

# The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 109

December 2024

## Boatsteerer's Locker

**Meeting's at RBL** – our meetings at the RBL Club room on a Friday continue to attract the usual suspects with some additional faces now and again.

**Cachalots Bar** – our bar lady Karen, continues looking after the bar upstairs.

The last opening of the Club room at the RBL before Christmas will be Friday 20th December. At the time of writing, we will re-open 3rd January 2025 but that may be subject to change.

**Zoom gatherings** – Generally available on a Wednesday from 1030. I will contact the usual attendees to confirm at the beginning of each week. Please contact me if you wish to join us and I will send the log in details.

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

**Subscriptions** – at a previous meeting of the management committee this year and following a review and report about the financial health of the Club from subscriptions, it was agreed to raise each subscription element by £5. This was highlighted in the previous edition of the Cachalot. The last increase was in 2013. Please see the additional sheet included in the paper copy of the Cachalot or the attachment issued with the electronic copy of this Cachalot.

**Please remember to amend your Standing Order accordingly in good time ahead of the renewal date.**

**Functions** - Mark Oakley 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](#) and also for 2025-2026, copy enclosed/attached with this newsletter.

**Curry lunches** - have been held at Everest Cuisine through the year with our last one on 16th November with twenty-seven members and guests attending. The newly installed chairlift fitted to the stairway has been a great advantage.

**Christmas Lunch – RBL - Wednesday 11th December**

We have been liaising with Chef Sam to provide our Christmas Lunch once again. A Cachalite was issued in late October to remind members. There is a maximum number of 42 due to restrictions on space.

**Southampton Docks Carol Service** – Thursday 12th December 1900 – Ocean Terminal

**New Years Day Service** - 2nd January 0930 - St Michaels Church.

**Burn's Supper** – Wednesday 22nd January 2025

Plans are in place to hold a Burns Supper at the RBL. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend as giving a talk about the Antarctic at Solent University on that same evening but please still email boatsteerer or office emails if you wish to attend.

**Sea Pie Supper** – Friday 7th February 2025

Tickets have been selling fast and I am pleased to say, with assistance from our Staff Captain Nick, our guest speaker will be Captain Tom Woolley, Hon. President of the British Tugowners Association.

**Shipping Festival Service** – Thursday 12th June 2025

I was contacted by the Churchwarden of St. Michael's Church to confirm a date as they have another interest to use the church in June, hence the early note of the date. I am trying to contact the Chaplain at the Winchester Diocese with a view to request if the 'new' Bishop of Southampton can join us. Details to follow.

**Management Committee Meeting** – will be held in the Club room of the RBL on Thursday 12th December. In accordance with Rule 7, among items for discussion and action will be the appointment of the Boatsteerer and Storekeeper. However, as highlighted in previous editions of the Cachalot, Ian Odd as Storekeeper will be standing down. Hence, we are looking for a volunteer to replace Ian. Please contact the Boatsteerer if you would like to get involved.

If you are one of our 'younger' Cachalots, you may wish to consider, and we would really like to encourage you, to become involved in the management of the Cachalots. Initially, this can be arranged on a mentor basis, but we really wish to encourage our younger members to take a more active role in the Club. If you have an interest in taking this forward, please contact the Boatsteerer in the first instance.

**Meeting of Past Captain's** – the annual meeting of the past Captain's has been arranged in the Club room of the RBL on Saturday 4th January 2025 at 1200.

**Annual General Meeting** – the AGM, in accordance with Rule 11, will be held in the downstairs room of the RBL on Thursday 9th January at 1900. This will take the form of an in-person meeting, and I will also provide a link by Zoom. Please advise if you would prefer to attend by this method.

Items for consideration at AGM:

For note - Club Officer - Post Captain Noel Becket, is due to stand-down from the committee and will be replaced by David Carter as Post Captain. Noel is eligible to stand as a Harpooner.

For note – Harpooners – Captain John Noble and Captain Andrew Moll OBE, are due to retire from the committee but are eligible to stand again.

Harpooner Captain Douglas Gates, Hon. Membership Secretary has indicated his intention to stand down with effect this AGM.

- All other Harpooners are not due for re-election until January 2026.

- Four Trustee's remain in post.

If you have any business you would like to be raised at the AGM, please pass these to the Boatsteerer who will ensure their inclusion in the agenda.

Please note that any decisions requiring a vote will only be available to those who have completed their subscription payment for 2025.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Captain and Officers to all our fellow Cachalots and guest readers .

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

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



# From the editor

## Internet woes

The problems outlined in the previous edition have been resolved to a certain extent in that the officers' '@cachalots.org.uk' addresses have been restored and messages are being properly diverted to their home addresses. However, all of the messages which should have been received between the 23rd August and 25th September seem to have been irretrievably lost, which astounds me. My understanding of such things is that nothing is ever completely lost on the internet, it is just sat on some server somewhere. When I switch my email system on I get the message, "unable to connect to server at cachalots.org.uk" so something is still not right. If the Service Provider is unable to provide that service and retrieve the lost messages then my vote will be to change to one who can. If you tried to contact us between the dates above and have not received a response, please try again.

## Who, why or what, is a Cachalot?

With this edition you should have received, as inserts or attachments, a programme of events for 2025, a message from Past Captain Andrew Moll and your membership renewal form. You will have noted that subscriptions have increased, as explained elsewhere in this newsletter and you may be asking yourself just why you should be a Cachalot. The who and what are covered on our website, under Membership and the Club Rules, but the why is a more personal choice. For the benefit of newer members, and some of the older ones, may I offer the following.

When the Club was formed in 1928 it was a social talking shop for qualified Master Mariners and as it grew in popularity those working in the local maritime world but without such qualification were permitted to join as 'Messmates'. They were not allowed to vote or serve on committees and had their own club tie. However, it was acknowledged that during WW2 they kept the Club afloat in the absence of the MMs who were elsewhere engaged. Soon the restrictions were relaxed and towards the end of the century, when Messmates outnumbered the MMs the distinction was done away with altogether and all Members are now designated as Cachalots.

Another section of membership is that of the exclusive "Stowaways", a title sparingly conferred on 'Persons whose national status or service to the Country is, in the opinion of the Management Committee, such as to render it desirable that they should be made honorary members'. During the Club's 96 year history, just 32 such people have become Stowaways, including HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Currently there are 10 Stowaway members, including HRH The Princess Royal and Lady Mary Fagan LG DCVO.

