampton.

The service will commence at 1900 and there will be a guard of honour with flags.

Port Chaplains

The names of the current Port Chaplains in serving the Port of Southampton

Fr. James Mosher – Mission to Seafarers
Frans Sahetapy – Sailor's Society
Gregory Hogan and Charles Stuart – Stella Maris.

Club Officers and Harpooners

The record of such has been updated following the AGM and is posted on the Club room noticeboard and is available on the Cachalot website as indicated.

Club Officers - Club Officers | The Cachalots
Harpooners - Harpooners | The Cachalots

I have written this on the afternoon prior to our departure to South Africa *(for a well deserved break - Ed.)* so I hope the remainder of February remains not too cold in Blighty for you.

And in closing, I have learnt today that my name has been put forward by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire to attend a King's Garden Party with my wife Karen, at Buckingham Palace in May, date to be confirmed. We had been listed in 2020 by the Honourable Company of Master Mariners but Covid intervened and such events were cancelled.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

Productivity afloat

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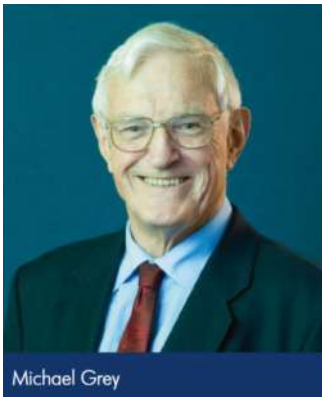
By *Michael Grey MBE*



There is endless angst about the inability of any British company or institution to improve its productivity from one year to the next, with a variety of reasons being given, from too many staff working from home, through a lack of investment, to gross idleness. When I read these agonised entreaties, my mind always flits to the complement of hard-working seafarers on modern merchant ships and the way that their numbers have been whittled away to the skeleton staff who rattle around today in big ships.

Half a century ago it would have taken some 50 to 100 officers and seamen to man a 10,000ton cargo liner on a deep-sea schedule to the furthest reaches of the Commonwealth. Today we have a crew of under 20 running ships ten times the size, that can be four or five times more productive than their break-bulk predecessors in terms of round voyages accomplished. You might suggest that this really is a cracking example of productivity improvement, driven by design, innovation, huge investment and for those 20 souls aboard their giant ships, a lot of hard work.

But the work aboard ship is, one could observe, quite unevenly spread, with the senior officers and mainly the masters driven mad by endless and quite pointless activity that distracts them from the main job of keeping their ships safe and on schedule. I always recall a conversation some years ago with an old shipmate, who a few years short of retirement had determined that rather than being on the receiving end of all the endless communications and reporting, and soul destroying pointless regulatory nonsense, he was going to become one of those dishing it all out. He had handed in his resignation and was going to become an auditor, who would be going aboard other people's ships and keeping them awake.

He was not without a conscience and, as a result of his decades in command, would be more kind and understanding than some of the box-tickers who had stamped up his gangway demanding instant attention. But he said, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em". I also recall another master who corresponded with me before his too-early death telling me of his increasingly miserable life as every last bit of support was stripped away from his role by penny-pinching managers ashore. The radio officer (who had been his confidant and secretary) disappeared, leaving him to supervise the ship's communication system. The electrician went, as did the cadets and junior engineers.

The crew were to become "Gee-Pees", working in both engineroom and on deck, with all threatening mutiny as the sailors hated the noise below and the greasers hated the cold. The last straw was the removal of the chief steward, which left him (the multi-tasking master) with the job of what he wrathfully described as the "menu engineer," sorting out what they were all going to eat on the voyage. And it wasn't quite the final straw, as the company had just told him that he would no longer have the facility (and company) of a North Sea pilot on an eight port European rotation. It is those old friends who I think about when I read about the lack of productivity and its consequences.

A few weeks ago in the Spectator magazine the advertising guru Rory Sutherland had some useful reflections about the past, when "people who did useful work were given people to work for them so they could do useful things more easily". There were PAs capable of making their bosses several multiples more productive, drivers, assistants – a whole cadre of people who were part of a productive machinery that really worked.

Now the few useful people are bowed under with demands from the box-tickers, the compliance staff, the HR gang, the administrators, the "pen pushers" says Sutherland "who demand that they must conform to a host of metrics and proxy targets so their contribution can fit into a cell in a spreadsheet." The output of productive staff, now a distinct minority, can only suffer, as the demands of these leeches are met.

You might say that this is a feature of modern life and we are not going to change things for the better, even as the technology which is supposed to make life easier, puts even more demands upon us.

But back to our maritime world and wouldn't it make a lot of sense if, instead of plotting to take even more people off the ships, the role of the few genuinely overworked people (chiefly the master) could be made easier, more fulfilling and infinitely more useful. Give them some sort of assistant, to (like old ROs, pursers and chief stewards did) keep the auditors, e-mail senders, box-tickers etc etc off the master's back. That could preface an increase in productivity which otherwise will remain elusive.

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The Sea Pie Supper 2024

This year's SPS was held at St Mary's Stadium again, on the evening of the 2nd February. The final total of attendees was 364, down from last year's 386, mainly due to two tables pulling out and to last minute sicknesses.

Unfortunately two of our Stowaways also had to withdraw due to personal circumstances, Lady Mary Fagan, who has been a stalwart supporter of the function for over 25 years, and Lord West. Cdre Voyce OBE, the Naval Base Commander at Portsmouth, was also a very busy man at that time but managed to send one of his Executive Officers in his stead.

There were 17 Club Captains, Past and present, attending, so the opportunity was taken to capture a group photo in the VIP lounge before the customary picture of the Top Table guests was taken.

Also a picture of some of those present who have ben awarded the Merchant Navy Medal

Our Distinguished Guests

Standing left to right:
Rev'd Reg Sweet RN, Mr Spiros Vassiliou (Consort to the Lord Mayor), Mr Matt Burrow (Warden HCMM), Cdr David Eagles (RFA), Capt Ian McNaught CVO MNM (Deputy Master Trinity House, Stowaway), Cdr Glen Higson (Exec Officer PNB)
Capt John Lloyd MNM FNI (CEO Nautical Institute), Cdr Les Chapman (Past Master HCMM), Prof. Anthony Hill CBE (Director NOC).

Seated left to right:
Mrs Muriel Potter, Ms Amelia Riviere JP DL (High Sheriff of Hampshire), Clr Valerie Laurent (Lord Mayor of Southampton) Mrs Christine Atkinson, Mr Nigel Atkinson (HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Stowaway), Capt Noel Becket, Mrs Debbie Becket, Capt-Elect David Carter MNM, Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE, Ms Ranji Goddard, Mrs Jacqueline Hill.

