

The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 107

June 2024

Captain's Log

A very warm welcome to this Cachalot from your Club Captain. A busy month and into Summer.

Your Captain visited the RAF Yacht Club in Hamble and the Honourable Company of Master Mariners in London this month. Many a friend of the Cachalots new and old met.

The club now has new contacts made in the Anchorites and my chosen charity, the Maritime Volunteer Service Southampton will benefit handsomely from our charity golf day at Lee-on-Solent Golf Club superbly organised by our Boatsteerer, Robin,

Our engagement with the Solent Mariners grouping with a view to new members is paying dividends. As I write this note our next gathering will again be in the SS SHIELDHALL this Friday evening. I do urge all Cachalots to support these events as our showcase to wider Solent maritime.

Our Working Group on rejuvenation of membership and the sustainability of the Club has been meeting and ably being run by Post Captain Noel Becket. We will be reporting with proposals to the next Management Committee.

We have said good bye to our last notably maritime friendly Southampton mayor Valerie Laurent. We will see her again however.

Lastly the club enjoyed a delightful club supper this recent week. Your Captain presented on his role as the Royal Navy's Merchant Navy Liaison Officer. He rather hopes not too many were frightened off with his brief on the training and security challenges upon us in our maritime sector. These are many and substantial but good work is being done.

The demographic bubble of retiring maritime experience is now upon us. The modern

trend words of skills, opportunities and advancement disguise the arithmetics of maritime critical mass and as the phrase goes, "There is no substitute for experience".

We currently stand around a quarter of critical mass to ensure our leading role in the maritime world. Easy to say but what to do? The phrase all hands to the pump to turn around forty years of maritime decline is very apt.

The key word is a single one, "Growth". Every measure being challenged with the test of, "So what?". To achieve the cultural change of turning hot air inputs into delivering output. It used to be called the now unfashionable word 'business'.

It is notable that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are both leaning heavily on the word, "Growth". For good reason is that without it we will die as a nation in the form we are familiar.

Also security wise we are now into a pre war generation. A very uncomfortable thought but historical parallels will not go unmissed in these most turbulent times. Resilience now becoming foremost in thoughts and difficult in our now risk averse modern culture. So many historical trends are now converging. The future is only ever the history we have forgotten.

The experience the Cachalots bring to this challenge is invaluable where experience is now notably short. We will do our bit to ease our blight of national sea blindness and I feel sure the Cachalots will play their part in inspiring our current and future seafarers. It is the legacy we leave that defines us all. We will do it... We have done it before.

Lt Cdr David Carter MNM

Club Captain

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.

Zoom gatherings

Due to a change in golfing days, I am now unable to do zoom on a Thursday but intend to be available on a Wednesday instead from the usual time of 1045. 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!!!

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](#)

Two curry lunches have been held at Everest Cuisine in March and April with about 22 members and guests attending. Next one on 20th July

A club supper was held on Wednesday 15th May at the RBL with 23 members attending.

Cachalots Golf Day, Spring 2024

Our fourth spring golf day at Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club went very well. See report later. The next golf day in the autumn will be held at Paulton's Golf Centre on Thursday 19th September.

I have received an approach from the Southampton Shipping Golfing Society for a match between the SSGS and Cachalots in 2025. A date and arrangements are still to be resolved but I would hope to confirm a date by the December issue of the Cachalot.

Shipping Festival Service 2024

The service is confirmed 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 attending along with representatives from organisations associated with the port of Southampton. We are very pleased to welcome the Bishop of Winchester, Philip Mounstephen who will read the Address.

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

A post-service reception will be held in the Stella Maris Hall adjacent to the church in St. Michael's Square.

Club Officers and Harpooners

Our Storekeeper (Hon. Treasurer), Ian Odd has indicated he will stand down at the end of his tenure at the meeting of the management committee in December. We are therefore looking for a willing and suitable replacement to take on the role.

Rule 7 indicates the Storekeeper shall be appointed by the Management Committee and retire every two years, but they may be eligible for re-appointment by the Management Committee. A job description is available from the Boatsteerer who should be contacted in the first instance.

Let us hope the summer period remains drier than the spring.

Robin

Captain Robin Plumley MBE

Boatsteerer

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk

From the editor

This edition contains two very different travelogues: one, from our Post Boatsteerer as he goes a-rambling with his rail-card and the other the fourth part of an interrupted trip to NZ which started on the *Arcadia* back in 2022.