The Club is a Private Members' Club and until recently membership was restricted to those who had been properly proposed and seconded by existing members and applications were rigorously vetted by a Membership Committee. Nowadays applications are scrutinised by all members of the Management Committee for approval. The Club has no constitution as such, just a set of Rules which are amended occasionally. The current iteration dates from 2013 with a minor amendment in 2015. In the 'new' Rules, Rule 1 states that the name shall be "The CACHALOTS", also known as "THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB", whereas it was originally the other way round. This acknowledges the inclusivity of the Club and tries to dispel the connotations of an inhibiting old boys club.

The Club is non-political and totally independent. We are not rich and have no liabilities other than our running costs. We are not a registered charity, receive no sponsorship and are beholden to none. Our main income is not from the subscriptions but from the sale of tickets to the Annual Sea Pie Supper, the largest black-tie function in Hampshire, if not the south. The main purpose of that event is the public change of command as the outgoing Captain hands over the Club Collar to the incoming one. We usually have a good speaker from the maritime world and over the past 10 suppers we have also held a Grand Draw for a prize generously donated by the Southampton Shipowners' Association. To date this draw has raised £41,202.77 (plus a few odd dollars, euros, kroner and dirhams) for the three local Seafarers' charities. Another, smaller, black-tie do that we organise is the Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar Dinner where a similar Prize Draw has so far raised £8,090 for the Southampton Sea Cadets. We also run a bursary scheme which currently helps Sea Cadets enjoy an off-shore experience.

The Club is managed by the Management Committee, consisting of the five Officers of the Club, (that's the two semi-permanent officers, the Boatsteerer and the Storekeeper, who are appointed by the M/C on a two year term but usually serve for longer, and the three Captains who serve through a three year period as Staff Captain - Captain - Post Captain) together with at least six Harpooners who are elected at an AGM and serve for two years before being eligible for re-election.

Ideally, the experience gained on committee would prepare members for the succession to more senior positions but this can be hampered somewhat if those Harpooners are themselves Past Captains who may be there just to make up the numbers in the absence of any willing new candidates. So, if you would like to become more involved with the running of this unique club of ours then please notify any member of the M/C and we will put your name forward. The M/C meets quarterly at the RBL, usually on a weekday lunchtime but this is probably to suit their own situations and is not set in stone.

Finally, we communicate with members through this quarterly *Cachalot* newsletter, either the printed copy or online, and through the *Cachalite* email bulletin system which intends to keep members updated between newsletters. Our website was originally designed as a static source of information for members and others and is not inter-active. That is under review. We also have a fledgling presence on LinkedIn and Facebook for those who prefer those things.

We don't really know how many of you actually read this or follow the online services but in an experiment in the last issue I offered to donate £1 to the Captain's Charity for everyone that responded to an included code and a further £1 if they deciphered it. That I received just **one** reply didn't do my ego any good but it didn't tax my bank balance either. OK, it was over the period when we were not receiving any emails so I will donate £10 to the charity (the MVS) anyway.

## Trafalgar Dinner 24

The Admiral of the Port's Trafalgar Dinner, held at The Grand on the 18<sup>th</sup> October, was considered to be a huge success, with much positive feedback from many of those attending. The numbers are bouncing back after a couple of lean years following the Covid pandemic and 162 attended this time.

After the drinks reception held in the splendidly restored lobby of what was previously the South Western Hotel, a Southampton Sea Cadet piped all hands to dinner and Councillor David Shields, the Lord Mayor of Southampton and said Admiral of the Port, led the procession of guests to the Top Table, preceded by the Lord Mayor's Cadet carrying his Admiral's flag and the Town Sergeant carrying the Silver Oar of Admiralty.

Lt Cdr David Carter MNM, Captain of the Club, welcomed those attending and the Lord Mayor gave a short address.

Past Captain Andrew Moll OBE then made an appeal on behalf of the Southampton Sea Cadets.

Following The Nelson Grace, given by Honorary Member the Rev'd Reg Sweet RN, an excellent meal was served by the very proficient staff. After the meal the company stood for the traditional Second Grace, given by Staff Captain Nick Jeffery MNM.

After the Loyal Toast and an interval, Guest Speaker Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI, the new Deputy Master of Trinity House, gave a very spirited Immortal Memory speech which was well received by the throng, especially as they were urged to holler "Hurrah" every time the Admiral mentioned "Victory". This they (we) did with great gusto but the Toast was drunk in silence, also a Trafalgar Dinner tradition.

In a slight break from another tradition, if our event held just six times can be termed traditional, the prize for the Grand Draw, generously donated by the Southampton Shipowners Association, was not a personal electronic device but this time a LEGO set. Not just any old LEGO set though but a special 2083 piece edition of a 42 inch long model of Concorde aimed at the adult enthusiast market. Hours of endless fun in store for the winner, Captain John Lloyd MNM, CEO of the Nautical Institute. The Prize Draw had raised £1280 in cash for the Southampton Sea Cadets, plus another £95 on our card reader brandished by the Boatsteerer for those who no longer carry the hard stuff, so a total of **£1375**.

The Club has been holding Trafalgar Dinners in house for some years now but when we opened it up to the maritime community seven years ago at St. Mary's Stadium we finished the evening with some sea shanties led by a shanty group. A couple of years ago, when our regular shanty men were unavailable we went ahead without them, the singing being led, unaccompanied, by the Boatsteerer backed up by a few brave Cachalots. This year a volunteer from each table was invited to join the ensemble and lead the company in some favourites: Spanish Ladies, Heart of Oak, South Australia and Drunken Sailor were all on the song sheet. Not quite up to Gareth Malone standards but what may have been missing in finesse was adequately made up for in enthusiasm and the evening ended in a most enjoyable way with a glorious sing-song in which everyone participated.



Rear Admiral Iain Lower raising some 'Hurrahs'



Volunteer singers from each table, led by the Boatsteerer, Robin Plumley MBE



Prize Draw winner Captain John Lloyd MNM had plenty to sing about



The contingent from the 17<sup>th</sup> Port & Maritime Regiment at Marchwood were enthusiastic in what they would do with a Drunken Sailor



## Cachalots awarded MNMs

Cachalot Captain Richard Kirkby, Master of the luxury yacht *Mayan Queen IV* and three of his crew were among the nine recipients of the Merchant Navy Medal awarded for meritorious service this year. They were presented with their medals by HRH Princess Anne (a Stowaway Member) at a ceremony on the 5th November.

Also presented with the MNM that day, for services to welfare, safety, diversity and inclusion, was Cachalot Captain Louise Sara, shown on Captain Kirkby's left in the group photo *right*. Louise is a director of maritime standards at Carnival Corporation and a fleet captain.