Captains all

Standing left to right:
David Carter MNM (Capt-Elect), Martin Phipps MBE (Post Capt) Rachel Dunn MNM (2019), Ian Odd (2014), Robin Plumley MBE (2017), Andrew Moll OBE (2020/21), Noel Becket (Club Capt), Nick Jeffery (Staff Capt-Elect)

Seated, left to right:
John Mileusnic (2009), George Angas (2006), Jeremy Smart (1998/2015), John Noble (1989/2013), Chris Phelan (1978, Senior Past Capt), Terry Hughes (1997), Terry Clark (2000), Leslie Morris (2008/2016), Peter Grant (2012).

Merchant Navy Medal holders

These six attendees were all awarded the MNM in the years shown, *from l to r:*
Nick Jeffery, (Staff Captain-Elect), 2016, **John Lloyd**, (CEO N.I., TT guest), 2023, **Rachel Dunn**, (Past Captain), 2019, **Mike Morley**, (Cachalot), 2018, Capt. **Ian McNaught CVO FNI**, (Stowaway), 2013, and Lt.Cdr **David Carter**, (Club Captain-Elect) 2018.

Also attending but not pictured here (apologies) were Capt. **John Hughes**, (Cachalot), 2017, Capt. **Roger Barker**, (Cachalot), 2016, and Capt. **Duncan Glass OBE**, 2010. The latter two were both seated at the Trinity House table.

Other known Cachalot holders of the MNM but who were not present are: our President, Capt. **Reg Kelso MBE,** 2017, and Capt. **Peter Roberts,** 2022.

Last year, on the very day of the Supper, the Master of Ceremonies, Richard Wilson OBE, was taken seriously ill and rushed to hospital. Sadly, he did not recover and died several weeks later. On the night, his place was taken by Boatsteerer Robin Plumley MBE, ably assisted by Cachalot Imogen Smart, using Richard's notes. This seemed to work rather well so, this year they repeated the exercise, wearing a red sash in lieu of the M/Cs red tunic to denote their authority in leading the proceedings.
After the Top Table guests were received by the assembly and the Rev'd Reg Sweet RN had delivered another splendid topical Grace the company tucked into the traditional 'Crew Soup, Sea Pie and Cachalots' Tart'.

Following the meal Captain Becket proposed The Loyal Toast and the Boatsteerer, Captain Robin Plumley MBE proposed the Toast to 'Absent Cachalots'.
There followed a break before Imogen donned the sash, took the helm and led the more formal part of the evening: the Installation of the New Captain.
Captain Noel Becket assured us how much he had enjoyed his year of office and handed the Club Collar to his successor, Lt Cdr David Carter.
Captain Carter presented his predecessor with his Past Captain's badge and then proposed the Toast to our Guests.

He then introduced the Principal Guest, Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE and his first pleasant duty as Captain was to install Sir Alan as a Stowaway Member of the Club, presenting him with the scroll, a silver whale and the Club tie.
In his well received Response, Sir Alan's main topic was the North Atlantic and how it influences almost every aspect of our lives: climate, weather, trade and even our security under the protection of NATO. *(See pages 8 &9 for a full transcript of his speech)*

After the second break it was time for the Prize Draw. The prize, once again generously donated by the **Southampton Shipowners Association,** was a state of the art, world class personal listening device, aka *Bose Wireless Earbuds,* (one for each ear).
The raffle envelopes which had been placed on each table had been collected and the place cards of all those who had contributed to the draw had been extracted, along with the monies contributed, and the cards placed in the raffle drum. **Amanda Travers,** one of the group on the Whitakers' table and a regular attendee, had been volunteered to draw the winning card and the winner was **Matthew Duncan,** also a regular attendee who was a guest on one of the Cachalots' tables.
This year, in recognition that a growing number of people do not carry cash with them, and following a short trial last year, a card-reader had been obtained but we would still prefer that people donate cash. The downside of the card-reader is mainly the time required to complete each transaction: think, visiting 35 tables and processing *n x 35* contributions. One would be hard pressed to do it during the fifteen minute comfort break. Also, the card-reader bears a 1.6% transaction charge, money that should ideally go to the designated charities, as intended.
Whatever, the cash donations came to £2735 and the reader raise a further £840, making a total of **£3575** which will be split equally between the three local branches of the Seafarers' charities: The Mission to Seafarers, the Stella Maris and the Sailors' Society.

Then on to the fun part of the evening; the traditional shanties led by the Ansome Cabin Bouys; and who cared if they sometimes mischievously deviated from the words as printed in the programme. It all added to the jollity of that part of the proceedings.

Finally, two rousing choruses of 'Land of Hope and Glory', followed by the National Anthem and the call, 'Who Goes Home', which signalled the end of another successful and hugely enjoyable Sea Pie Supper.

Let every man here drink up his full bumper,
Let every man here drink up his full bowl,
And let us be jolly, and drown melancholy,
Drink a health to each jovial and true-hearted soul.

An Admirable speech – Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE

Here is the transcript of our newest Stowaway's speech at the Sea Pie Supper, kindly provided by the Admiral himself, and which one of his fellow Top Table guests described as 'memorable'.

I'm lucky enough to have sailed in most of the seven seas of the world. Unfortunately I've been violently sick in all of them, but never let that get in the way of a generally happy story. Of all those waters, the one I know, love and respect the best is the Atlantic Ocean, along with its adjoining seas on this, its north-eastern flank. That's perhaps not surprising, because our beloved British islands are totally surrounded by the Atlantic. We dwell in it. We are kept warm (sort of…) by its currents, we are nourished by its fishy protein, and connected with the wider world by its vibrant trading routes. We have been largely protected - by the sheer wetness and deepness of the Atlantic - from the pillaging ambitions of foreign armies. And of course, we are eternally bedevilled by its angry weather systems, from Beelzebub to Zebedee. In short, the Atlantic dominates our environment, and our souls: perhaps even in ways we don't fully appreciate. This huge ocean occupies 17% of the earth's surface and is more than 5 miles deep in places. It measures over eight thousand miles from North to South, and three thousand miles across at its widest. 31 million square miles in total. It's a big piece of water.

For most of us, though, the Atlantic is just grey, cold and forbidding. It pounds our western coasts, throws storms repeatedly at us, and divides us most inconveniently from our cousins and friends on the other side of 'the Pond'. The Atlantic has also been the setting for a long and vivid succession of gritty competitions, battles, wars, and shocking tragedies that have no need for the embellishment of mere fiction. In counterpoint to the flowering of human civilisation that they helped to nurture, the Atlantic's waters have spawned shedloads of human misery: for example the baleful stories of the *Titanic*, the *Lusitania*, *Bismarck* and *Hood*, the Battle of the Atlantic and the Arctic convoys, the Russian submarine *Kursk*, the British yacht *Cheeki Rafiki* and – just eight months ago - the American *Titan* submersible: obliviated in one single, horrific instant.

