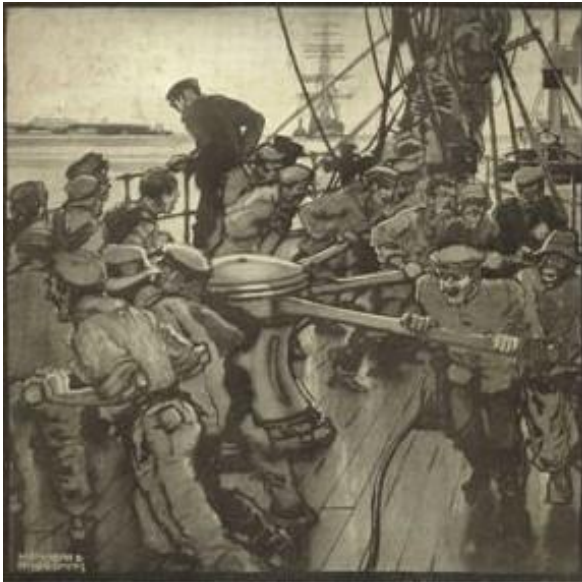




# The Seven Seas Club

TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER THE COMRADESHIP OF THE SEA

*The Official Organ of the Seven Seas Club*



## Volume 91, No.2

### WINTER 2015

# **OFFICERS**

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The committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month throughout the ‘dinner season’.



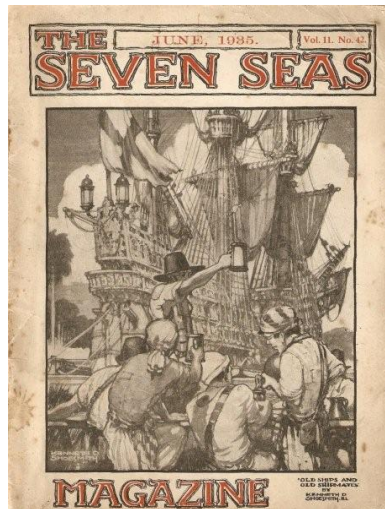
## EDITORIAL

Thank you so much to everyone who has sent in articles for the magazine. Please keep them coming. The more people who contribute, the more varied your magazine. In this edition.....

Our President went to Cowes for the ASTO Small Ships Race. He presented the Seven Seas Trophy to the crew of the *Scaramouche* from the Greig City Academy in North London. He found the event truly inspiring and he recommends that you take a look at [www.greigcityacademy.co.uk](http://www.greigcityacademy.co.uk) to find out more.

Once again we are indebted to Louis Roskell for providing us with a copy of another of his amazing paintings. Glyn Evans, in his continuing search for the work of Kenneth Shoemith, has written a thought-provoking article about the decline of the British Mercantile Marine. And Captain Flemming Nelleborg Pedersen gives us an insight into the history of the Falkland Islands. There is more from Jim Killen, and Glyn Evans has written about Royal Navy Swords..... quite a mixture.

I thought that you might like to see what the Seven Seas Magazine looked like 80 years ago. The artist is again ... Kenneth Shoemith.



.John Callcut – [john.callcut@btinternet.co](mailto:john.callcut@btinternet.co)

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



As the year comes to a close may I take this opportunity to wish all our members good health, good luck and good cheer for 2016.

It has been a privilege to chair our dinners - and during the Autumn, perhaps more so, to represent the club, along with others, at the October St Paul's Cathedral Annual National Service for Seafarers. The Service, on the day following, for those lost at sea with no known grave held in All Hallows by the Tower, and then, in November, the Remembrance Day Service at the Merchant Navy memorial on Tower Hill.



I attended Ian Shuttleworth's funeral and this was a big event. It was impossible to get the team together for one reason or another (to do with our management!) A friend David Nathan gave a short but accurate eulogy much appreciated by the congregation, and Lizzie Ball gave a short recital which was very moving and ended with a foot-stamping hornpipe!

The service began at 1300 with Holy Trinity (the RYS church) full to the brim. Reception from 1415, and ashes scattered from the *Lord Nelson* which when I left had not arrived but was on the way. I would guess 600 attended and the Seven Seas Club team was around 20.

## SECRETARY'S CORNER

As most members will know I am in the process of relieving John in the post of Hon. Sec. If all goes to plan, this process will be completed when you vote me in at the 2016 AGM. In the meantime I am de facto doing the job with John as Officer of the Watch; so please send your secretary's communications direct to me. The process will no doubt cause some change and the odd fouled anchor, so please be patient with us.

I am trying to do as much of the work as possible by email. Everything I write and send out to you is actually despatched by our Membership Sec. Dom Watson (also our Dinner Sec. for his sins). So please remember to reply to [sschonsec@gmail.com](mailto:sschonsec@gmail.com). Please don't just hit "reply" as that will go to Dom - causing him extra work. He does enough already!