What, you may ask, has all this to do with the maritime world or the SMMC? The answer lies in that last C, - 'Club'. I try to keep the content of this newsletter to that written or contributed by members of the Club, be it nautical or not. After nearly 25 years and 107 editions I have just about exhausted the tales from the failing memories of the old hands, many of them war or immediate post-war ones. Not quite though, for I have just uncovered, among the mess of papers on my desk, a record of the war-time sinking of the Blue Funnel Liner *Medon*. I meant to include it in this edition but have now left it too late. Something you can look forward to reading in the next edition!

Surely something of interest must have happened in the past fifty years that is worth repeating here. Over to you, all contributions gratefully received. I must say that during my editorship, I have rarely excluded anything offered. Sometimes we have been able to create interesting articles just from a few photos or clippings and Mr. Google. Perhaps I should try AI.

And perhaps I should also include here part of my report to the AGM in January:

On a personal note I should state that although I am reasonably fit and healthy with no known health or mental issues, I will shortly be an octogenarian..

I am very happy to continue editing the newsletter, in fact you will probably have to pry it from my dying fingers, but it may be time for a willing sub-editor to step up to assist in the future course of the good ship Cachalot.

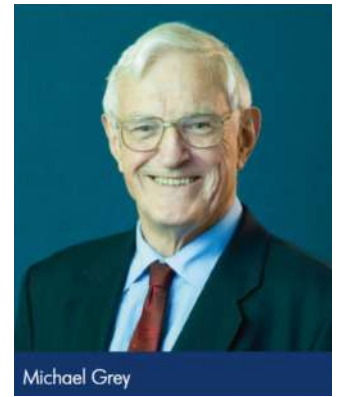
As our Club motto has it: In Omnia Paratus.

A matter of priorities

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 856 May 17th 2024

By *Michael Grey MBE*

There is a great deal of absolutism around any discussions about climate and common sense, you sometimes feel, rarely gets a look-in. I was reading about all these extra tonne-miles being racked up by the ships whose owners are responsible enough to avoid a passage through the Red Sea and avoid the risk of a Houthi drone or missile hitting the ship.



It ought to be a decent, uncontroversial decision, to keep a ship and its crew safe from danger of death and several days of real fear, in a situation where there is limited ability to tackle the situation at source. And the Houthi rebels, egged on by their Iranian paymasters, are not going anywhere soon, threatening to extend their area of outrage into the Indian Ocean, where the Somali pirates have re-activated their war on shipping.

But now there is all sort of angst from the climate NGOs and their tame activists about the additional emissions from all these ships on their extended voyages around the Cape, which threatens their march to the Nirvana of net zero. Even more appalling is the fact that many of the ships, carrying cargo whose owners hope to receive it sooner rather than later, have cracked open the throttles and speeded up. Think of all those horrible additional emissions!

You cannot argue with people who believe that science can ever be settled and appear to have priorities skewed by a single objective, driven on by their convictions that it is more important to “stop oil” and end the role of the internal combustion engine, whatever it may cost. The safety of seafarers and the need to keep their ships out of harm’s way probably fail to enter their stream of intensely focussed consciousness.

Ah... those priorities again. The arguments take me back to a meeting several years ago, when the idea of arbitrarily restricting a ship’s power, for environmental reasons, was being debated. All the speakers seemed to think it was a very acceptable means of reducing harmful emissions – a “low-hanging fruit” that could easily be plucked, before tackling more problematical matters like alternative fuels or new means of motive power.

But then there was a forceful interjection from a very senior shipmaster, who pointed out that power was not something idly supplied by ambitious engine manufacturers, but its availability could be a matter of life or death to a ship and those aboard her. He recounted an incident, when he had been master of a fully laden and damaged Capesize, when in a storm, he had needed every ounce of power to prevent being blown to leeward. If he had less power, and the coast had been rather closer, the ship, he said, would probably have been lost. His was not a lone voice and in the enthusiasm for lower power, or for de-rating machinery, it was acknowledged that there were balances to be struck over the need for power to be available in extremis. And this balance in our priorities surely resonates today.

That took place several years ago, but the relentless drive to lower emissions has continued, so maybe there is little surprise among mariners that there has been an upsurge in complaints about the various methods used to limit shaft power in existing ships. It is not just storms where reliable and powerful machinery systems matter; it can mean the difference between safety and very expensive accidents in restricted waters, when power is needed in a hurry if something unexpected happens. But, in the relentless pursuit of the green agenda, does this get sufficient emphasis among the regulators? And after the Baltimore bridge calamity, and plenty of evidence of power losses in embarrassing places, for a variety of reasons, some of which might be connected indirectly to the search for more sustainable shipping, there is a new urgency about these problems.