The *Mayan Queen IV* was in the Mediterranean en route for Crete in June last year when Richard answered a distress call given out by the Greek Coastguard regarding a vessel sinking nearly 50 miles off the coast of Greece. They arrived at the scene in the early hours of the morning and worked with a Greek Coastguard vessel to pull people from the water. Richard said: "We got really close and could hear screams from the water. We launched our rescue boat and pulled out as many people as quickly as we could. People were dying all around us. Sadly many people drowned but the crew managed to rescue more than 100 people. The Greek CG vessel was quite small so 100 came on board to us. They were in a bad way, they'd seen family members dying."

There were 104 survivors and only 84 bodies were recovered but is thought that the fishing vessel, the *Adriana*, was crammed with around 750 migrants bound from Libya to Italy when it capsized and sank in deep water at about 2 a.m. So, in the region of 650 drowned that night!! Most of the casualties were inside the fishing boat in the fish holds with many women and children who went down with the wreck.

According to a report in *Superyacht Times* of 15th June a coast guard spokesperson told broadcaster Skai TV; "It was a fishing boat packed with people who refused our assistance because they wanted to go to Italy. We stayed beside it in case it needed our assistance but they had refused."

The awards were announced on Merchant Navy Day, September 3rd, and Captain Kirkby said:

*After half a century at sea from Cadet to Master Mariner, working and living in an industry I care passionately about, I am honoured and humbled to receive such a prestigious award.*

*The award belongs to every member of my crew who rescued 100 souls last year near Greece in horrific circumstances.*

*This medal serves as a reminder that as seafarers we may be called upon at any time to help others, and I accept it on behalf of all those who dedicate themselves to the safety of life at sea.*



Captain Kirkby, seen here 2<sup>nd</sup> from left, with the three crew members who manned the rescue boat: Coxswain Ben Owen Bramwell, Trystan Tanner and Bosun Ashley Oliver West.

*Picture; Department of Trade*



### Superyacht Mayan Queen IV

96.75m 3897 GT (after modifications in 2019)  
Built by Blohm & Voss in 2008 for Mexican mining billionaire Alberto Baillères and now, after his death, owned by his family.

Richard Kirkby went to sea as a cadet with British & Commonwealth in 1974 and stayed with them until he obtained his Master's Certificate in 1985. His superintendent at the time was Reg Kelso for whom he has the greatest respect. He started working for the Mexican family in 2002 to develop the new yacht with the owner, then oversaw the build at Blohm and Voss in Hamburg for over 4 years.

*Mayan Queen IV* was launched in November 2008 and he has been senior Master since then and manages the yacht. He still has several of the officers with him from the build stage and has 49 on the payroll with 32 on the yacht. His crew are mainly British, which is the preferred nationality in that part of our industry. All his officers are ex British Merchant Navy with unlimited certificates.

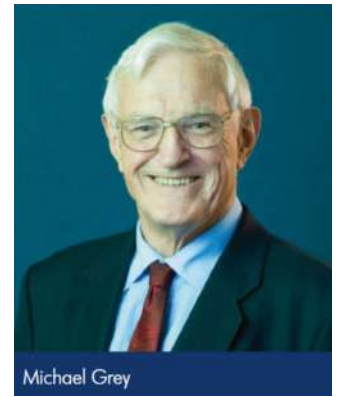
Richard is not permitted to give us any more information regarding the sinking of the fishing vessel as there are active claims against the Greek Coastguard and he will be one of the main witnesses. Hopefully when that is resolved he will be able to give us a personal account of the incident.

Richard lives in Exmouth, Devon, and joined the Cachalots in 1995.

## Voices from the sea

### **The Maritime Advocate online Issue 869 November 15th 2024**

By *Michael Grey MBE*



Shipping often seems a strange sort of industry. Take the matter of expectations by its employees who crew its ships. On one hand there are those who would only sail aboard nice new ships, where they were afforded free internet connections, good promotion prospects, pension plans and medical insurance. But on other ships, with very different employers, none of these benefits would be available; a substantial proportion would struggle to get paid on time, of even what they are legitimately owed, sometimes with inadequate provisions for food and water, and no expectation of being relieved on time.

You might suggest that the sub-standard, like the poor, have always been with us, but in our supposedly well-regulated and high-tech world of 21st century shipping, it is enlightening to be shown some of the hard facts about what really goes on at sea. This week saw the annual Danica Seafarers' Survey spell out something of what some 5000 of the seafaring workforce is thinking, its mobility and expectations. It seems from these bare facts that employers are having to pay more to hire and retain good people, who will be increasingly competent at surveying the labour market and willing to move to those employers who will help them realise their ambitions. In many respects, seafarers are no different, in terms of their hopes and expectations, from their shore-side compatriots. The present generation have different concepts of loyalty than their predecessors and are far more mobile; willing and able to search out something better, with a lot more facility through social media to do just that.

Whether we are talking about a ship manager or a second engineer, a technical superintendent or a chief officer, they will be always looking for something better and the employer who wishes to retain them needs to realise this. The best always do, while keeping an eye on the markets and unemployment figures. But some of the welfare concerns highlighted in the Danica survey should worry everyone. The Maritime Labour Convention – the “Third Regulatory Pillar” it was proudly advertised – ought by now to be thoroughly embedded and ingrained in the maritime world. And yet 35% of those surveys returned to Danica suggested that they were not being paid on time. Some 25% commented on issues with food and drinking water. You might suggest that the sort of ships aboard which such conditions apply represent the bottom of the maritime food chain, which just will never be eradicated. The welfare agencies and the inspectors of the ITF are always coming upon these horrors.

These reports however suggest that the sort of regulatory oversights which were put in place by port state control to maintain surveillance over MLC compliance are still inadequate. The reality is probably that, as they always have been, they remain patchy; properly implemented in those ports and countries where you expect them to be implemented, ignored or treated as optional in those ports and countries where, for all sorts of reasons, they are corrupt or plain incapable. As long as these substandard operators remain beneath the radar, trading between substandard ports, they go unremarked; only when they stray into better regulated waters, they hit the headlines. This is, as cynics might observe, the way of the world.

There is nothing this time around in the Danica headlines about shore leave and the lack of it, but it is interesting that the Australian Maritime Safety Agency has recently published a stern reminder that this not an optional extra to be grudgingly conceded. AMSA, which obviously has good reason for this reminder, points out that the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, Regulation 2.4, paragraph 2 specifies that shore leave should be given to crew members “consistent with the operational requirements of their positions,” but should not be based on financial implications. And while it might be pointed out that this provides a certain latitude, the intention seems sufficiently clear.

Mind you, there are plenty of places where they just make it so very difficult, through visa restrictions, practical logistics or simple bloody-mindedness by the port or terminal operators, for anyone to stretch their legs ashore for a few hours. And it cannot be ignored that there are often just so few people aboard a ship and time in port so frenetic and harassing, that shore leave is impractical. But that is another story.