You will see elsewhere that the Seven Seas Trophy - which we bought and provided to help get the then new Small Ships races established - has been won this year by a team of pretty disadvantaged young men from an inner city school in north London. I am hugely pleased to see our efforts bearing such wonderful fruit and hope you will join me in following their progress.

John has handed responsibility for the slop chest to Neil McAlpine so please get in touch with him for your ties, cufflinks and other club goods. My final administration point, for now, if you have a potential new member please send me their details and I will contact them to get their application under way. Please do not give them that old membership form you have had in your kit bag for years, or even email them one, as it will cause some confusion and delay.

Fair winds for now.

Ray Kay - [sschonsec@gmail.com](mailto:sschonsec@gmail.com)

**Seen on a memorial in Portsmouth .... Sent in by Derrick Aughterlony**

*There are no roses on a sailor's grave  
No lilacs on an ocean's wave  
The only tribute is a seagull's sweep  
And teardrops that their sweethearts weep.*

## CLUB DATES & SPEAKERS

28<sup>th</sup> January 2016 - Anthony Harvey Esq: The Maritime Foundation

25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 - Capt. CJW Clarke OBE MN: Ship Handling, the Paperless Bridge, and STUFT

31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 - Glyn L.Evans Esq.: Dazzle Ships of WW1

29<sup>th</sup> April 2016 - Mrs Rubina Whitehorn: Seafarers UK

26<sup>th</sup> May 2016 - Sea Shanty Evening

## OBITUARY

*Reproduced by kind permission of the Daily Telegraph*

Ian Shuttleworth who has died from cancer aged 71, enriched many lives with his courage, good humour and determination, despite being confined to his wheelchair for 46 years, and brought the pleasure of sailing to disabled people.

He learnt to sail on the Solent as an 11 year old, and when he was introduced in 1978 to the newly founded Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST), which aimed to facilitate sailing for the disabled, he threw his support into the organisation. He also lent his body and his wheelchair for the testing on new equipment for the sail training ships *Lord Nelson* and *Tenacious*.

As importantly, as a fund-raiser for the JST over the next 35 years, he generated millions of pounds . He never rattled a bucket, but thought of lucrative fund-raising ideas, and he never accepted expenses for his ceaseless efforts. Instead he was rewarded by being made a trustee and later vice-chairman of the trust.

In 2010 Shuttleworth completed a sky-dive, raising thousands of pounds for the JST. “I am sure you will be thinking,” he wrote , “how can someone be stupid enough to jump out of an aeroplane especially if it is still in flying condition? Well, I was a naval helicopter pilot some years ago and was not issued with a parachute, so it was more than a little interesting. I have now done the jump from around 13,000 ft, but please keep your donations coming

Ian Ashton Shuttleworth was born at Bournemouth on March 11 1944 into a military family: his father was a lieutenant-commander in the Royal Navy and later Deputy Lieutenant and then High Sheriff of Derbyshire, and all five of his brothers became officers in the Army, the Royal Navy or the Royal Marines. He was educated with his twin, Richard, at Seacourt school in Southsea, Desmoor prep in Surrey, and at the Nautical

College, Pangbourne, and they both won scholarships to the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, in 1962.

At school the cry “You, Shuttleworths!” was often heard and it seemed that the twins were in trouble more often than others. At Dartmouth, where in uniform they looked even more alike, they sometimes swapped places, generally so that one or other could accept a social engagement, and they were only caught once. Staff officers saw the funny side, but the twins were jointly punished for the impersonation.

They were not separated until the Navy appointed Richard to a ship in the Middle East, and Ian to the destroyer *Daring* in the Far East, where he was awarded the GSM for services during Konfrontasi (the Indonesia–Malaysia confrontation). Nevertheless, they took the same course, as lieutenants, to become helicopter pilots and were awarded their wings on the same day in July 1969.

Everything changed that month: on July 5, their younger brother Ashton, a sub-lieutenant in the Navy, was killed in a car crash; three weeks later, Ian was a passenger in an MG Midget which crashed in Cornwall, and he was paralysed from the chest down. The £75,000 insurance pay-out was then the highest ever awarded for personal injuries.

Shuttleworth spent six months in hospital, before moving into a Chelsea flat where he lived independently. For many years he commuted around London with his wheelchair in the back of his Mini Clubman.

He began work for a public relations company before in 1974 becoming an articled clerk in a law firm, but he quickly regretted this decision, and instead bought Kontiki, a beach bar at Mojácar in southern Spain, which he ran with the help of girls from London. In 1976 he sold the bar to Gordon Goody, a mastermind of the Great Train Robbery, who had recently spent 12 years in prison. When the expatriate community expressed its disapproval, Shuttleworth returned to Mojácar to help Goody make the Kontiki a success.