None of this is designed to identify me as a “denier” and enrage those of more feverish climate enthusiasms. Rather, it is a suggestion that we should examine priorities, at a time when in some parts of the world, the essential shipping upon which we all depend, is in a war situation and safety of seafarers today surely ought to take priority over cleaner air tomorrow.

Printed here with the kind permission of The logo for "The Maritime Advocate online" features the text "The Maritime Advocate online" in a stylized font, with "The" in small blue letters above "Maritime". "Maritime" is in a large, bold, blue font, "Advocate" is in a smaller blue font, and "online" is in a red font. Below the text is a yellow horizontal bar with the website address "www.maritimeadvocate.com" in small black letters.

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

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

Thursday 25th April 2024

Following our successful golf days in 2021, 2022 and 2023, the first of our days in 2024 was held in generally fine weather at Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club. My thanks to Cachalot Bruce Thomas for setting up the day and to the club team for providing an excellent conditioned course and facilities with meal afterwards.

Thus, on Thursday 25th April, fifty-eight of us gathered at Lee-on-the-Solent for a bacon buttie and coffee ahead of the fourth Cachalots Golf Day since 1989. For this event we were very pleased to receive sponsorship for the prizes from Svitzer Towage, Portico, ABP Southampton and Solent Stevedores.

The fifty-eight players were from DP World, ABP Pilots, SERCO, Svitzer Marine, Southampton Shipping Golfing Society (SSGS), Denholm, Exxon Fawley, BMT Group, University Southampton and National Oceanography Centre. and other guests to swell the numbers. Ten of these were also Cachalots.

The majority of players from 2023 signed up quickly and we had thirteen teams of four and two teams of three. The format was a Texas Scramble from a Shotgun start at 1000.

The teams were chosen with a mix of handicaps and different organisations which provided interest for players to mix and talk during the round.

Prizes were given for the best two teams with highest score. A bottle of English sparkling wine and a Cachalot cap.



Our Cachalot Captain and main sponsor, David Ayres from Svitzer Towage, with the winning team

Runners up

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

There was also a 'Beat the Pro' hole at the 7th where for £5, a prize could be won for the golf simulator at the golf club if your shot was closer to the hole than the Pro!!



Russell Lempa from Yellowstone Environmental Solutions won three of the nearest the pin prizes!!!



Beat the Pro winners

In the clubhouse we enjoyed celebratory drinks and a pleasant meal. This year, each player was asked to bring a 'decent' bottle of wine towards the raffle prizes, organised by Neil Dunn.



Cachalot Neil Dunn sorting the raffle tickets

Money raised from the raffle and additional generous donations were collated towards the Cachalot Captain's Charity, Southampton Maritime Volunteer Service.

And then to the prizegiving!

The results:

Nearest the pin 7 th	Russell Lempa (Yellowstone Environmental Solutions)
Nearest the pin 9 th	Russell Lempa (Yellowstone Environmental Solutions)
Nearest the pin 13 th	Russell Lempa (Yellowstone Environmental Solutions)
Nearest the pin 14 th	Tom Ingman (BMT)
Nearest the pin 17 th	Steve McCrindle (DP World Southampton)
Beat the Pro	Six players including Bruce Thomas, David Ayres, Russell Lempa, Adam Warringer, Richard Neno, Ben Halton, Gemma Coutts
Team prize (First) 64 points c/b	
Team prize (2 nd) 64 points c/b	Martyn Dunn, Ian Wilson, Doug Wray, James Goodfellow

An enjoyable and successful day in great company with about **£2,577** being raised towards the Captain's Charity. Many thanks to all who came along and supported us on the day. Special thanks to the Pro in the shop at Lee-on-the-Solent for organising the par 3 competition and that of the club management, ground staff and the bar and catering staff for a great meal.

Our next event will be the Autumn golf day for the Charles Webb Cup at Paulton's Golf Centre on 19th September.