But at the same time, the Atlantic has been the inspiration and the backdrop for huge leaps in discovery, invention, technology, trade, migration, urbanisation and wealth. It's not only today's Cornwall surfers and west coast windfarms that have benefitted from that ocean's mass and moody power. The gateway to a whole New World was opened by Christopher Columbus's 1492 westward transatlantic voyage, and his landfall in the Bahamas. Small point of pedantic detail here – he was actually aiming for China and India at the time. But this just proves that anyone can make the occasional navigational misjudgment. Indeed, by misreading simple navigational distances, I was once guilty of anchoring my frigate so close to a lovely Mediterranean island that it formally constituted a military invasion of the Hellenic Republic of Greece. Almost immediately after filing my daily position report with Fleet HQ came a flash signal by return: WTF? (which didn't need much decoding). Boy, did we get out of there fast…

The great Columbus was followed by wave after wave of explorers, treasure hunters, Pilgrim Fathers, entrepreneurs, migrant workers, chancers, wannabe film stars, the Beatles, and – yes – also oppressors, pirates, slave traders, colonialists, exploiters, … and even a few Great Train Robbers. It wouldn't be stretching it too far to describe the Atlantic as 'the inland sea of Western civilisation' – both its good bits, and its sometimes very horrible bits.

Much later, the Atlantic inspired great, inventive strides in ship construction and propulsion, marine science, communications, and aviation, where great records of transatlantic achievement were successively set, celebrated and duly surpassed. Ocean liners enjoyed their long heyday from the late 1800s to the 1950s, with ships eventually carrying some 2,000 passengers at sustained speeds of 40 mph, such that a whole voyage from New York to Liverpool took just 3 and a half days. Incidentally, a top tip here. Always sail from the UK to the USA, not the other way around. The time difference gives you a bonus extra hour's drinking a day.

But soon, following on from the incredible exploits of Alcock and Brown, Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart and others, aviation came to dominate the transatlantic travel market. Scheduled airliners – sometimes cheaper, and always faster – inevitably usurped the ocean liners, culminating in the super-speedy Concorde, which halved the flight time and gifted you an extra three hours… to wait for your baggage. The Atlantic also

gave Freddie Laker and Richard Branson their golden opportunity in the 70s and 80s to undercut the monopoly of expensive national airlines, paving the way for countless new budget airlines, with their low fares, and their extortionate prices for optional extras - like breathing.

At a rather slower pace, the Atlantic has even been swum across, by a handful of extremely plucky individuals. The first success was in 1998, in a crossing time of 73 days. That seems a very long time – two and a half months. But it's all relative. Apply for a British passport on the day you set off, and it might just about have arrived in time for your triumphant, now lawful emergence on some American beach.

Of course, at another level the Atlantic has also been a stern testing ground for the evolution of navies, weapons, and warfare: think of the Spanish Armada, the battles of Trafalgar, Jutland and the Falklands, and countless other ruthlessly violent maritime contests: Cowes Week, for example. My Royal Navy contemporaries and I were brought up very much as children of the Atlantic, especially in the very Cold War of the 1970s and 1980s, when the prospect of major seaborne conflict out there seemed all too real and present.

Despite all the time and energy spent elsewhere around the global oceans, both then and more recently, there was no doubt in our naval minds that the ultimate security of the UK, and Western Europe, would depend on our prevailing in the North Atlantic. We were expected always to know what was going on out there, to understand the intentions and the capabilities of our possible adversaries, and then be ready to take them on. It's no coincidence that NATO – founded in 1949 and the most successful military alliance anywhere, at any time - is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, locking the power and mass of the US firmly into our interests on the European side.

As British officers, we were expected to be both expert and deeply experienced in Atlantic operations. For the UK, that included a particular niche in anti-submarine skills, which traced its ancestry to techniques and tactics developed against marauding packs of U-boats in WW2. But we had, especially, to live up the onerous responsibilities placed on the UK through the NATO command roles of Commander-in-Chief Channel, Commander-in-Chief Eastern Atlantic, and Commander Anti-Submarine Warfare Striking Force. All of these were absolutely key maritime leadership positions in the Alliance. And all were zealously held, and jealously guarded, by successive Royal Navy admirals.

What's more, if it had to go nuclear early, or chemical, we were ready for that, too. It was generally presumed that the Atlantic might be the first, and maybe the least controversial, place for an exchange of tactical nuclear weapons, or 'buckets of sunshine' as they were frivolously known. For me, it was always a riveting experience, as duty officer, to climb down into the ship's deep weapons magazine to check and count, and sometimes surreptitiously hug, our stock of nuclear depth bombs. Wouldn't have done for one or two simply to have gone missing. And we firmly believed they might indeed need to be used.

When the Wall came down and the Soviet Union imploded in the nineties, the Atlantic Ocean all at once lost some of its dark drama and became instead an occcasional playground for collaborating with Russian and ex-Warsaw Pact navies, under the banner of 'Partnership for Peace'. In those optimistic, post-Cold War years, we were told we had now reached the 'end of history' and that we should welcome the triumphant ascent of benign liberal democracy across the globe. Fat chance. As we all now know, something ugly happened on the way to Utopia, and our respected Atlantic Ocean has, once again, become a setting for mistrust, enmity, and military skulduggery. In those halcyon years of booming Cold War defence budgets, we probably overestimated the opposition's strengths: maybe ever-so-slightly on purpose. From what I see today, the much greater risk would be in underestimating them.

So that's it. I'll admit to being utterly fascinated and beguiled by the Atlantic Ocean, and all the happenings and stories it has borne on its lumpy waters. I have always thought it a compliment for a person, a policy or a population to be described as 'Atlanticist': it describes for me what it means to be libertarian, free trading, inventive, diverse and outward-looking. And I'm proud to believe that our own British culture, outlook and sense of humour have all been fundamentally shaped by the hazards, challenges and opportunities thrown up over the centuries by that awesome, ever-changeable vastness around us. But swimming it? No thanks.

Thank you for listening.

Leap Year Drinks

Event by the Southampton Wardroom

Thursday, Feb 29, 2024, 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

The White Star Tavern, 28 Oxford Street, Southampton,

As we have an extra day this year we have decided to celebrate with some drinks!! Come and join us for a "Leap Year Drink" . We'll be there from around 7pm - See you there!