Shuttleworth was an active liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, an enthusiastic member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, and one of the 120 members of the Castaways club. He was also a member of the St Moritz Tobogganing Club, having gone down the three-quarter mile run as the rear passenger in a two-man bobsleigh. With Shuttleworth unable to assist the driver in braking manoeuvres, the result was a hair-raising ride in an exceptionally fast time.

He had many friends, rarely refused an invitation and was usually found in the most raucous knot at any party. If steps prevented his access either strong men would carry him up or the most interesting people would gather round him at the foot of the staircase.

Late in life, stimulated by his lifelong interest in marine watercolours and love of opera, he gained a degree from the Open University in Humanities with Art History.

Ian Shuttleworth was modest about his achievements, refused to feel sorry for himself and almost never complained. On one occasion, after a liquid session at the Coopers Arms in Flood Street, Chelsea, when asked what life was like in a wheelchair he confided to a friend: “Every day is a real bastard, but as there is nothing I can do about it, the only solution is to make the best of every day and try and smile.”

**Ian Shuttleworth, born March 11 1944, died May 23 2015**



*Ian Shuttleworth (right) with twin brother Richard*



*The late Ian Shuttleworth at the Goodwood Festival of Speed*

## SISTER CLUBS

To find out what is happening at our sister clubs in Australia and South Africa visit

**Australia** - <http://sevensaaustralia.com.au>

**South Africa** – <http://simonstown.com/clubs/sevensa/com>

### DINNERS

Photographs: Dom Watson and John Callcut

**17<sup>th</sup> September 2015** - 78 Attendees



*The President with guest speaker Professor Robert Grime  
and PO 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert Jones CD1 RCN*

**Trafalgar Night** – 81 Attendees

Chip Leonard Anchor – Louis Roskell



*Graham Capel presents the club with  
a table decoration from South Africa*



*Louis Roskell receives the  
Chip Leonard Anchor*



*The President with his guest, Commander Julian G. Malec O.B.E.*

**19<sup>th</sup> November 2016 – 53 attendees**



*Our speaker, Ray Kay, with the President*

## ASTO Small Ships Race

by Chris Esplin-Jones

The school boy crew of eight plus a skipper and a member of staff are shown receiving the Seven Seas Trophy from the President awarded for Line Honours (ie. first regardless of handicap) in the yacht *Scaramouche* in the ASTO Small Ships race held annually in October at Cowes. The famous 45 ft yacht, originally launched in 1981 for the US Admirals Cup team, is now owned by the Greig City Academy, Hornsey, North London, and is kept in Poole Harbour. The school use the yacht for adventure training and intend to develop a crew to take part in the 2017 Fastnet race.





*Scaramouche*

## A Note from the Conway Club Website

by Ray Kay

The club's inaugural meeting was on Tuesday 13th December 1910 at the Seaman's Institute, Liverpool. It was formally named The Conway Club. Major Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams was elected the first President (see right) - a post he occupied for 10 years. There was a committee of 20 OCs. By 31<sup>st</sup> December there were 100 members with numbers increasing fast as news spread around the world. Numbers doubled each year for the next few years. Today we have just over 1700 members.



Then as now OCs were living all around the world so there were immediate proposals to set up branches abroad including Australia and Nigeria. The very first club branch was actually formed in 1912 on the China Coast. India followed suit soon afterwards (probably influenced by the large number of OCs in the RIM and Bengal Pilot Service), Toronto in 1932, Nairobi (a joint Conway Worcester branch) and Singapore both in 1934 and Vancouver in 1938. Despite their early support an Australian Branch was not formed until 1954.

There was also a move to set up branches around the UK and the first one, in 1922, was a monthly Luncheon Club in London which the founders called "The Seven Seas Club". The first UK branch proper was formed in the West Country in 1930. It met at the Vicarage, Bishopton, Bristol.

### **Dom Watson has received this note from Steve Crouden**

Many thanks for the notice. Please accept this note as an apology for the 'no show' and also a brief update on my whereabouts for use and abuse as you see fit.

It has now been two years since I accepted an invitation to take up a position in the Royal Australian Navy. This followed a 'gap' year after 33 years in the Royal Marines. Fortunate to be on a short list of worthies with Amphibious 'expertise', I joined a small posse of 'Royal' defectors to educate the Aussies on how to turn their AU\$3bn acquisition of two Spanish built Amphibious Assault Ships into a capability. Sounded good on paper, the reality has proved a lot more challenging and the pace of progress, for those that know Australia intimately, painfully obstinate.

So what now, I find myself dressed as a Commander and running the RAN School of Maritime Warfare, how dangerous is that, a Royal Marine Lieutenant Colonel leading the charge in the Southern Oceans!