Robin

New Members

Michael Antony Clegg is Principal Surveyor at Matthews Daniel Services - worldwide consultants in loss adjustment and marine warranty surveying. He is a Chartered Master Mariner and a Liveryman of the HCMM and a Freeman of the City of London. He is a Fellow of the Nautical Institute and a committee member. He is also a Fellow of the Society of Consulting Marine Engineers & Ship Surveyors where he is Assistant Vice President and a committee member and a Member of the Society of Offshore Marine Warranty Surveyors where he sits on the screening committee for new members. He is an IMCA vessel and small boat Surveyor as well as a Specialist Member (Oil & Gas) of the International Institute of Risk & Safety Management and a Technical Member of the Institute of Occupational Safety & Health. He supports the RNLI as a Governor member as well as the Sailors Society.

What leisure time he has is mostly taken up being a chauffeur to his two daughters.

Having recently returned to Cornwall after 30 years living in France, Singapore and Dubai, he wishes to broaden his connections with British shipping in general and help with mentoring or promoting life at sea.

Sebastian Freeman is Regional Sales Director for Fairbanks Morse Defense, an OE equipment manufacturer. He is a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights and a Council Member of the Maritime Defence & Security Group of the Society of Maritime Industries.

He has various RYA qualifications and enjoys leisure sailing, travel, food & wine and rugby (arm chair). He joins us to widen his network in the Southampton region.

Simon Love is a Master Mariner working for Carnival and is currently Captain of P&O Cruises Aurora. He follows in the footsteps of his father, Peter, who was also a Master with P&O, commanding the Arcadia, Victoria and Sea Princess among others. Peter was Captain of the Club in 1985 and went aloft in March 2008.

Michael Seymour is now retired from the P&O Group, having worked for 40 years for OCL, P&OCL, P&O NL and P&O Ports. He was Chairman of Forth Ports for 4 years.

Mike is an Associate Member of the HCMM and was a Council Member of the Mission to Seafarers. He is still on the Shipwrecked Mariners Council.

He joins us at the suggestion of his friend and ex-colleague Ian Thomson.

Sam Smith is Commercial Manager at Ships Agency Cory Brothers Ltd.

Sam was a guest at our last Sea Pie Supper and enjoyed it so much that he thinks it will be good to show support and become a member of an historic maritime organisation.



Gone Aloft

Peter Starkey, who went aloft in the week of 7th April, was one time Captain of the Cachalot's Cricket Section which pulled stumps in 2016. Peter was a qualified umpire under the England and Wales Cricket Board and umpired for the Southern Electric Premier Cricket League. He joined the Club in 1995 when he was a lecturer at Warsash School of Navigation. Peter was no longer a Cachalot member when he went aloft.

Going Foreign with my Senior Railcard on St.Valentine's Day

Post Boatsteerer Ken Dagall, with no Valentine to distract him, sets off adventuring.

Being in possession of a Senior Railcard and being egged on by my son to see how far I could go from Southampton without changing trains, I consulted the oracle 'Google' and found that as well as English places I could go foreign and therefore being an adventurous Cachalot I purchased a return ticket to Cardiff.

I duly went to Southampton Central Station in the rain and caught from platform 4 the 09-11 hrs three coach train which should have originated in Portsmouth bound for Cymru's capital city but due to railworks started at Southampton.

Having found a window seat with table facing forward in the last coach on the right hand side we set off at a steady rate passing the docks and all their rail traffic and freight containers some painted a shade of pink and marked ONE others painted green and marked COSCO which I later found to be OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS and CHINA OCEAN SHIPPING COMPANY. We wizzed passed the Millbrook and Redbridge deserted stations and several floodplains to Romsey and the trout River Test where we briefly stopped for passengers including an attractive young lady who sat opposite me and produced her laptop and started her office work. Did you know that the Revd Wilbert Awdry, the creator of 'Thomas the Tank Engine' was born in Romsey.

On the move again passing though the Mountbatten estate and more flooded fields we speeding past Mottisfont in Dunbridge and Dean stations and entered a few tunnels before emerging at Salisbury with its tall Cathedral spire and stopped for five minutes for a change of some passengers and where the young lady took off her jacket to reveal more tattoos on her arms than a Royal Navy Leading Wren. We then headed off following the valley of the River Nadder passing isolated farms and old churches with sheep on the hills to the small station at Warminster near Salisbury Plain and our Army camps and training grounds. After a very brief stop we set off passing Dilton Marsh Halt, which Sir John Betjeman immortalised in a poem, to stop at Westbury with its white horse carved into the Downs and where the train became nearly full as the line from Weymouth and the Heart of Wessex Line plus the Reading and London Paddington Line joined us. There we were joined at our table by a young couple in love who held hands. Next stop was Towbridge and a very brief stop after that the River Avon joins us for the rest of the journey to Bath. Five minutes later we pass through a tunnel into Bradford on Avon, a charming town, for another brief stop and it's here that the Kennet and Avon Canal can also be seen with people walking and cycling in the rain along the towpath and the start of a beautiful section to Bath.