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and the author, *Cachalot Michael Grey MBE* [greyjm@gmail.com](mailto:greyjm@gmail.com)

## 2024 Bursary

The Cachalots continue to offer bursaries to Southampton and Winchester Sea Cadets towards training voyages on the brig 'TS Royalist' and 'MV Jack Petchey'. The full cost of one of these voyages now stands at £430 for one week which can be a burden to cover for some families. The bursary is available up to £500 for each unit and nearly in all cases used as a partial payment so that multiple cadets can benefit over the year. Both of these vessels provide the opportunity for cadets to develop confidence, teamwork and leadership skills as well as meeting new people from around the United Kingdom and most importantly having a good time.

This year bursaries were awarded to Phoebe aged 17 for a second trip onboard 'TS Royalist' and Jessica aged 13 for a voyage on the 'MV Jack Petchey'. Another Southampton Sea Cadet Lara gives us her feedback from a voyage onboard 'TS Royalist'.

J N Mileusnic  
Bursary Officer

*One of the things we do request when granting the bursaries is that the cadets give us written report of their experiences. We understand that, in these days of social media and thumbs flashing over mobile phones, this may be quite daunting for the youngsters, perhaps even viewed as some sort of punishment after an enjoyable (or not) experience. But we don't wish to judge, nor find fault with their efforts, just to learn of their development as detailed above by John. I believe that the over use of my editor's pen would perhaps destroy some of the authenticity of their offerings so I bring them to you as received other than corrections for punctuation and capitals. I had little need to correct spelling mistakes and suspect the use of built in spell checkers. When AI becomes ubiquitous I might be redundant.....Editor*

### *Phoebe's report.*

"TS Royalist holds 24 cadets along with 8-12 staff members. Over my trip we sailed from Gosport-Cowes-Cherbourg-Portland then ending off in Weymouth harbour. Over the week I was a watch leader. This meant I was taking charge of 5 other cadets. This gave me an additional role of responsibility throughout the week along with my usual duties. Some of these tasks were out bracing stations, sail setting stations and sail handing stations. These stations set the sail and also turned them depending in what direction the wind was coming from. this was a team exercise and it was where everyone started to work as one rather than as separate parties. As the week progressed, everyone was able to take the helm and steer the ship along a course, following the navigational tools and orders from the captain. At the end of the voyage I was able to go up onto the rigging and stow the sails. Overall this trip was a great experience and helped me gain many more skills to help future cadets and also helped me to gain confidence in the things I already knew."

### *And from Jessica*

#### TS JACK PETCHEY – RAMSGATE TO LONDON – OC JESSIE

At the start of the week, everyone aboard got to know each other and learn our way round TS Jack Petchey. The next day we spent moored up and did safety briefs and lessons like navigation. We were also allowed shore leave around Ramsgate harbour where we got to look at the local area and learn about it. The next day we left harbour and went underway to Brightlingsea. During the time we were on the water we took turns to go up on the bridge. While we were up there, we got to helm the boat, be lookout and take care of our ships navigation logs. Once we got to Brightlingsea we got to have some shore leave again and once we got back, we toured around the mayor of Brightlingsea. The next day we got prepared to tour around roughly 40 cadets from 2 different units. The next day we went underway to Sheppey. When we were at the Isle of Sheppey we toured around the local unit. Though we weren't allowed shore leave there it was nice to talk to other cadets from different areas. That evening we made letters for Sir Jack Petchey's family to send our condolences due to his recent passing. While going down the river Thames we stopped the ship in front of Sir Jack Petchey's house to give him a moment of silence and to show our respects. We then docked up at HMS President to tour around the Jack Petchey foundations and give them a short trip on the boat. The next day it was time to say our goodbyes. During my time onboard we toured around over 100 people. I enjoyed my experience a lot and was so thankful to be given the opportunity.



A silent tribute to Jack Petchy from the cadets onboard *TS Jack Petchy*



## Royalist Feedback.

When I went on Royalist 1 had a trip from Gosport and back. We sailed to the Isle of Wight (*and*) while sailing we were all given a job to do so that the boat was able to sail smoothly. Before we were able to sail they made sure that we all know what our roles were, where we needed to stand and when we needed to be there and I think that it is a good thing because it helped us all work as a team. One other thing that I enjoyed was that we were all treated equally so we all had a day where we had to serve food and clean dishes and they made sure that all the cadets did something of that sort to show that even though we were on the boat having fun that we still had to maintain the boat clean for ourselves and for future cadets that will get the chance of having the trip.

By going on Royalist I was able to get an Offshore 1, which is good because it shows that I am able to work as a team with people and that I am also good with communication which are skills that are sometimes what employers are looking for, which means that this could help with getting a possible job in the future. Everyone was able to understand what they needed to do because we were taught properly and in ways that we would all be able to understand. Another thing that made things better was that I was able to meet new people that are from around the UK which was fun. One thing that some people that go on Royalist might not get to do is being able to pack the sails because most of the time they are only packed at the end of a season and fortunately for me I was on the last trip of the season which meant that we got to pack them which was fun, and the last thing that I would like to mention would be that at the end of every night we are given the option to get a bedtime story which was fun. This is something that I hope every cadet gets to experience at least once in their time at cadets.



## New Members

**James Halligan** is a Chartered Engineer and self employed Consultant Marine Engineer particularly for the oil and gas industry. Most recent projects include marine support to front end engineering and designs for Floating Production Storage and Offtake (FPSO) and Floating Liquid Nitrogen Gas Production (FLNG) vessels.

Previously a seagoing Marine Engineer to the rank of Chief Engineer from 1970 - 1990 - LR Surveyor - Hoverspeed Engineer Manager, he is a Fellow of the Institute of Marine Engineers Scientists and Technologists and a Member of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects.

His interests include anything maritime.

**Ben Halton** is Operations Manager at the DP World container terminal in Southampton and previously P&O Nedlloyd & Maersk Line Stowage Coordinator. He enjoys golf, football and socialising. He already has strong links with the Club through his role at work and was recommended to join by a Southampton pilot.

**Claire Hogan** is a Chief Officer Class II/2 Unlimited with a PGCE Learning & Teaching in Higher Education. She works for Boskalis Marine Services, part of Boskalis Westminster dredging, as a SHE-Q Officer. She says, "I have a varied career in the Maritime Industry following a 12 year seagoing career. All the shore jobs I have had have stayed within and supported the sector. In my spare time I volunteer as a Careers at Sea Ambassador for MNTB, Ambassador for Careers in Maritime for Maritime UK and I am an Enterprise Advisor for a school in Southampton. My interests are around attracting young people into the industry and supporting people in their early Maritime careers. I have done some unofficial mentoring for past Cadets.