I have missed not being able to join you but remain connected through your e-mails. I have another four years to run here before a predicted return to the Northern Hemisphere, at which point I have every intention of reacquainting myself with the Club and the Gentlemen of the Seven Seas - I might even have a tale or two to tell.

Thank you once again. Please keep me posted and pass on my best wishes at the next gathering.



*HMAS Canberra*





In addition to three new sister ships including the *St. John* (see Vol. 90 No. 2), the South American Saint Line had four wartime built ships of which the *St. Merriel* was one. She was built at the Burnt Island Shipyard in 1942 as the *Lambrook*; known as a “Doxford Economy” type, she could carry ten thousand tons of cargo. Her propulsion was by a three cylinder Doxford, double acting, opposed piston diesel engine, which used ten tons of fuel oil per day at ten knots. As the *Lambrook*, she had accommodation for troops in the ‘tween decks and, when I sailed on her, the weld marks of portholes could still be seen along the sides. She was in action during Operation Husky, the invasion of North Africa in July 1943, having sailed from the Clyde in convoy KMS 19 in June. Her boatswain was killed by enemy action on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept 1943.

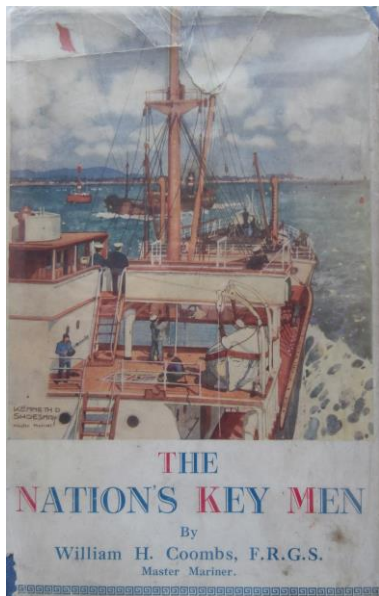
I joined her in Barry for a short six-week voyage to The West Indies for sugar from Bridgetown, Barbados. There was only an anchorage in those days so the bagged sugar came out in barges, the bags being cut and bled into the holds. It was a long process and there were many other ships either loading or waiting for a cargo. We rolled home in the swells generated from a recent storm, before it was back to South America for the next voyage, making my first trip as a third officer.

## The Nation's Key Men

by Glyn L. Evans

There are several ways by which a man's stature may be measured, height being the most visually obvious. Less obvious but lingering longer in the memory is that stature acquired by the legacy of a life spent in improving the lot of one's fellow men. Nudging the bar at just over four foot ten inches in thick socks, William H Coombs might be described in today's politically correct way as "vertically challenged" but his work to better the conditions of service imposed on British Mercantile Marine officers - by unscrupulous ship-owners and an uncaring Government - lives on today.

In my continuing search for paintings by the maritime artist, Kenneth D Shoesmith, I became aware he had provided the dust-jacket illustration for a book entitled "The Nation's Key Men" written by William H Coombs FRGS, Master Mariner and Member of the Court of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. Captain Coombs was born in



North London in 1893 and in 1907, at the age of 14, joined the training ship, HMS "Conway" where he found Shoesmith also a cadet, one year his senior. Eighteen years later, in commissioning Shoesmith to provide the illustration for his book, Coombs was following in the footsteps of Poet Laureate, John Masefield, himself a "Conway" cadet.

I tracked down and purchased a copy of the book complete with its dust jacket (a somewhat rare thing for a book published over 80 years ago) and signed "With the Author's Compliments and Best Wishes for brighter times ahead. Christmas 1925." The illustration, correct in all detail (Shoesmith was himself a Master Mariner) shows a homeward bound cargo vessel, with "I have a Pilot on Board" hoist, navigating a busy shipping lane; the Captain and Pilot on the bridge in position of command, outside the

wheelhouse.

The book is dedicated "To You, my Brethren of the Sea - the Officers of the British Mercantile Marine, to whom the British Public, the Statesmen, the Politicians, the Shipowners, the Marine Superintendents, the Board of Trade, the Lawyers and Underwriters give great praise with their lip, while assisting.....to perpetuate an absurd, unprofitable and unpatriotic injustice - this book is affectionately dedicated .....in the fervent hope that it may in some measure materially assist in obtaining for you even a PART of that recognition and consideration so long overdue." In his Foreword, Coombs states "The purpose of this book is to draw attention to the unsatisfactory state of affairs

existing today among the Key-Men of Empire - the Officer personnel of the British Mercantile Marine, and to indicate a practical method of reform. It therefore deals with a subject of the utmost national importance. Britain depends on her Mercantile Marine....”