Onward we go passing Avoncliff where the canal crosses over the track on a stone aquaduct and swiftly passed Freshford and into Bath where many leave including the young lady opposite and the young couple quickly found a nearby double seat. Their places were taken at the table by a mother with her two young daughters aged 9 and 7 and having been given some homemade fudge for the journey by a kind neighbour I shared it with them and made friends for life.

Passing nonstop Oldfield Park and Keynsham we arrived at Bristol Temple Mead and where the mother and family left for shopping. It was here that the train driver changed ends and instead of being in the rear coach I found that I was now in the very front coach of now a 12 coach train as we left Bristol passing Laurence Halt and Stableton Road stations to stop at Filton Abbey Wood which serves the town of Filton which is a suburb of Bristol. Nearby is Aerospace Bristol, an air and space museum with exhibits and vehicles chronicling more than 100 years of flight. The museum is even home to the last Concorde.

After a brief stop for more passengers we were on our way passing Parchway and Pilning stations before entering the Severn Tunnel where I briefly succumbed to the arms of Morpheus before coming wide awake as we exited the tunnel and into Cymru which still looked like the rain soaked English countryside. We were soon at the port of Casnewydd on the Afon Wysg where we had a brief stop before continuing and soon through various tunnels to the capital city of Caerdydd and the Afon Taf and platform 1, the end of the line. Alighting I soon realised that I was in a different country as all announcements were in a foreign tongue followed by an English translation. Exiting the station it was still raining but heavier than in England !! Fortunately the station is near the city centre and I quickly found a restaurant for lunch which accepted my British credit card. After lunch I intended to take the Red Tourist Bus but one passed and due to the non-stop rain it was difficult to see the occupants so once on board it would be difficult to see out ! Fortunately there were several covered shopping arcades nearby which I took advantage of and even entered a pub to sample a local Celtic Whisky Liqueur. With no letup of the weather I decided to call it a day and returned to the station for an earlier train and the arms of Morpheus. It was still raining when we arrived back in Southampton at 18-30 hrs but I had an interesting rail journey although we didn't see a Red Dragon flag flying until we reached the capital !!

Ken Dagnall

SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE



**St. Michael's Church,
Southampton
Thursday 13th June 2024
1900**



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

Post Service reception

All guests, clergy, Cachalots, flag bearers and escorts are invited to join the Cachalots for a selection of sandwiches and cocktail snacks and drinks in the Stella Maris Hall adjacent to the church in St. Michael's Square.

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

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 some recipients of the posted copies have been obliged to attend their respective sorting offices and pay a surcharge to collect them 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 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 next Curry Lunch is booked there for

Saturday 20th July

1230 for 1300

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

Subsequent bookings are for

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		
Feb	M L Barnett	N S Becket
Mar	S Daniels	P B Giles
Apr	C R Kelso	S J Lawrence

The cut-off date for the next edition (#107) will be on
Friday 16th August '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

Going Under – the fourth part

Continuing the travels of Cachalot Colin Crimp and Jill Fitzpatrick (read the previous parts in Cachalots 102, 103 & 106) they finally arrive in New Zealand.

New Zealand South Island (south)

Queenstown, NZ South Island, on the shore of Lake Wakatipa at the foot of the Southern Alps, was to be the start of a 2000 km, four week road trip in a motorhome, ending in **Auckland**, North Island. Up to that point, our motorhome experience, while considerable, had all been in a wonderful but rather elderly vehicle in North America. This was about to change.

Our introduction to Big Bertha (we know she was called that because she had something called Bluetooth and the name kept coming up on one of the display screens on the dashboard) started with an enormous bunch of keys, none of them labelled, and an explanation of which key was for which water/fuel/propane/sewage/equipment locker. A few of the keys were actually for doors but, surprisingly, none of them was for starting the engine. ‘Just chuck the whole bunch into the cup-holder and hit the start button’, said the girl. It was not long before we became aware of who was actually in control of this trip - a Mercedes Diesel called Big Bertha, of course, with cryptic little messages that came up on the display screen like “*It is not possible to start the engine at this time*” if she was not totally satisfied with the state of the doors, seatbelts, handbrake, voltage and many other things too numerous to mention, including, probably, whether you needed to blow your nose. She was a joy to drive, though.