Royal Insitute of Navigation

The local branch of the RIN is also inviting Cachalots to their meetings, the next of which is at the Hornet Sailing Club, Gosport, on March 22nd. at 1800. The subject is "The Loss of The White Ship" an event which could have changed the course of British history.
If anyone wishes to attend, they should register at rin.org.uk/events. Both meetings are free to attend, and they would be very pleased to see them. ***Cachalite 251* refers.**

Southampton Wardroom / Cachalot event at HMS Collingwood

Our Captain has arranged an event in the Wardroom at HMS Collingwood on Thursday **14th March.**
Timings: 1700 Arrival - Presentation, 1800 Wardroom Bar open, 1900 Meal, (Chilli con Carne & rice, veg option)
Cost should be under £10, card payment on the night.

SHIELDHALL EVENT 4

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

St. GEORGE'S DAY SUPPER (Hot Pot)

Friday **April 26th** from 18.00, on board SS Shieldhall at 110 Berth Southampton SO15 0HH

Further details will be promulgated when known

The Cachalot

Members are reminded that this newsletter is produced in both a digital format, delivered to their email address and as a printed copy which can be collected from the clubroom or sent by post to those without email facilities or who just prefer to read a hard copy (and why not). The default is to send it online to all those who have supplied us with their email addresses but if you would like a printed copy please let us know and you will be added to the postal distribution list.
The two versions are usually identical, the email one is just the pdf copy of the printed one. Sometimes there may be an edit after the copy is sent to the printers and before the email copy is promulgated.
Each edition is also posted on our website in the members only section where you will find ALL the previous editions too.
Copies are also emailed to certain non members such as widows, contributors and similar maritime clubs and associations.

It has come to our attention that at least two recipients of the posted copies of the last edition were obliged to attend their respective sorting office and pay a surcharge to collect it because of "insufficient postage". All the distributed envelopes were identical and the same postage applied to each, as 'approved' by the local Post Office in Hythe. We are diligent in trying to comply with the postal guidelines but the Post Office and Royal Mail sorting offices are two different entities. If this problem occurs again, with this 20 page bumper edition, we would advise you to challenge your sorting office and advise us at our office. *Ed.*

Curry Lunches

EVEREST CUISINE

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)

The first Curry Lunch this year is booked there for

Saturday 16th March

1230 for 1300

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

Subsequent bookings are for

20th April
20th July
24th August
21st September
16th November

Nearest car park is Gloucester Square, off the High Street.
Book, and pay, through the office a.s.a.p.please.

250 Club

Nov	S J Lawrence	I Odd
Dec (£100)	K Dagnall	F N Pedersen
Jan	F N Pedersen	C N Phelan
Feb	M L Barnett	N S Becket

Club Supper

A Club supper is being arranged on

Wednesday 22nd May

downstairs at the RBL
Menu and price are as yet undetermined
but full details will be promulgated when known.

Max numbers will be 42.

The cut-off date for the next edition (#107) will be on

Friday 17th May '24

Officers of the Club and Committee Members for 2024

CAPTAIN	Lt Cdr David Carter MNM RNR
STAFF CAPTAIN	Captain Nick Jeffery MNM
BOATSTEERER	Captain R. Plumley MBE
STOREKEEPER	Captain I. Odd
POST CAPTAIN	Captain N. S. Becket
Hon. MEMBERSHIP OFFICE	Captain D. Gates
Hon. EDITOR	Captain T.E. Clark
Hon. FUNCTIONS OFFICER	Mark Oakley
Hon. BURSARY OFFICER	Captain J. Mileusnic
Hon. CHAPLAINS	Fr J. Mosher, Rev'd F. Sahetapy, G. Hogan, C. Stuart

HARPOONERS:

T.E. Clark, D. Gates, J.M. Noble, A. MOll, L.R. Morris, M.L. Oakley, M. Phipps, J. Shepherd

A trip on the Royalist

Bursary Officer Capt. John Mileusnic reports: The Southampton Master Mariner's Bursary is split equally between Southampton and Winchester Sea Cadets with the aim to encourage and assist young people to experience life onboard an offshore vessel. The Commanding Officer of Winchester Sea Cadets, S/Lt (SCC) J Chesman RNR, recommended cadet Jody Carroll and once the management committee approved he was awarded a bursary as part payment for an offshore voyage. He was originally booked on one of the offshore motor vessels but the voyage was cancelled and he transferred to the brig 'T S Royalist'. His report is below.

I was lucky enough to be awarded a bursary to go on an off shore voyage on TS Royalist from the 7-13th October 2023; it was an amazing experience that I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. I wanted to go on TS Royalist for a different experience as I have only ever been on power boats and other cadets recommended going on a sailing ship to gain more skills.

There were 24 cadets aged between 16-17 years old and I was the youngest at 13 years and there were 9 staff who were really knowledgeable and fun. The day started with an early morning alarm at 6.30 am followed by breakfast of either cereal or a pastry and then we were given our bracing station roles for the week, mine was the leechlines and assist halyard. The leechlines meant that I had to control the corner of the sail and the assist halyard was a group of 6 cadets including myself moving the yard up and down working as a team.

Most of the cadet roles were to do with the lines and steering however we learn't many other skills. We were also given daily mess men duties and these would include washing up and serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. When required part of all of our roles was to tie the sails up which involved us climbing up the masts which was great fun and we have a photograph of us all lined up along the yard which is 24 feet long.

It is my ambition to join the Navy when I am 16 years old and hopefully study naval engineering so I enjoyed going into the engine room on TS Royalist and learning about how the ships engine operates. We had off shore leave and went to into Gosport, Cowes, Poole and Weymouth where we had many people who were very interested in TS Royalist and were taking pictures of us. The sea was very turbulent on the voyage, waves were crashing over the decks, this was fun but sometimes scary.

I made some good friends over the week and the older cadets looked after and helped me if I was stuck and I enjoyed the teamwork and challenges, it really built my confidence. Going on this voyage taught me that I was capable of doing things that I didn't think I could, like climbing the ship masts which are 148 feet tall.

My most special day out was day 3 when we went from Cowes to Portsmouth and it was incredibly turbulent and the staff were deciding whether to proceed with the voyage due to the weather conditions. It was challenging for us all but exciting and we all worked hard.

I took away from the voyage many sailing skills, learning to be part of a team and good life skills, which hopefully will help me in my future Naval career if I am successful in my application. The ship met all of my expectations and I hope I will have the opportunity to go on TS Royalist again one day.

CFC Carroll (Jody)

Going Under – the third part

Having arrived in New Zealand on board P&O's ARCADIA, (see the first two parts in Cachalots 102 & 103) Cachalot Colin Crimp and Jill Fitzpatrick had to curtail their planned trip around New Zealand due to family circumstances but were able to resume later in the year.