In introducing Chapter One, Coombs goes on to say, “The very existence of the British Empire and the welfare of the British people depend upon the free movement of British ships upon the seas of the world. This is one of the few statements of fact which can be made.....without fear of disagreement. It was in the knowledge of the dependence of the British Empire upon the British Mercantile Marine, that Germany launched her intensive submarine campaign upon our Merchant ships. It was because of the superior sea sense of the British Seamen that Germany’s blockade failed and British victory was achieved. Consider your breakfast table - note its dependence on the food ships of the Empire.” These words would have resonated with the British public between 1939 and 1945 when once again the German blockade failed.

On my kitchen wall at home I have a poster designed by the artist Charles Wood and issued by the British Government’s Ministry of Information in 1942 with the caption “The life-line is firm thanks to the Merchant Navy.” Members of the Seven Seas Club will need no reminding of just how close to being severed that life-line came. While today Captain Coombs’ words might sound somewhat jingoistic and the term “Empire” rendered obsolete, it remains a fact that the welfare of the British people continues to rely upon the free movement of ships, all the more given the huge increase in dependence, since those words were written in 1925, on imported goods.

The inter-dependence of Britain’s Armed Forces and her Mercantile Marine is historically well documented and, if I quote only one statistic, it is that between 1939 and 1946 the Cunard White Star liner “Queen Mary” transported over 750,00 troops to and from various theatres of war, travelling more than 550,000 miles in the process. More recently, John Johnson-Allen in his excellent book documenting the part played by the Merchant Navy during the Falklands War, makes the point in the book’s title, “They Couldn’t Have Done It Without Us.” Sadly, since then and in such seemingly small and insignificant measures, Britain’s Merchant Navy has declined in inverse proportion to her dependence upon ships to put breakfast on the tables of her people. The process of this slow but sure decline has been well-documented by another respected author and member of the Seven Seas Club, Captain Richard Woodman in his book “Fiddler’s Green.”



What then of the legacy left by Captain W H Coombs? Apart from his book, published at his own expense and given free to all those to whom the book was dedicated, and to the Statesmen, the Politicians etc. at whom it was aimed, Captain Coombs was instrumental in setting up the Navigators Insurance Company to provide, at minimal cost, cover for those Merchant Navy officers unfortunate enough to lose their professional certificates following an official enquiry into the loss of a ship, a collision or other accident. His work to amalgamate and thus strengthen the various associations representing officers' rights and conditions of service resulted in the formation in 1935 of the Navigators and Engineer Officers Union with Captain Coombs serving as General Secretary until 1943. Through various subsequent amalgamations including MNAOA and NUMAST the single trans-boundary union for maritime professionals, Nautilus International, was formed in 2009.

In 1965 Captain Coombs supported Captain O M Watts (Editor of Reed's Nautical Almanac) to lobby for the introduction of BBC weather forecasts for UK coastal waters. He was appointed CBE in recognition of his services to the Merchant Navy and died at sea on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1969.

*With thanks to Mark Longford, Navigators & General for additional material and to Andrew Linington, Nautilus International for permission to publish the picture of Captain Coombs.*



***William H. Coombs FRGS***

## **To the Distant Shores of the Falkland Islands**

**By Captain Flemming Nelleborg Pedersen**

It may seem strange that a great Dane should attempt to give you all a little history lesson, but then on the other hand it may not be so strange at all.

Approximately 400 million years ago, the Falkland Islands were the centre of the **Gondwana super continent**. The tectonic forces later broke up Gondwana to form South America, Africa, Antarctica, India and Australia.

In the process the Falkland Islands rotated, so that north became south, and drifted 6,500 miles. Many of the geological features of the Falklands are similar to those found in South Africa, with quartzite, sandstone and mudstone being the most common types of rock. Today, there is considerable interest in oil exploration in the surrounding waters. Some believe that the source rock could contain in excess of 60 million barrels of oil, and there is also a belief that the rocks that once were linked to South Africa may contain gold and diamonds - perhaps an overall reason why the UK wish to hold on to the Falklands?

The history of the Falklands goes back to 1592, which was the first recorded sighting by the English sea Captain John Davis in the ship *Desire*. This was the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1592. (Sir Richard Hawkins two years later confirmed a 2<sup>nd</sup> sighting). The first recorded landing was in 1690 by the English Navigator Captain John Strong on his ship the *Welfare*. He named the channel dividing the two main islands 'Falkland Sound' after Viscount Falkland who was treasurer of the Royal Navy.

It would take up a lot of time to describe all the interesting events over the many years and I have therefore decided to give you a very short resume of the past.

**1740:** Lord Nelson passed the islands on an exploration and suggested that Britain should consider preliminary steps to establish a base near Cape Horn

**1764:** The French diplomat and explorer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, established a settlement at Port Louis on East Falkland.

**1765:** Unaware of the French settlement, commodore John Byron landed at Port Egmont on West Falkland and took possession of the islands for the British Crown.