We didn’t go far on the first day, trying to get used to all the screens and electronics, never mind the cooker. We had bought a pizza from the supermarket only to discover that, while Big Bertha had a microwave, a grill and a hob, there was no oven. Our attempts to use the grill on low as a sort of oven did not end well – 50% of the pizza was cremated and the remaining 50% remained raw. Even folding it in half and eating it as a sort of sandwich did not seem to even things out. Still, the scenery, right from the moment we set off, was non-stop spectacular and who needs pizza? The journey east to **Dunedin** took us through the beautiful Dunstan and Raggedy Mountains where many of the mountain streams had taken on the look of creeks in the Yukon with heaps of mining spoil now grassed over, the remaining evidence of over a century of gold panning. We passed down endless lush green valleys of fruit and olive trees and vineyards and, of course, everywhere there were sheep (and goats and alpacas and cattle).



Harrington Point, Dunedin



The wonderful Albatross

Dunedin has a lot of Scottish influence, with some wonderful architecture from the 18th century through to Art Deco from the 1930s and has found its niche as something of an art centre, including an impressive collection of street art. As if that is not enough, it also has the Otago Peninsula at the end of which is Harrington Point, home to the Royal Albatross Centre. The Southern Royal Albatross has a wingspan of an incredible 3 metres, and glides effortlessly using air currents and wind, in fact it hardly moves its wings at all. Modern glider design takes a great deal from the albatross. November is mating and nesting time for them and so there was a risk we might be a little too early. But there, in front of the hide, were two nests already in use with a huge bird sitting on each one (they lay only one egg every 2 years) while their mates were gliding round and round keeping an eye on things. They mate for life,

share all their chores and are just beautiful to watch. Harrington Point is also home to countless black-backed gulls which look very similar to albatrosses but are about half the size. As the ranger said, ‘if you look up and you can’t decide if it’s a gull or an albatross, then it’s a gull. If it’s an albatross, you will know it’s an albatross.’

On the way north up the east coast towards **Christchurch**, the Pacific Ocean glowed an aquamarine blue, in contrast to the salt water black swans that proliferate there, and everywhere the colours of the spring flowers and shrubs in fields and gardens highlighted the bright green of the countryside.

Then suddenly, as if to remind us what it takes to maintain this beautiful picture, the wind got up, the sky turned black, the thunder rolled, the temperature dropped and the heavens really opened.

I’m not sure what we’d done to offend Big Bertha, but the weather then became very cold indeed and the one thing that refused to work was the heater in the cab. We arrived in Christchurch frozen to the marrow. It was clearly an electronics problem because the next day it was perfectly all right. Probably just Big Bertha confirming who was really in charge.



Rebuilding the old cathedral, Christchurch



The transitional 'cardboard' cathedral

One of the reasons for New Zealand’s existence and the subsequent development of its stunning mountains is the fact that it sits right on the place where the Pacific and Australian tectonic plates meet and it therefore has a long and fiery volcanic and geothermal history. In September 2010, an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 shook **Christchurch** but, because it was a lateral shift well outside the city and located deep down, it caused limited damage and casualties. Aftershocks from this quake continued subsequently but the worst of these occurred in February 2011. While the magnitude of this was less (at 6.3), it was an oblique shift, much closer to both the surface and the city and it caused liquefaction of the ground. Much of **Christchurch** was badly damaged, having been weakened by the earlier quake, and the casualties included 185 dead. The cathedral partially collapsed and the 6-storey television building, where the majority of the casualties were located, was destroyed. But **Christchurch** bounced back and a beautiful ‘transitional’ cathedral (designed by Shigeru Ban, a Japanese architect who specialises in post-disaster recovery) was built nearby over the subsequent 2 years, constructed from shipping containers, timber, steel and hundreds of cardboard tubes and due to last for 50 years. The rebuilding of the old cathedral is set to be finished in 2027. We just had to visit the Quake Museum, a lot of geology and personal stories, some of lucky escapes, some of tragedy. We were thoroughly ‘earthquaked out’ by then and took refuge in the stunning Botanic Gardens. But our route lay westwards, over the Southern Alps to the West Coast and **Hokitika**.



The ascent to . . .