Life had imposed an interruption of about 8 months in our travel plans but autumn came and suddenly it was no longer winter in New Zealand and therefore time to carry on where we'd left off. On the basis that the inevitable jet-lag would be a wasteful intrusion into our motorhome time in New Zealand, we had decided to start in Australia for 2 weeks of recuperation. And so it was that we arrived in **Perth**, Western Australia, on 19th October courtesy of Malaysia Airlines.

I'd never really given much thought to the actual meaning of a "Boutique Hotel", although the word itself suggests something small and a bit flashy. On arriving at The Tribe, our introduction to 'Boutique' was swift and brutal. Everything looked very nice on the surface. After all, every aspect had been designed by a proper designer – but perhaps one who was not accustomed to staying in hotels. The room was small, but adequate. The lighting was very complicated and seemed to have a mind of its own, indeed there was a switch by the bed labelled 'Mood Lighting' resulting in illumination that kept changing colour at random – very difficult to read by. The bulkheads of the toilet and the wet room (and boy, did it get wet) were made of glass with only the barest of obscurity – fine if you're a lone occupant but if not, well we all need just a little privacy now and then, don't we? And, worst of all, there were no mugs for the tea – just teensy-weensy little cups and saucers. All beautifully designed but not really *thought about*. Having said all that, it was comfortable and the staff and the food were excellent so let's leave it at that.

The walk from The Tribe down to Elizabeth Dock and its ferries and restaurants and bars passes through the huge Kings Park where the Jacaranda trees were showing their full blue and purple blossom and the massive roots of the Morton Bay Fig seemed to be creeping across the ground as if in a Grimm's Fairy Tale. A seemingly endless stairway, Jacob's Ladder, leads down 150 feet from the edge of King's Park to the shoreline. Here, the pedestrian traveller is in constant danger from collision with those hardy souls who choose to thunder up and down the stairway in the quest for perfect quads and glutes. This is clearly not a past-time for the feint-hearted, indeed, many of those we passed on their way up looked close to expiring.

Morton Bay Fig tree – King's Park, Perth

The 'Indian Pacific' preparing to leave Perth

Perth has a useful selection of free bus routes, an ideal way for jet-lagged and sleep-deprived wanderers to see the city. But the next stage of our Australian transit was calling and so it was that we stepped into a taxi at 07.30 and headed towards East Perth Rail Terminal. The driver was a nice chap, a Bosnian, but he did like to talk. Just when his monologue lagged a bit and we began to close our eyes, he would suddenly start up again, ". . . and I tell you nuzzer zing, . . .". Taxi drivers are the same the world over. After a rather splendid breakfast laid out for us on the platform, the 28 coaches of The Indian-Pacific trans-continental train eased gently out of **Perth** at 09.00 behind a single diesel locomotive and headed east through the Avon valley towards the red earth of the outback. We were looking forward to two days of free bar and 3 full meals a day in the fine-dining restaurant car, and at least we'd be able to get some sleep. Wouldn't we?

It took only the first 3-course lunch service to make us realise that we were going to struggle with eating all the available food and drinking all the available drink and that there was a danger that we might eventually arrive in **Adelaide** and be unable to squeeze out through the door.

During the afternoon, the red earth became patched with great salt flats where trees had been felled for planting grain. Where the trees had previously been able to evaporate off the sub-surface water, this water now just seeped up to the surface bringing with it all the salt. Nothing will grow there now. Most of the railway is single-track with passing loops and during the afternoon we made several stops to allow freight trains to pass. We had hardly had time to digest lunch when it was time to embark upon our 3-course dinner. During the evening, just as it was getting dark, the train pulled into **Kalgoorlie-Boulder**. In 1893, gold was discovered here and it has been a gold and nickel mining town ever since. Still heavy from our dinner, we boarded a coach for a tour of the town in the dark (now, that was a first) and a visit to the town's mining museum, followed by a viewing of the Kalgoorlie SuperPit (a massive opencast gold mine over 2 miles long, a mile wide and 2000 ft deep, operating 24 hours a day, every day). A spectacular sight at night. Surely we'd sleep after all that.

We had two very comfortable bunks in our cabin (deployed by the steward while we were eating dinner) and a very neat shower and toilet. You would have to be a contortionist to use the shower, though, so we didn't. Yes, the coaches of the Indian-Pacific are very neat, but they're not new. Even at our relatively sedate speed across the start of the Nullarbor Plain, the shakes and rattles, bumps, clonks and screeches were not good for encouraging slumber.

Kalgoorlie Superpit at night

Cook – in the middle of nowhere

After a very fine breakfast, the Nullarbor (meaning No Trees) Plain was still there, 800 miles of flat and very red soil with nothing growing but salt bush. Sometimes these were uprooted and bowled along in the constant strong wind. As the view didn't change much, some might have considered it boring, but there were wedge-tailed eagles, free-roaming cattle (looking a bit thin, it has to be said) and feral camels. I found it fascinating to watch. Camels were introduced in 1840 because they were so well suited to the desert and there are now over a million of them. After another 3-course lunch the train stopped in the ghost town of **Cook**. It was established in 1917 to support the railway with supplies, fuel and relief drivers and at one time had been a whole community complete with school and hospital. The population is now only 4 and many of the buildings have gone. While the crew was changing over and fuel was being taken on, we had half an hour to stretch our legs in this extraordinary place, where the temperature was 35 Degrees C and the wind was blowing up so much salt bush and dust that we had to wear facemasks. All too soon the whistle blew and we had to leave – after all, it would soon be time for dinner.

At every meal, 3 times a day, we sat at a table of 4 with a different couple of people, usually Australian, which made for some interesting conversation. The bar was in a separate coach next to the restaurant (it was a long thin bar) and this was also a very jolly place in which to spend some time. Unfortunately, we had to pass through it in order to get back to our cabin and so usually stayed a while. But despite this, sleep was not easy. Shake, rattle, bump, clonk, screech.

Some while before embarking on this antipodean odyssey, we were aware that Terry, our esteemed editor, and Meryl were taking a similar train journey across Australia, north to south, from **Darwin** to **Adelaide**. A few days

before our arrival in **Adelaide**, we found out that, not only were they going to arrive on exactly the same day as us but, incredibly, they were staying in the same hotel, Hotel Richmond. Nothing 'boutique' about this place, it was wonderfully 1930s and located bang in the middle of **Adelaide**.

This lovely city was established in 1836 with a central 'square mile' surrounded on all sides by parks and green spaces and this remains today, with all subsequent development having taken place outside the ring of green. There's nothing like a bus-ride to help the sleep-deprived traveller to catch up on a bit of shut-eye and so we took advantage of the Circle Bus Tour right round the outside of the city, partly because it was a good way to see where things were and partly because it was free. Having subsequently met up with Terry and Meryl, there followed a good dinner and a glass or two of wine, a pattern that was then to be repeated on several occasions.