**1766:** Captain John MacBride established a British settlement at Port Egmont. At the same time, The Spanish Government protested about the French settlement and Bougainville was forced to surrender his interest in the island for an agreed sum of money. A Spanish Governor was appointed, and Port Louis was renamed Puerto de la Soledad and placed under the jurisdiction of the Captain-General of Buenos Aires; then a Spanish colony.

**1770:** British forced from Port Egmont by the Spanish

**1771:** Diplomatic negotiations between Britain, France and Spain took place to produce the exchange of Declaration whereby Port Egmont was restored to Britain

**1774:** When the American War of independence approached, Britain withdrew their forces for redeployment leaving behind a plaque as the mark for continued British Sovereignty.

**1811:** The Spanish garrison withdrew from Puerto de la Soledad. At this time, South American colonies were in a state of revolt against Spain.

**1816;** the provinces, which constituted the Old Spanish vice-royalty, declared independence from Spain as the united provinces of the River Plate.

**1820:** A Buenos Aires privateer claimed the Falkland Islands in what was probably an unauthorised act – which was never reported to the Buenos Aires government and no occupation followed.

**1823:** A private attempt was made to establish a settlement on the Islands, but this failed after a few months. The organisers requested the Buenos Aires government to appoint one of their employees the unpaid ‘Commander’ of the settlement.

**1825:** Britain and the Government of Buenos Aires signed a Treaty of Amity, Trade and Navigation. No reference was made to the Falkland Islands.

**1826:** Louis Vernet, a naturalised citizen of Buenos Aires (originally French with German connection), undertook a private venture and established a new settlement at Puerto de la Soledad.

**1829:** Buenos Aires appointed Vernet unpaid Commander of his concession in the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego, on the grounds that they claimed all rights in the region previously exercised by Spain. Britain registered a formal protest, asserting her own sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. Vernet made the first of several approaches to Britain then to re-assert its sovereignty over the Islands. Earlier he had got the British Council in Buenos Aires to countersign his land grants.

**1831:** Vernet seized three American sailing ships, in an attempt to control fishing in the Falkland waters, in retaliation. The US sloop *Lexington* destroyed Puerto de la Soledad, and proclaimed the islands ‘free of all government’. Most of the settlers were persuaded to leave on board the *Lexington*.

**1832:** Diplomatic relations between the US and Argentina broke down until 1844. Supporting Britain. The USA questioned the claim that all Spanish possessions had been transferred to the Government of Buenos Aires and confirmed its use of the Falklands as a fishing base for over 50 years. The US declared that Spain had exercised no sovereignty over several coasts to which Buenos Aires claimed to be heir, including Patagonia.

Buenos Aires appointed an interim Commander to the Islands, Commander Mestivier, who arrived (with a tiny garrison and some convicts) about a month before Britain re-asserted its claim at Port Egmont.

**1833:** By the time Captain Onslow sailed from Port Egmont in the warship *Clio* and took over Port Louis, claiming the Islands for Britain, commander Mestivier had been murdered by his own men.

At this point Buenos Aires protested, only to be told: “The British Government upon this occasion has only exercised its full and undoubted right... The British Government at one time thought it inexpedient to maintain any Garrison in those Islands: It has now altered its views and has deemed it proper to establish a post here.”

Since this time, British administration has remained unbroken apart from a ten week period during the Argentine occupation in 1982

**1845:** Stanley officially became the capital of the Islands when Governor Moody moved the administration from Port Louis. The Capital was so named after the Colonial Secretary of the day, Edward Geoffrey Smith Stanley, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby.

**1914:** Battle of the Falkland Islands, a major naval engagement of the First World War in which British victory secured the Cape Horn Passage for the remainder of the war.

**1965:** United Nations Assembly passed Resolution 2065, following lobbying by Argentina. This reminded members of the organisation’s pledge to end all forms of colonialism. Argentinian and British Governments were called upon to negotiate a peaceful solution to the sovereign dispute, bringing the issue formally to international attention for the first time ever.

**1966:** Through diplomatic channels Britain and Argentina began discussions in response to UN Assembly pressure.

**1967:** The Falkland Islands Emergency Committee was set up by influential supporters in the UK to lobby the British Government against any weakening on the sovereign issue. In April, the Foreign Secretary assured the House of Commons that the Islander’s interest was paramount in any discussions with Argentina.

**1971:** Communications Agreement was signed by the British and Argentine governments whereby external communications would be provided to the Falkland Islands by Argentina.

**1982:** As we all know, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and occupied them for ten weeks but was defeated by the British and surrendered on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June.

Diplomatic relations between Britain and Argentina have now been restored and tensions are reduced considerably.