I value the contacts I have made over the years and many of them are members of the The Cachalots. I admit I was intimidated for many years as it was the 'Master Mariners Club' and I felt I didn't fit. I now have age and experience on my side and I know that I do fit and have a lot to offer with the wealth of Maritime experience I have picked up over the years. I also hope to be able to network with people within the industry and maybe make contact with people that can help any new starters I am in contact with on their journey in the Maritime sector.

**Ben Huggins** is Towage Manager at Svitzer Marine in Southampton. He has a Yacht Masters certificate and spent 18 years working for Customs/Border Force onboard their coastal patrol vessel, the last five as Master. Ben sees being a member of the Cachalots as a privilege and something he will endeavour to support during his time with Svitzer who have been supporters of many of the Club events.

**Barry Sadler** is an unrestricted Southampton Pilot and a Chartered Master Mariner, AFNI and AFRIN. He is also Court Assistant and SW Secretary of the Honorable Company of Master Mariners. He is also a Younger Brother of Trinity House. He runs his own consultancy and training company specialising in course training and advice. His interests include maritime history.

He joins us to participate in local events with like-minded maritime professionals.

## ***A message about subscription increases.***

Thank you for being a member of The Cachalots and for supporting the Club.

We hope this message finds you well.

Following a historical assessment of subscription levels and income received, a motion, with supporting evidence was put forward at the committee meeting in March to increase the membership fee for each category.

This motion was discussed at the management meeting in June and members present agreed to take the recommendation forward.

We fully understand that nobody likes to see price increases, but there has not been an increase in fees since 2013 and this change will help us provide the best service to our valued members.

The membership fee will increase by £5 with effect from the renewal date of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

The new subscription fees will be as follows:

Full member £50

Retired member £40

Overseas member £15

The change will be published firstly in the September edition of *The Cachalot* and again in the December edition together with the renewal notice, and by email to Cachalots who prefer electronic communication. For those who pay by Standing Order, you will be requested to amend or change any order you currently have with your bank in good time.

If you would like to know more about these changes, or have any concerns about the subscription fee increase, please visit the Cachalot website or contact the Club. Cachalot Nick Jeffery has agreed to be the point of contact and can currently be contacted through [staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk](mailto:staffcaptain@cachalots.org.uk)

On behalf of the Membership Committee, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to the Cachalots.

Best regards,

Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer

## **Club Christmas Lunch** **Wednesday December 11th**

In the downstairs room at the Royal British Legion Club, **1230 for 1300.**

*Trio of Salmon;  
Citrus cured, gravadlax and smoked salmon mousseline.  
Beetroot gazpacho  
Avocado gel croute*

*Turkey paupiette stuffed with sage & cranberry stuffing wrapped with Bacon  
Fondant potato, Root vegetables and creamed Brussel sprouts*



*Traditional warm Christmas Pudding with brandy sauce  
Or Cheese board with seasonal Garnishes*



Catering by Chef Sam

**£38**

max 42 on 'first come' basis

Cut off date Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December



## 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 but they are in three flights so you can always rest at Base Camp or Camp I during your ascent.

**And they have now installed a stair lift for those with mobility problems**

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

The first Curry Lunch in 2025 is booked there for

**Saturday 22nd March**

1230 for 1300

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

Provisional bookings for next year are: 19<sup>th</sup> April, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 27<sup>th</sup> Sep, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov  
They are based on the Saints not playing at home on those dates but are liable to change due to Cup matches or their position in the leagues.

Nearest car park is Gloucester Square, off the High Street, and there may be on-street parking available in Queensway.

Book, and pay, through the office please.

The cut-off date for the next edition (#110) will be on Friday 14th February '25

## Sea Pie Supper 2025

St. Mary's Stadium

Friday 7th February

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

To members only  
and through the office please.

Members £69 Guests £79

02380 226155

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

## Burns Supper

Our Caledonian Cultural Experience will be held downstairs at the RBL again, on  
**Wednesday, 22nd January**

Expect the traditional fare and entertainment

1900 for 1930

Black Tie & Miniatures

Price yet to be determined



<b>250 Club</b>		
Aug	K Dagnall	M Seymour
Sept	W J C Clarke	J N Noble
Oct	L R Morris	L R Morris
Nov	C R Kelso	Judith Peck

## Going Under – the sixth and final part

*Continuing the travels of Cachalot Colin Crimp and Jill Fitzpatrick (read the previous parts in Cachalots 102, 103 & 106, 107, 108).*

### New Zealand North Island

It was well past midnight and pitch black when we drove off the ferry into the city of Wellington, with no idea of where we were heading. We knew there was a campground just outside the city but must have missed the sign in the dark so we just pulled into a small sideroad and parked up for the night. We slept well until about 06.00 when the silence was shattered by the loud revving of many diesel engines. A quick glance under the curtains confirmed the fact that we had slept beside the city bus depot. Another early start, then.

One remarkable thing about New Zealand is the effort that is put into honouring Maori culture, heritage and language, trying to ensure that these can run successfully alongside their mainstream euro-cosmopolitan counterparts. A large proportion of place-names in use are of Maori origin, self-evident when you come across them, as we did next in Paraparaumu. Some of these names are not easy for an Englishman to handle, though. There seem to be just too many vowels. As a foreigner's rule of thumb, if more than 40% of the letters are vowels, then it's probably a Maori name.

It was there that we came across an armada of Blue Bottle jellyfish stranded on the beach. There were hundreds of them, blown ashore by a sustained period of wind from the west. That's how the Blue Bottle gets about. Its blue bladder, which looks like a bottle, just gets blown by the wind and from their one very long tentacle, they can inflict a nasty sting. Fortunately for the survival of the species, though, there are both left-handed and right-handed Blue Bottles and so they don't all travel in the same direction.

A friend had suggested that we just had to visit his cousin in Te Horo and then drive the 'Forgotten World Highway'. There's nothing like a personal recommendation for ensuring a good adventure, so we did both. After a delightful morning in Te Horo over coffee and cake, we headed north past a stunning view from 30 km away of Mount Taranaki (Mt. Egmont), a perfect conic volcano around 2500 m. (8200 ft) high. Sadly, as we got closer the cloud descended, the rain started and Taranaki disappeared from view. The Forgotten World Highway runs from Stratford to Taumarunui, built on the route of 19th century colonial bridle paths and used extensively for surveying the route of the railway that was subsequently built, now largely abandoned. Today, this road, which took 50 years to build and opened in 1945, is an exciting drive. In places it is steep, narrow, partially unpaved and full of hairpin bends as it winds relentlessly through gorges, tunnels and dense forest for 150 km.