There's a lot of culture in South Australia and a lot of history, too. In the following days we took in the Botanic Gardens (with, among much else, a rain forest, a rose garden and the only remaining Museum of Economic Botany in the world), the Art Gallery of South Australia, the South Australian Museum and The State Library of South Australia (with its beautiful 1884 Mortlock Wing, 3 tiers of cast iron galleries under a glass dome roof) and wine-tasting in the Barossa Valley. As if all that wasn't enough culture for one week, that evening in the bar of The Richmond, Terry gave us our first insight into his traumatic adventure in Changi Airport (see the last edition of 'The Cachalot') which we will refer to here as 'The Sorry Tale of the Bidet and the Breeches'. I'm not sure that Hotel Richmond was quite ready for the sight of four of its elderly guests dissolved into total hysterics.

Having seen not one single kangaroo since arriving in Australia, it was essential to take the bus out of **Adelaide** up to Lofty Mountain and the Cleland Wildlife Reserve. Here we found kangaroos a-plenty, along with wallabies, koalas, wombats and dingoes, all roaming fairly free in huge enclosures. Walking through one of these enclosures, Jill had the excitement of a kangaroo (complete with a little Joey looking out of its pouch) hopping over to take some food from her hand.

Wine-growing in the Barossa Valley

Feeding Mum and Joey at Cleland Reserve

But it was time to move on – the 0630 flight to **Queenstown**, New Zealand, beckoned. Except that, having got up at 0300 to get to the airport, we then discovered that, right next to the details of our flight on the information screen, was the word 'cancelled' in red. Not the best surprise at 0430 am. We eventually arrived a day late and what an approach, flying along a valley with snow-capped mountains all around. Of course! **Queenstown** is the adrenalin capital of New Zealand, the place to go to if you're into extreme jet-skiing, leaping off mountains and, of course, bungee-jumping. The Kawarau Gorge Suspension bridge was built there in 1880, largely constructed of timber and spanning 120m. Originally built to service the search for gold it was already over 100 years old when the world's first commercial bungee operation started there in 1987. It is still used for that today. Exhausted from just looking at all this adrenalin-inducing equipment, we checked into our hotel for the night. What's this? A glass bathroom, weird lighting and absolutely nowhere to hang the towel? It's another Boutique Hotel !!!

Captain Ken

Here is another contribution from Ken Owen that appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" of January 2024.
Ken lives in the Derbyshire Peak District and has been writing about some of his sea going experiences for the Magazine, so his stories are not particularly aimed at maritime folk.
"Outlook" is an excellent Parish magazine and it can be read online at https://mellorchurch.org/outlook-magazine/

One of the New Year's largest gatherings of those connected with sea faring must surely be the Southampton Master Mariners' Club annual Sea Pie Supper.

It has been held annually for many years, previously at the Southampton Guilhall and more recently at St Mary's Football Club headquarters. It is a black tie occasion and comprises several hundred Club members and their enthusiastic guests, and provides the most delicious sea pie you could imagine.

After the meal, speeches and toasts there is always the singing of Sea Shanties, led by a professional guitar playing shanty man. Although first impression was that it was a little odd to see so many smartly dressed people to be singing pure work songs but gradually realised what fun it was.

This has always amused me, as seventy years ago the Outward Bound Sea School at Aberdovey employed Stan Hugil, who was recognised as the very last Shanty man in the Royal Navy. The Club's favourite shanty used to be 'Spanish Ladies'. Some of you may remember that it was part of the sound track in the film 'Jaws', However, some knowledgeable members insisted it was a Sea Song, rather than a Sea Shanty (the shanty being a pure working song, like chant) for hauling on ropes and heaving round a capstan.

On one Sea Pie Supper it was excluded, but such was the disappointment among the singers that it has always been included ever since.

The song goes:-

'Farewell and adieu to you fair Spanish Ladies,
Farewell and adieu, you Ladies of Spain,
We've just received orders for to sail for old England,
We'll bid you goodbye till we see you again'

But from then on the chorus and song become quite descriptive:-

We'll rant and we'll roar, like true British sailors,
We'll rant and we'll roar. Across the salt sea
Until we strike soundings in the Channel of old England,
From Ushant to Scilly is thirty five leagues.

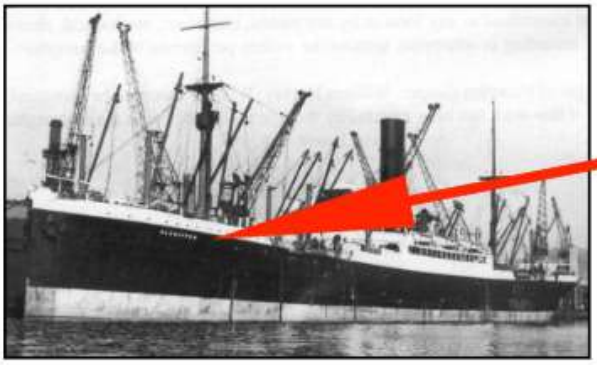
Stan Hugil

From then on, the song becomes quite descriptive of the ship's voyage; along the south coast of England, naming the various headlands up to the South Foreland Light, which of course is now illegal for ships due to the compulsory routing.

We now proceed north, close to the French coast, and come back close to the English coast. What's more, on some occasions when I was enjoying the song, I realised that some of the Government Officials from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and who were responsible for enforcing the routing were amongst us, and although they were obviously joining in, it might be wise not to sing too loudly especially as, at the time, I was proud to be the Club's Sea Staff Captain!

Although I have never observed sea shanties being used to assist work, I recollect being completely impressed, when I was a Blue Funnel Midshipman, observing the 'Gleniffer', a coal burning steam ship, taking on bunkers in Aden. I was on a new motor ship where we simply took our oil bunkers through an attached oil pipe, but the 'Gleniffer' was loading coal carried up a gangway by dozens of native labourers each carrying a sack of coal, but all chanting together.

They were all engulfed in a huge cloud of coal dust and the ship was black with it, but the sound of the chanting was completely overwhelming and never to be forgotten.



Very difficult to find this ship but this might be it !!

Little speed, little bumps

Ship handling, stopping distances and sharing information

By Cachalot, Captain Bill Hargreaves FNI

This article appeared in the February 2024 edition of Seaways

It wasn't a dark and stormy night. It was a little after lunch, and the 280-metre tanker was being held alongside with the aid of four tugs. The terminal was situated on the inside of the outer breakwater and the northerly gale was not only pushing the vessel off the berth but was whipping the spray and occasional green water over the breakwater and against the ship's side. I'd been onboard for two days and the off-signing Master had already left for a well-earned leave. This was my first 'big' command. My first few trips as Master had been on much smaller vessels and I'd been lucky enough to have traded in the Caribbean; lots of opportunities for ship handling and Mediterranean moors in the Windward and Leeward Islands.