The Falklands are located between Latitude 57° and 53°S and Longitude 57° and 62°W: approximately the same latitude south as London is north. And it is a sea journey of approximately 8,032 miles from Gravesend in Kent. The Falklands comprise two large and over 700 smaller islands covering an area of 4,700 sq. m. similar to Wales, and are approximately 1,000 miles from Antarctica and 400 miles from South America.

On the map, the Falklands are mere specks in the chill South Atlantic. For the approximately 2,379 who live there, it is spacious enough. Approximately 1,800 of them dwell in Port Stanley. Goose Green, with approximately 100 islanders, is the only other real community. Most of the rest live on lonely sheep stations scattered throughout the 'Camp' as the countryside beyond Port Stanley is called.

The countryside is a little like the Old West with the Stetson and it was rather entertaining when some of our passengers from UK, who had signed long term contract as shepherd, visited The West Store near the jetty. Here they were met with open arms and a unique sales talent by the manager, who was well capable of convincing them to spend the next two years salary on top quality saddles and all the rest of the riding gear required for the life on the out-stations, leaving them little money and a slim hope for an early return back to UK.

The climate is changeable, and you can experience more than one season in one day. The prevailing winds are from the west and are stronger in the summer, averaging 8 m/s or 15 knots. The average rainfall is 24 inches per annum (625mm). The climate is characterised by a narrow temperature range, which varies from 24°C in January to -5°C in July, with a mean annual temperature of approximately 5.6°C.



I spent a considerable amount of my free time visiting the landscape and I was fascinated by the extent of the spectacular wildlife, in a place where nature is still in charge. There are five species of penguin that breed in the Falkland Islands. As well as the King, Gentoo (left) and Magellanic (locally known as Jackass), there are Macaroni and the Rockhopper, all attracted to the Islands by the rich waters of the South Atlantic

Over 200 species of birds have been recorded on the Islands, ranging from the tiny Tussa bird to the large birds of prey

such as the Striated and Crested Caracara, the majestic black-necked and Coscorot Swans and, of course, the Black Browed Albatross which would often be seen following us for a few days north-bound after leaving Port Stanley.

Sharing the white sandy beaches with the penguins are the fascinating elephant seals, sea lions and fur seals; they all hide in the tussock grass that can be ten feet tall in places. The largest breeding site of the elephant seal is found on Sea Lion Island where there could be more than 500 pairs.

You may or may not be aware that for over 40 years a Danish Cargo ship transported most of the general cargo to The Falklands. There was a very specific reason for this, and that was the ongoing conflict with Argentina over many years; it was seen as being a safer route for the cargo to be transported on a neutral ship. I have been trying to make contact with Ian Jeppesen whose father was very much involved in the charter of Danish vessels for The Falkland Island Company. He had a great knowledge of Danish shipping and was instrumental in the close ties with Denmark. Unfortunately, I have not had a reply from him yet.

The *m.s. AES* (see below) was 2,200 tons capable of carrying 18 passengers. Our normal port for loading would be Gravesend or Victoria docks, and we all ensured that we had a jolly good night out before this long and lonely journey ahead of us, which would take us 3 months before retuning to real civilisation again. Our journey to Port Stanley would take us approximately 30 days including a short 4-hour stop in Las Palmas to take on bunker for the trip. When we arrived in Port Stanley, we were always greatly welcomed with lots of the residents from Port Stanley on the jetty waiting for vital supplies. Many of the products we shipped were for the two main local stores; one was The West Store owned by (FIC) and the Speedwell Store in John Street.



On several occasions we had passengers who were former murderers/convicts and were released on probation, provided they served a certain specified time on The Falklands, a very safe place with nowhere to go. Some very interesting people, a real insight into how anyone could end up committing a murder when they were normally a genuinely nice person. It illustrated that almost any person, in given circumstances, could do the same, but fortunately most of us have the sense not to enter into such a situation which could lead to such a terrible crime.

The only highlight in the evening was the Old Globe Tavern in Port Stanley, just like an old western type bar, or if - you had the desire for a more upmarket establishment - then you would visit the Upland Goose Hotel situated in the west side of the town. That would be the extent of your entertainment, with the exception of a few of us who became friendly with some of the soldiers based on the outskirts of Port Stanley who had a night club where we were able to polish off the evening.

The only other regular visiting ship to The Falklands was their own ship *m.s. Darwin* which normally ran between Montevideo and Port Stanley with passengers, fresh food and vegetables. The Antarctic Ship *HMS Endurance* would also visit on occasions on her way to South Georgia, and I had the pleasure having a luxurious lunch onboard during one of her visits.