Mount Taranaki



Forgotten World highway



Whangamomona Hotel

About halfway along the Forgotten World Highway is a small isolated town called Whangamomona, whose population is about 130. In the centre of town is the famous Whangamomona Hotel, a splendid wooden building evocative of the wild west. We just had to stop there for a beer and a piece of cake. In 1989, Whangamomona declared itself to be a republic after some very unpopular regional boundary changes. Annually, on Republic Day, the citizens elect a president and, over the years, this office has been won by a goat, a poodle and someone who worked in the hotel kitchen who held the office for 10 years without even knowing he was president because no one had told him that his name was on the ballot paper.

From the Forgotten World Highway, we headed east to Turangi and up to the town of Taupo on the north shore of Lake Taupo. This large lake, right in the middle of North Island, is located in a caldera formed by a massive volcanic eruption and collapse about 25,000 years ago. It was another reminder of New Zealand's violent volcanic and geo-thermal nature. The low cloud and rain that had obscured the far shore of the lake began to ease and so we set off to walk the mile or so into town. It was a very tortuous route and, being a Sunday, quite deserted. Coming upon an



“English Pub” (called the Fox and Hounds, would you believe) we took shelter and some refreshment. Our return journey seemed to look a bit unfamiliar and before long, as the rain started again, we realised that we were lost. A pick-up truck stopped to let us cross the road and so I went over to him to ask directions. Incredibly, it transpired that he used to live in Hampshire, selling merino wool clothes for children, and had coached Alton rugby team for several years. He then offered to drive us all the way back to the campground. What a star.

North of Lake Taupo is Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland. There are so many geo-thermal sites, you can't visit them all, but I think we'd decided by then to try and go back to this one. We moved on to Lake Rotoroa, yet another crater lake in another caldera and with such a high sulphur content that the water sometimes has a yellow-green appearance. The smell of sulphur was everywhere, and quite overpowering, as we wandered through the lovely gardens of Rotoroa to see the art deco buildings of the Blue Baths and Rotoroa Museum. After a night in Ngongotaha we headed south again to Wai-O-Tapu and arrived just in time to see the Lady Knox geyser erupt at 10.15, as she does every morning. We had been wondering how a natural phenomenon can be relied upon to perform according to a specific time and were a little disappointed to find that Lady Knox is constantly sort of bubbling and steaming and it's only when you throw a handful of soap powder down the hole that she erupts for a bit. Which is what they do at 10.15 every morning. This was first discovered by some prisoners on a work detail when they decided to use the hot water for bathing and got more than they bargained for when they dropped the soap down the plughole. The rest of Wai-O-Tapu was a geo-thermal marvel, though, with its bubbling mud pools, collapsed steaming craters, CO<sub>2</sub> bubbling through the blue 'champagne pool', all very stunning and stinking of sulphur.



*Sulphurous pools at Wai-O-Tapu*



*Starting to grow on the lava of Rangitoto*

Miranda is on the north coast, on the Firth of Thames, and to get there from Rotoroa we passed through a weird landscape where volcanic meets agricultural, lush country where sheep safely graze next to bushes which are hissing clouds of steam, where cattle roam in green pastures shaped into a series of little grass-covered cones by volcanoes past, and where there are palm trees.

But all too soon it was time for the very worst part – cleaning up Big Bertha before handing her back. I'm not very good at housework. We filled the diesel tank, replaced the gas bottle, swept the floor a hundred times and presented ourselves at the base near Auckland airport. We were a bit puzzled to be asked if we were aware of having “committed any infringements”. We looked at each other and said “No?”. Sadly, there it was on our bill, a payment of NZ\$30 they had made on our behalf to New Zealand Police in respect of a speeding offence, committed 3 weeks previously after picking up Big Bertha in Queenstown. We felt hard done by - 57km/hr in a 50 limit and it was on our second day. What made it worse was the fact that, as we had been keeping a diary, it was perfectly clear who had been driving at the time.

Auckland is so cosmopolitan and with such a maritime tradition, it is simply an exciting place to be. Never mind the added edge of sitting on the join between the Australian and Pacific tectonic plates. We had 4 days to relax before the long flight back to UK and so headed to a Chinese restaurant to discuss what we might do. We had selected this restaurant because it always seemed to be full of Chinese, which is usually a good sign – and so it turned out to be. Beyond our little table for two, at the back of the space, was a huge oval table with a large Chinese family gathering, a birthday celebration spanning 3 generations. Food and wine kept arriving at their table in vast quantities and the more they drank, the louder they all got, eventually becoming so drunk that discussions turned into arguments and the volume grew higher and higher. At one point, they apologised to us, and then the waiter apologised as well. Meanwhile, at our little table, the meal was superb and we had all this free entertainment thrown in. As we left, there was still more food arriving at their table, the family were still shouting at each other and ordering more wine. Fortunate for them, I suppose, that it was a Friday evening.



Just outside Auckland Harbour is an island called Motutapu. It's been there since long before there ere people. When the Maori arrived from Polynesia (only about 800 years ago) this was one of the places where they set up home. Right next to Motutapu, there is now another island called Rangitoto which appeared out of the sea as a conical volcanic eruption that occurred as recently as 600 years ago. Rangitoto has no permanent residents and is now a walking destination, with one ferry from Auckland going there in the morning and another one coming back in the evening. The trick is to make sure you don't miss the one coming back. Vegetation has claimed much of the surface of the island, but a great deal of it is still plain black volcanic lava, very rough and very abrasive. In the warm sun, the 2.5 km up the southern slope to the summit took us about 2 hours, followed by a well-deserved rest at the top looking into the crater, now filled with vegetation. The trek down the eastern slope to the return jetty took another 2 hours. A very energetic day.



*Walking the lava of Rangitoto*



*Auckland skyline – dominated by Sky Tower*

On our way down to the waterfront, the roads in Auckland were all blocked off with thousands lining the streets – the annual Santa Parade. It felt so weird to see all the Christmas wrapping paper and tinsel and elves doing their stuff in the middle of summer. Down by the harbour, Auckland hosts New Zealand's Maritime Museum, and what a place that is. Apart from the hundreds of exhibits inside, covering the arrival of the Maori right up to modern yacht racing, they have a small fleet of historic vessels, including the Ted Ashby, a ketch-rigged scow. It was on the Ted Ashby that we set sail under Harbour Bridge and into Waitemata Harbour. It being very windy, we had only main and fore sails rigged but oh, what a sight. One of the volunteer crew was an ex-Blue Funnel master from Liverpool, and one of the passengers was a young Malaysian gentleman educated at Winchester College – such interesting connections in a random group of people.