But back to a particularly dirty afternoon in a European port. From the bridge of my vessel, I could look out over the breakwater at a very confused and mountainous sea. When the pilot reached the bridge, I pointed out the dangerous conditions to him.

'Pilot, are you staying with us to the next port?'

'No, Captain, I get off here.'

'Pilot, you don't understand. Look at the sea state.'

'Captain, you don't understand. I get off here.'

He did give me the option of anchoring inside the breakwater, an offer I declined. I didn't consider it prudent to anchor a large tanker in ballast in a relatively confined harbour in such conditions. (At the time, I was unaware of Classification Society rules that state an anchor is for light and moderate conditions only.) Following our discussion of whether to anchor inside the harbour or not, the pilot left the bridge. The ship was still alongside and he communicated with the tugs and myself from the pilot boat. The manoeuvre from the berth to sea was relatively straightforward. Let the wind blow the vessel off the berth, make a 90˚ turn to port and then head between the breakwaters and out to sea. But, even now, over 30 years later, I can still remember my heart pounding, and then the sense of relief as we passed safely between the breakwaters.

Is 'probably' enough?

I was reminded of this moment a number of years later when, as a pilot, I attended a meeting with other members of the Harbour Master's department. One of the senior members of the team speculated on the need for pilots. 'Surely the Captain knows his ship.' (A sentiment oft repeated, and which I read quite recently on social media.) The approach to the tanker terminal in the port in which I was a pilot is particularly challenging, requiring two large alterations of course in a relatively narrow approach channel. My reply was that when I was Master, I could probably have manoeuvred my vessel safely to the terminal (especially once I'd had a few months experience on board). But, I argued, was the word 'probably' in accordance with the principle of 'as low as reasonably practicable' (ALARP) – and was 'probably' good enough for the risk assessment required by the Port Marine Safety Code? Undoubtedly, there are certain types of vessels where, due to both training and experience, Masters do know their vessels and are adept at ship handling. Coasters and cruise ships spring to mind. But, in my experience, this is not generally the case for most vessels. And I have witnessed and analysed ship handling from what I consider a number of different angles: as a Master, as a pilot, as a ship handling instructor, and as an expert witness.

As a Master, my training was limited to the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Before becoming Master, I had had no formal practical ship handling training. I'd made an approach to an anchorage a couple of times.

In the UK, MIN 653 details the 'Deck Oral Exam Syllabus'. The syllabus for OOW level includes 'manoeuvre the ship', and for Mates and Masters 'manoeuvre and handling a ship in all conditions'. In the past, this topic has been assessed using wooden models on a tabletop. Indeed, I have taught it this way using my own hand-carved models! With the shift to online examinations, the subject can now only be assessed verbally. I am aware of some nautical colleges using simulators, or on occasion manned models, to give students some ship handling experience. But, in the main, ship handling theory and practice is taught and examined in an abstract manner. It is perfectly possible for a holder of a Master's certificate of competency to have, as I did, only theoretical ship handling experience on taking his or her first command.

Gaining practical experience

While both individual ports and nations impose their own training requirements for authorised or licensed pilots, the training programmes are remarkably similar. The trainee pilot must complete a number of acts of pilotage under the supervision of authorised pilots. Once the trainee has reached the required standard, usually after satisfactorily completing a number of assessment trips, pilots are examined on their knowledge. If successful, they are licensed or authorised. It is usual that their authorisation will initially limit them to a certain size of vessel. As their experience increases, they will be required to pass further examinations and assessments as they progress to being authorised for the largest vessels to use their own port. By the time they have completed all their training, they will have had the opportunity to handle vessels of all types and sizes. Of particular importance, they will (or should) have developed an understanding of where to position a vessel and at what speed when making a turn or approaching a berth.

For a number of years, I have been an Associate Lecturer at Solent University's Ship Handling Centre. The vast majority of students attending the courses are pilots. Some of the pilots may have attended multiple ship handling courses. (It is a requirement of some legislatures that their pilots attend such a course at regular intervals, typically every five years.) There are also some ship's Masters or prospective Masters who have been sent on the course by what I consider enlightened shipping companies. As might be expected, many of the Masters and chief officers attending the course have a lot less ship handling experience than the pilots. While, at the beginning of the course the Masters and mates may only have rudimentary ship handling skills, by the end of the week nearly all of them have started to develop into intuitive ship handlers. It is particularly satisfying to witness them completing more and more challenging manoeuvres as the week progresses.

Collisions and speed

More recently I have provided opinion to legal firms and P&I clubs in the form of expert advice. I have had the opportunity to analyse many collisions or allisions between vessels and jetties. The more spectacular the collision, usually the greater the damage and consequently the greater the claim – and the greater the incentive to establish causation. As such, the cases I have examined may be considered a self-selecting group, the smaller bumps not being worth detailed analysis. I expect it will come as no surprise that the root cause of most of these accidents has been an inappropriate speed of approach. And in most cases the inappropriate speed has been inappropriately fast!

There are many examples of such collisions/allisions in the public domain. The UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) concluded that *'CMA CGM Centaurus was going too fast for the intended manoeuvre…The ship's bridge team were uncertain of the maximum speed required to complete the turn safely'*. (Page 3, Report No. 17/2018. Published October 2018). The United States' National Transportation Safety Board concluded that the probable cause of *Carnival Pride's* allision with the pier in Baltimore was due to *'approaching the pier with excessive speed and at too steep of an angle'*. (Page 6, NTSB/MAB-17/06).

Incorrect or inappropriate speed of approach does not just occur when a vessel is in close proximity to a berth. The seeds of a vessel's doom may have been sown much earlier. For example, in 2009, a tanker collided with two other tankers which were berthed at the Fawley Oil Terminal in Southampton Water. The pilot *'realised that the ship's speed was 10.5 knots, contrary to his plan, which called for the vessel to be proceeding at 4-5 knots at this point'*. (Page 14, MAIB Report No. 23/2009). At this point in its passage the vessel was still approximately two miles from its berth. Although the pilot tried to slow the vessel down, he was not able to do so in a controlled manner and the ship sheered towards the berthed tankers.