. . . Arthur’s Pass, Southern Alps

It was a steep climb up to Arthur's Pass, the sun shining bright on yet more green valleys of sheep and cattle as we headed towards the snow-capped peaks and lakes of the Southern Alps. What a spectacular road. Heading downhill after the pass we stopped for coffee in **Kumara**. The shop-owner (English but had been there for 15 years) said how small-town New Zealand was rather like an English rural village from 50 years ago, and he was resigned to never really being accepted as a local, always being viewed as an 'in-comer'. When we reached the coast, it was sandy beaches and agriculture with farmland stretching from the foothills of the mountains right down to the beach. How can one place contain so much beauty?



Icon of New Zealand - the elusive Kiwi

That New Zealand icon, the Kiwi, is a flightless bird that most people never see as it only ever comes out in the dark. It is about the size of a small chicken but with tiny useless wings. Kiwis are hugely protected but still suffer from human activity in the form of cars and trucks, cats and dogs and other invasive animals. Unusually for a bird, the Kiwi has a very keen sense of smell with nostrils at the far end of a very long beak. The female only lays one egg, but it's a big one – about 20% of the bird's body weight. Ouch. But how to get to see one? In **Hokitika** there is the National Kiwi Centre where we passed among display tanks of unusual turtles, eels and fish with the light getting progressively dimmer and dimmer until, in virtual darkness, we emerged into a large

enclosure in dim red light. And there they were, two Kiwis scratching about on the ground for food. Photography was strictly forbidden, of course, but it was quite enough just to have seen them.

But time was marching on and we needed to start heading north.



Past Captain & Bar



It was congratulations to Past Captain Leslie Morris who was Club Captain in 2008 and again in 2016. Les attained his 80th Birthday in early May and earlier this year had clocked up 50 years as a Cachalot.

It wasn't a surprise do because Les had promised to buy the drinks, thus ensuring a reasonable turnout.

They didn't even buy him a drink back but the Boatsteerer did present him with this homemade card which those present had managed to sign.





Captain Ken

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

Two items of important shipping news attracted my attention, as I write this month's article.

One, that a large bulk carrier has been seized by Somali pirates, and is being forced to proceed to Somalia with a warning that if a ransom of several million dollars is not paid, the crew will be killed one by one. And this is some 12 years after we thought we had solved this particular problem by embarking armed security guards.

The other shipping news that might interest readers is that the world's largest cruise ship 'Icon of the Seas' has been launched. Carrying some 7000 passengers and 3000 crew, a total of 10 thousand people on one ship. Those who are considering joining this Royal Caribbean Line could feel that she, at least, will be well guarded against pirates.



Then came the news that the Yemen terrorists, the Houthis who are the cause of the Red Sea ships diverting round the Cape of Africa, have announced that they intend to continue drone attacking ships that are making the diversion. I feel rather concerned that these extremely efficient pirates may not be so clever at distinguishing the radar target of a huge bulk carrier from a gigantic cruise liner!

Then, recently seeing some hammer head sharks on a television programme, I feel pleasantly reminded of visiting Labuan Island, in British North Borneo (as it then was) while serving on a Blue Funnel cargo liner. We had a free day and several of us including a few officers' wives took the lifeboat to the most gorgeous sandy beach. Here we anchored the boat in warm shallow water, and began swimming close to the boat. I thought it fun to investigate an area of the beach where the local Malay fishermen were landing their catch. To my delight I noted they had several two metre baby black hammer head sharks. I thought it would be fun to take one back with me and re-join the swimming party.

As we learned the local language, so we could communicate with the stevedores loading the ship, I spoke to them 'Saya mao satu ikan yu' (I want to buy a shark). They were only too pleased to sell one for a tin of cigarettes. And so, taking it with me holding it under water, I returned to join the swimming party. Then the fun began. I said, 'It felt like something bit my leg' and pretending I had just discovered it, flung the shark in to the empty life boat, 'Pesky thing' I said as I clapped my hands. But I wondered if I'd done a wise thing when the shark suddenly twitched, and I thought it might be alive after all. Fortunately, it wasn't, but I would certainly not try the trick again! And hammer heads still rather scare me.



Productivity afloat

The Maritime Advocate online Issue 848 January 26th 2024

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

A Criminal Pilotage Investigation (cont)

The Londonderry case festers on with the MCA now declaring that it has no regulatory powers or oversight under the Pilotage Act of 1987 (and therefore no authority over CHAs) and has branded Barrie Youde's persistent enquiries re their issued Clean Bill of Health as vexatious.

That three properly authorised pilots were effectively dismissed from their jobs and replaced by cheaper labour is nothing new to mariners and probably considered as 'good business' by today's grubby standards.