But there remained another 'must-do' thing before heading home – to dine on the move at an altitude of 200m. The restaurant on Auckland's Sky Tower gives just that while revolving at a speed of 1 revolution per hour (that's 1 degree per 10 secs!). During the starters it was still daylight, for the main course it was dusk and by pudding, darkness had fallen. Our 3 revolutions gave us spectacular 360 0 views over Auckland. Sadly, there was no time left for the bungee-jump from the top of the tower, but you can't do it all. Yes, it was time to get our feet back on the ground and to climb out from Down Under. But there was one more lesson that we still had to learn – not to select a seat anywhere near the bulkhead where they hang cots for small babies. 27 hours is a lot of screaming.



*Ketch rigged scow 'Ted Ashby'*



*Auckland Sky Tower*



## Gone Aloft

Captain Ken Owen passed away at home in the early hours of Thursday 31 October. Ken was a much liked and respected ship's master who had a career at sea which started as a Midshipman with Alfred Holt/Blue Funnel. He went on to serve for many years as captain of OCL, P&O Containers and P&O Nedlloyd containerships. After retiring from PONL, Ken was drawn back to sail with other companies and his last voyage was on the APL Denmark. After paying off that ship, Ken received an invite to attend a dinner at Banqueting House in London. He went down with his wife Allwyn, only to find that the reason for the invite was that he was to receive the Lloyd's List and Nautical Institute Shipmaster of the Year award for 2004, for exemplary professional conduct over a long maritime career.

Ken's love of the sea went back to the start of the Second World War when he was five years old. His family were on holiday in Switzerland when the conflict started, and they made a hurried return by train and ship to the UK. On the overnight sea voyage, he recollected lying next to a lifeboat and looking up at the stars on a completely blacked out ship, and thinking 'This is the life for me'. The obsession with a maritime career continued throughout his school days, leading him to sign indentures with Alfred Holt and Blue Funnel Line.



Talking to HRH Prince Philip at a function on board HQS Wellington in 2013.

Ken's career at sea through the 1950s and 1960s encompassed passenger and conventional cargo vessels. He secured the various qualifications through to 'Masters' (Certificate of Competency as a Master Mariner) and received promotion from midshipman to captain. By the 1970s he was sailing on the OCL Liverpool Bay-class containerships which were managed and manned by Ocean Fleets, and he moved over to P&O Containers the mid-1980s.

With P&O Containers and then P&O Nedlloyd, Ken sailed on a range of company container vessels, but it is fair to say that one of his favourite commands was the Strathconon, a ship he sailed on for a number of years on the TransPacific and Atlantic services. He had a reputation as a captain who was not only a good seaman, but who genuinely cared about the welfare of all on board.

Past Captain Ian Thomson was a good friend for over 70 years and says:

*"I first met Ken when we were both midshipmen on the Blue Funnel ship Calchas in September 1954. Since then we have been close friends and I have many happy memories involving family exchange visits, holidays abroad, maritime dinners and company reunions. There is though probably only room here for three of those stories!"*

*When I was based at the port of Southampton and Ken was on the Peninsular Bay, I gave him a couple of grow bags so he could grow some tomatoes in the wheelhouse. This was one of Ken's favourite hobbies on board, and he told me that on one vessel an American pilot was amazed and said 'Gee Captain, I ain't seen tomatoes grown in a wheelhouse like this!'*

*Apparently on another voyage, Ken's ship received a call from another company vessel that was passing, with a query about whether he was on board. When Ken came up to the bridge, the person on the other ship said he thought he must be on board as he could see the tomatoes through his binoculars...*

*Ken of course had a farm, and he didn't just bring his agricultural interests to sea with the growing of fruit and veg... In the accommodation on our vessels the internal doors would have notices about wearing hard hats, safety boots, etc. When Ken was on board the notices were usually about chickens, donkeys, sheep, pigs, etc.!*

*When Ken's son Richard gave me the sad news on the morning of 31st October, I posted the information on the Facebook sites 'Blue Funnel for Old Timers' and 'OCL Bay Boats'. Within 24 hours there were more than a hundred responses from friends and shipmates of all ranks showing the enormous affection and respect they had for Ken. Sadly, I have lost a great friend."*

Ken Owen joined the Club in June 1997 and was a regular attendee at the Sea Pie Suppers with other ex Blue Funnel shipmates.



With friends Michael Grey MBE and Captain Reg Keso MBE at the Sea Pie Supper in 2013

He lived in Derbyshire and wrote a regular 'Captain Ken' column for "Outlook", his local Parish magazine, and kindly gave permission for the articles to be reproduced here. I had already prepared his final piece before his death and you can read it on the following page.

Ken was taken ill earlier this year and was admitted to hospital in September. After a prolonged stay, his daughter Elizabeth and son Richard managed to get him home. He spent his final days there surrounded by his family, his dog and a stupendous view of the Peak District from his bed. This was all he wanted.

Our condolences go to his wife Allwyn and their family.

*The tribute above is taken mainly from the PONLheritage.com website, for which thanks.*



## Captain Ken

*Here is the final contribution from Ken Owen that appeared in his local Mellor Church Parish magazine "Outlook" in September 2024.*

*Ken lived in the Derbyshire Peak District and had 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/>*

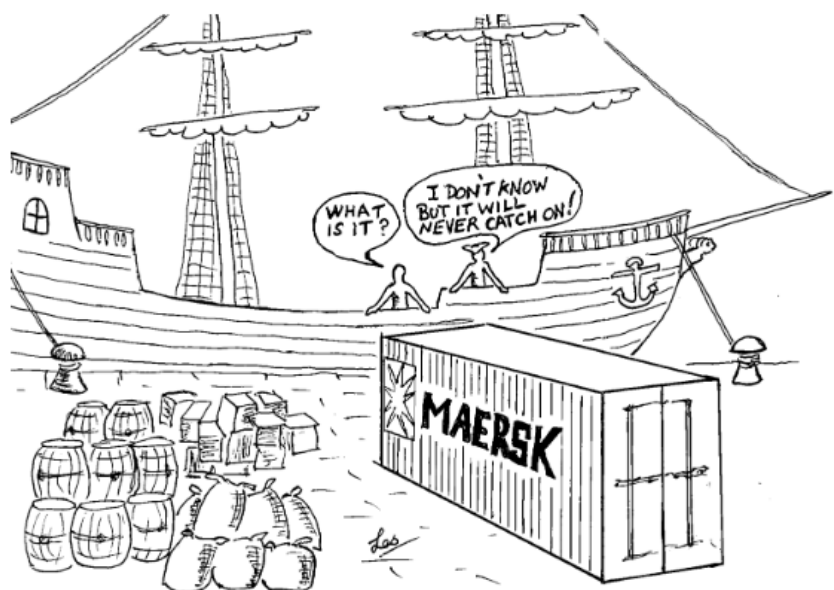
I once had a younger brother, Rodney, who served his apprenticeship in Manchester Liners where he crossed the Atlantic 54 times. He then sailed several voyages up the Amazon, with Lamport and Holt Line, before joining P&O's Moss Hutchinson Line. Very sadly, when sailing as 3rd Officer on the passenger ship 'Assiouf', he caught meningitis while calling at Beirut in Lebanon where he died at the young age of 23 and is buried there at All Saints Church.