The Nautical Institute quite rightly espouses the highest standards in world shipping. The pages of Seaways are full of examples of best shipping practice. At the recent Council Meeting, I was part of a breakout group that considered actual standards in world shipping, specifically in the wheelhouse. Among the topics discussed were leadership, peer review, bridge resource management and 'missionbased roles' and training. All excellent principles and techniques and wholeheartedly adopted by many shipping companies. But how do principles of leadership apply in the context of the minimally manned bulker where the Master uses the opportunity of having the pilot on board to catch up on emails, or has to take an important phone call from his charterers? Or mission-based roles on a bridge where there is only the Master and one officer, who are agency staff and have little or no empathy with the ship operator they are working for, and whose training is limited to basic STCW requirements?

In this less than perfect world, what can be done to reduce collisions with jetties and thus the number of claims made against the P&I Clubs? Of course, there should always be a proper master-pilot exchange (MPX), whatever the ship. But Masters do not always have the skill set to properly monitor the pilot's

performance. The ship must always have a completed passage plan, from berth to berth. But the navigator drawing the passage plan on chart or ECDIS has probably got only minimal ship handling experience, and in any event, the passage plan rarely, if ever, details the speed of approach to a berth. Of course, during the MPX, the pilot's passage plan is, or should be, discussed with the bridge team but its incorporation into the ship's own passage plan is another ongoing argument for another day.

Speed of approach

As a very junior trainee pilot, I was asked by the very experienced, very senior, supervising pilot whether an imaginary man on the jetty would be running or walking to keep up with the ship. Hedging my bets, I said he'd be jogging. 'Too fast' was the response. He added that a vessel should always be at less than walking pace as it approaches a berth, ie less than three knots. Little speed means little bumps. Or, to put it another way: there are old pilots and bold pilots, but there are no old bold pilots.

In my experience, as a general rule of thumb, a vessel should be travelling at three knots and be continuing to slow down when at least two ship's lengths from its berth. The person in charge of the manoeuvre of the vessel, whether that is the pilot or one of the ship's staff, should be constantly aware of or made aware of the vessel's speed and course over the ground. Predictors, on either the radar or ECDIS, although not necessarily perfect, are a really useful tool for gaining an appreciation of the future movement of a vessel.

In a perfect world, the senior officers on the bridge of a vessel should have practical ship handling training, but training costs money. Of course Masters must challenge pilots if they are not sure about how their vessels are being conned, and of course it is incumbent on pilots to explain to captains what their intentions are. But, if the Master's ship handling skills are rudimentary then, I suggest one factor in the handling of his or her ship that can be closely monitored is the speed and course over the ground.

Pilot cards and manoeuvring information

In 1987, IMO Resolution A.601 (15) recommended the provision and display of manoeuvring information on board ships. The information was to be displayed in the form of a pilot card, wheelhouse poster and manoeuvring booklet. The pilot card is presented to the pilot during the Master/pilot exchange, and – unless it is dark – I will usually see the wheelhouse poster. The wheelhouse poster, if in accordance with IMO recommendations, should contain information which I consider essential to a Master's understanding of how to berth a vessel safely. IMO recommends that the wheelhouse poster shows the stopping characteristics of the vessel at various engine settings in deep water. (This information is also included in the manoeuvring booklet.)

In my experience, estimated stopping distances as recommended by IMO are not always included in the wheelhouse poster. While this data should only be used as a guide, knowing the stopping distance at different speeds should and must alert the bridge team to when a vessel is approaching a berth with excessive speed. Of course, these distances may be increased when a vessel is in shallow water, which it probably will be when approaching a berth. The distances may be fore-shortened if a vessel is being slowed down with the assistance of tugs. The stopping distance should allow an assessment of the appropriate speed for each stage of the passage, which should be incorporated into the passage plan. The appropriate speeds can be used to challenge whoever has the con about their speed of approach. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation for the vessel's speed at that point of the passage, but the essence of safely completing a passage plan is that all members of the bridge team are involved in the execution and monitoring of that plan. Of course, most of this is good practice. But, in my experience, it is not common practice and the importance of an appropriate speed of approach must be emphasised.

In conclusion, while it would be undoubtedly beneficial if those involved in berthing and unberthing vessels all had formalised ship handling training, I suggest that efforts should be made by organisations such as the NI and P&I clubs to promulgate the importance of speed of approach. Attention should be drawn to the stopping distances of a vessel, which should be detailed on the wheelhouse poster or in the manoeuvring booklet. Stopping distances should be included in the passage plan so that the speed of approach can be safely monitored by all members of the bridge team.

Bill Hargreaves

Gone Aloft

Brian Edward Simpson was a retired Ships Agent who went aloft on 10th December, aged 84, having spent some time in a care home.
Brian was well known around the port, having worked for Union Castle, OCL, P&O Containers and P&O Nedlloyd Ltd.
He was a Member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers and joined the Club in 2002 on his retirement from P&O Nedlloyd.
His wife, Anne, predeceased him.

Gone Aloft

Past Captain (2002) **Ian William Stirling** was called aloft on 22nd December, aged 89.

He was born in Bristol of a Scottish family in 1934 and received his (wartime) education at various schools in Gloustershire, Scotland and Bristol. He attended the School of Navigation at Warsash as a cadet in 1951 and served a cadetship with Clan Line until 1955. He subsequently sailed with United Baltic, NZS and Safmarine, gaining his Masters certificate in 1961.

He was RNR from 1956-1984, his involvement there encompassing Sub's courses, Dartmouth Training Squadron, Submarines, HMS Bulwark and NCS.

His first job 'ashore' was as a Junior Hydrographic Surveyor with the Port of Bristol in 1968. He became a self employed Trinity House IoW Pilot in 1970 and a Trinity House Deep Sea Pilot in 1980.

During 1981-82 he worked for 6 months as Master for Gardline Surveys. He continued his Pilotage career in Southampton, through the transition to ABP in 1988, until 1995, and Deep Sea Pilotage until 2000.

He was a self employed marine consultant and expert witness from 1982 and occasional honorary Master of the s.s.Shieldhall.

Captain Ian Stirling FNI RD

Ian was a Fellow of the Nautical Institute and member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport, of the Institute of Petroleum, of the Institute of Management and of the Academy of Experts.

Ian joined the Club in 1994 and was Captain in 2002 and he and his wife Mavis, who pre-deceased him in July 2022, were regulars in the Club room and at Club functions.

Our condolences go to their daughters Claire and Caroline.

The World Ship Society WORLD SHIPS SOCIETY DORSET BRANCH

Zoom Meeting

2.30pm, Saturday March 9th 2024

An overview of the Haven Ports
~ with Derek Sands ~
With Derek as our guide we explore the Haven Ports of Felixstowe, Ipswich, Harwich and Mistley on the Orwell / Stour Estuary in Suffolk … along with maps of the locations, Derek's images will depict some of the facilities, the shipping using them and cargoes handled.

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

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

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

The CACHALOTS

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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.