But in supplying, under compulsory pilotage, insufficiently trained, and therefore improperly authorised pilots, the Port Authority broke not only their own bye-laws but may be considered to have acted in a fraudulent manner. That this seems to have been endorsed by a Minister of the State is also perhaps no longer considered shocking.

So, nobody died, there were no significant accidents and the replacement pilots are by now sufficiently experienced but, as a retired pilot and named defendant in the court case that gave rise to the whole sorry situation, I make no apologies for re-visiting this topic.

I should state here that these are my personal sentiments and may not reflect the views of the SMMC.

Terry Clark

IGNORANCE.

We are an island nation. It's confirmed in every book.

And, thus, we need each admiral, each mariner, each cook.

We plainly need each engineer to keep each ship propelled,

We also need each shipbuilder, who should know how to weld.

Now, all of this is basic stuff. Quite obvious and clear.

The need for trade and commerce never alters, year on year:

And arguably does increase, as population rises.

The figures only rise: with all allowance for surprises.

Around our coasts are hazards great. With fluctuating tides.

Which mariner from foreign parts can know where hazard hides?

Which human brain from far away can know of hazards near?

Twelve thousand miles of distance cannot quickly disappear.

And all of this was known to those who once considered my lot.

They knew the state had obligation to provide a pilot.

And so it did. And so it does. What standards might apply?

Where a ship must take a pilot it's allowed to ask, "But why?"

A shipmaster is rarely thick and, less so, suicidal.

In coastal navigation his concern must needs be tidal.

Where he must take a pilot he's entitled then to know

That the bloke imposed upon him has some knowledge of the show.

Thus, who controls the standards, if not now the DfT?

Controller of the MCA? Trustee for you and me?

Are pilots written off as surplus? Overpaid and thick?

How, then, does commerce operate? How does our island tick?

Or, could it be that those in charge of pilots do not know,

Just what they do, and have to do, to let the commerce flow?

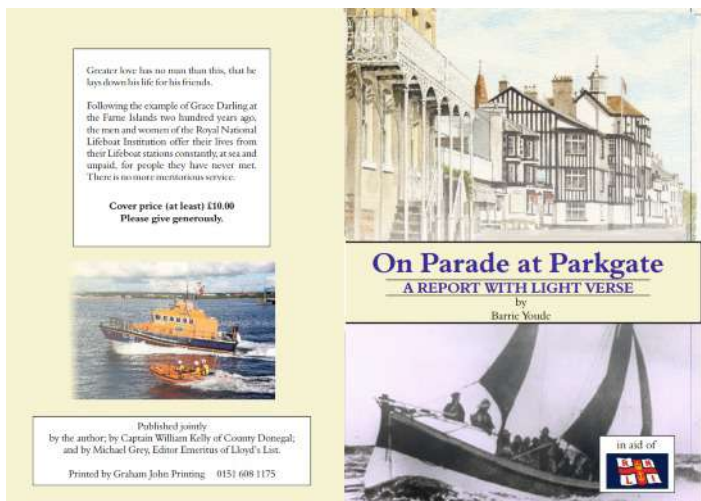
The perils of the sea exist, diminished not one whit.

Does ignorance now govern all? Is that the truth of it?

BY

09.05.24

On Parade at Parkgate



A Report with Light Verse, in aid of the RNLI, has just been published jointly by Barrie Youde, by Captain William Kelly of County Donegal and by Michael Grey, Editor Emeritus of Lloyd's List, with illustrations provided by Parkgate fishing families, by Parkgate Society and by Burton & Neston History Society.

Barrie Youde says: The connections between Ireland, Lloyd's List and Parkgate are well-documented and long-established by way of the former ferry-service across the Irish Sea from Parkgate and the numerous references to Parkgate in Lloyd's List, although the last such reference was almost certainly written with a quill pen, if not by Edward Lloyd himself, at his Coffee House in the City of London in the eighteenth century. It is a great pleasure indeed to revive all of those connections after so long.

The publication arises from my own lifelong love of Parkgate and the privilege of having lived for much of my life on The Parade. Much help has been given by the fishing families and by local history societies, for all of which I am enormously grateful.

All receipts will be forwarded to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

75 pages, £10-00 at least (plus £2.10 postage - UK)

Please contact Youdeco@btinternet.com



Zoom Meetings

The meetings are now stopped for a summer break

and will resume on 14th September

when they welcome Captain Robin Plumley MBE

who will talk about taking supply & survey

ships to the Antarctic.

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, visit their website shipsdorset.org and follow the links.

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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.