I remember once visiting Rod's ship in Salford and asking about the awful smell that was all around in the Manchester Ship Canal. The port was so heavily polluted in those days that it is quite amazing that it's so much cleaner now and there are fish swimming again there. But at that time in Houston, Texas, it was even worse, and I recollect being actually sick transiting the canal due to the dreadful smell. At the time all ships needed to dry dock regularly so that the barnacles, that grew on the ship's hull, could be removed. The only ships I had heard of that didn't need to dry dock belonged to an American Company that ran between Manchester and Houston. The filthy water killed them off! I am very pleased to note that Houston is now clean again.

When the Container Revolution took place in the nineteen sixties, the whole world's dock-workers were extremely against it as it was about to reduce their number. Strangely, although we seafarers realised it would affect us the same way. I was surprised how cooperative we seemed to be. As Chief Officer of 'Ajax' in the late sixties I was responsible for loading the first two newly built 20 foot shipping containers waiting for us in Singapore. They were sitting on the quay with lots of other crated cargo. But what a shock I suffered when the crane loaded them on to the ship. The loading gangs had never seen such large empty boxes, so had made convenient use of them. One had been made into a ship's office, complete with table and telephone, and the other; a bedroom with ten dock-workers fast asleep and the door tightly shut! Once, when we had previously discharged at Holt's Wharf in Hong Kong (now the New World Centre) the container had to be carried on ten bamboo poles by about 20 dock workers. We little knew then that the Container Revolution was about to change world trade for good.

*Ken celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in August and he had given his permission for me to reproduce this cartoon which was drawn in the birthday card from one of his friends, Les.*

*Ed.*





# The broken baggage train

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 867 October 18th 2024

By Michael Grey MBE

It was the Duke of Marlborough, unarguably one of the most successful exponents of warfare, who attributed his triumphs on the battlefield to his mastery of what today we term logistics. In an age when armies fed themselves off the land over which they marched, John Churchill ensured that his baggage train, with all the stores required to maintain his men in the field, was readily available and regularly replenished. It was a lesson that other great military captains took to heart.



You can have the best armed and most sophisticated equipment available, but if the “baggage train” is neglected, you end up very embarrassed. This historical analogy came to mind recently, when, for the first time in its long and distinguished existence, the crews of the UK Royal Fleet Auxiliary took industrial action and went on strike. And while poor pay and conditions are at the root of the dispute, it has come at the end of a long period that has seen this important civilian accessory to the Royal Navy arguably neglected. The result, highlighted by the industrial action, has seen a crisis in recruitment and retention which has seen ships laid up inactive, because of a shortage of the skills necessary to take them to sea.

At a time of global instability such as has not been seen for decades, it is a sorry business indeed. It is not something that has happened suddenly, as the two unions maintain that their pay has signally failed to keep up with inflation and has now fallen more than 30% astern of reasonable expectations. And while the long period of neglect can be attributed to the previous government, the incoming administration has failed to recognise the problem, while rushing to reward other, more visible, public-sector workers such as train drivers and junior doctors.

The morale in this particular merchant service, not for the first time, is suffering. It is all a great shame, because the RFA had a proud reputation as still offering a worthwhile maritime career to UK citizens, who were faced with a shrinking choice as other employers recruited in what we term the “world market.” Highly integrated with the RN, it offers enormous interest in a wide variety of ship types, doing challenging work. But a good career should not be at the expense of poor wages and conditions and successive governments have failed to recognise the growing discontent, despite the obvious signs of poor retention. This failure to nurture a vital service is mirrored in the RN itself, which is suffering the same problems, with a current generation apparently unattracted to life in the Senior Service, along with difficulties in retaining specialist skills.

The current review of the defences (which some have suggested is just putting off difficult financial decisions) will do little to remedy immediate concerns on grey painted ships, both civilian and military. It may be just a curious coincidence in the way governments regard important but less visible services that the same sort of crisis is facing the far larger Military Sealift Command of the United States. Ships, which ought to be at sea accompanying the fleet, are tied up in port for a lack of staff, with retention becoming a major problem.

According to a very revelatory interview in the UK’s Nautilus Telegraph, in the case of the MSC it is not so much pay but the inordinately lengthy tour lengths which are discouraging both officers and ratings from remaining in the service, which, like the RFA, is civilian manned. This obviously has sown the seeds of a far greater crisis, as the shortages have meant that people have had to remain afloat for far longer, just to keep their ships operational. Family life has suffered accordingly, as has morale, with more people leaving for good, just as soon as they are able. The lesson seems to be that while the fighting efficiency as seen by the public of the US Navy seems terrifyingly great, it depends entirely on the less glamorous and largely invisible auxiliary service that feed, fuel and re-arm this vital arm of defence. The baggage train should never be neglected.

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and the author, Cachalot Michael Grey MBE [greyrjm@gmail.com](mailto:greyrjm@gmail.com)



## Gone Aloft

We are advised that **David Hywell-Evans**, a retired Chief Engineer, went Aloft in March this year. David joined the Cachalots in 1986 as a Messmate and lived in Chandlers Ford.

**Ross Greenwood Sinclair** on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Ross was with the management of P&O Cruise Ltd from 1971 to 1986 and Finance Director and General Manager Fleet in 1980. After retirement he was Chairman of the British & International Sailors' Society, now the Sailors' Society. He joined *The Cachalots* in 2006.

Captain **Ken Owen** on 31<sup>st</sup> October. *See page 13*

The Cachalots congratulate Stowaway Member, retired Deputy Master of Trinity House, **Captain Sir Ian McNaught** on being promoted by His Majesty The King to Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO).

The award was part of the King's Birthday Honours List 2024, published on 14 June.



### Zoom Meetings

**Saturday 14th December 2024 at 1430**

**~ Operation Pedestal –  
1942 Malta Convoy ~ with David Parsons ~**

**The supplies that reached Malta with the Santa Marija Convoy was enough to prolong the island's resistance for at least another month.**

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

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

If you are not yet on that list, and for more information, visit their website [shipsdorset.org](http://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. 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.