We would spend most of our time in Port Stanley, but would also visit Goose Green Farm, which had an approximate population of 100 residents, being the biggest farm on the Island at the time, with approximately 140,000 sheep. The farm had their own jetty where we were partly able to moor with our two anchors out. Fitzroy was another large farm that we visited with *AES* and at times Fox Bay. We would off-load general cargo and load wool for our return to UK. We would also load wool from *s.s. Great Britain* which was still in Port Stanley, deteriorating further day-by-day, and was used as a storage ship for coal and wool. The average annual wool clip at the time was approximately 2,500 tonnes. At times we were carrying wool back to UK at a value exceeding £250,000 (There are approximately 700,000 sheep on the Falklands).

Wool was always our main cargo for our return trip, but often we would call in to a small port on the River Sao Francisco called Sao Francisco Du Sul, located on Latitude 26° 14.0'S and Longitude 048° 25.0'W. The port is on an island in the river, which flows into Babitonga Bay. We would load Brazilian mahogany in any space left below deck and - when all hatches were closed and made safe - we would then have a full load of mahogany on the deck. But only after careful stability calculations using all those dreadful formulas which I am sure some of you still remember, and of course we also had to consider the time of year with reference to expected weather conditions. We have on one occasion lost 75 % of the deck cargo of mahogany in the Bay of Biscay and had to seek shelter in Lyme Bay.

On another return trip from Port Stanley, our deck cargo was a small proportion of the wild life. It was rather sad to see elephant seals, sea-lions, and penguins being taken away from their home and having to travel over 8,000 miles to Dudley Zoo in the UK.

We had a large refrigerated container on the deck full of fish to feed them with during the journey. The stress was very noticeable on the sea-lions; they would refuse to eat after being captured and we were having to force-feed them for several days before they would finally start to eat by themselves. I can assure you that this was a very difficult task and you were at high risk of being bitten.

I did three round-trips to the Falklands in 1965 (9 months in total) before I joined *Lilli Tholstrup* (Kosan Gas) chartered by the British Government to supply natural gas to the Americans in Saigon with another ship owned by Kosan Gas supplying ammunition, rather a dangerous contract at that time, but that is a different story.

I did a further two trips on *A.E.S* in 1971 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer after leaving Navigation School in Svendborg (Denmark). I had borrowed money from Maersk and A.E.SØRENSEN for the two years study for my Mates & Deep Sea Masters certificate. *A.E.S* did not have a 3<sup>rd</sup> officer and therefore gave me a short cut and I needed two trips (6 month) to repay my debt to A.E.SØRENSEN before joining MAERSK in 1971 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer on *Leise Maersk* (85,000 tonnes bulk carrier).

So I had a total of 5 trips to the Falklands (15 months) with 5 months of them being based somewhere around the Falklands.

Sadly, the ties with Danish shipping over so many years for the supply of cargo to the Falklands came to an end last year, as the MOD have now taken over the contract, but up until early this year, the Falkland was still being served by Danish ships with the Port of Loading being Shoreham in Sussex.

It was a very interesting experience - now distant memories, but I hope you may all have enjoyed learning a little more about these distant shores of the Falkland Islands....

### **A Yarn from Jim Killen – continued from the previous magazine.**

Only enough to keep the tug in position. As the tug and tow surge in the swell the big towing nylon occasionally breaks the surface but never does the tow-wire become tight. With almost no tension on the tow-line the tug and tow drift, beam-on, toward what looks to me to be a very narrow opening. As instructed I'm at the towing winch brake handle.

“Keep it just minimum tight – when the wire snatches I want that brake to slip!” those were the instructions I'd been given. I had then, as instructed, slowly, released the brake until the wire started to slip. Then tightened it a little, just until the slipping stopped. There is a fair bit of ground-swell and waves are being bounced back from the ever closing

breakwaters. The outgoing river current is slowing our progress a bit but we are still being blown in the direction of some nasty-looking masonry. Then, almost when I was certain we would not make it through the entrance, Dead Slow Ahead is rung on the engine-room telegraph. The tug eases ahead. The telegraphs are then rung Stop. This happens a few times. Each time the towing gear lifts clear of the water but does not ever get bar-tight. Then again Dead Slow Ahead is rung and the tug is easing in the direction of the opening.

The big towing-nylon explodes from the water as the tow-line comes tight, the winch brakes squeal as the wire is snatched from the drum. Then the tow-wire drops slack. Then again the nylon explodes from the water as another swell surges the tug away from the tow. Again a few meters of wire is veered, winch brakes squealing, but the tow has started to rotate and ease forward, following the tug. This happens a few times, then the tug is through the gap and the tow is between the breakwaters. The pilot launch is alongside and an anxious looking pilot hurries to our bridge. Then both tug and tow are in the calm waters inside the breakwaters. Two smallish tugs are heading our direction. There is minimum but constant tension on the tow-wire and the tow follows us meekly towards the ship breaking berth, she's resigned to her fate and given up all resistance - a lamb to the slaughter. We have the assistance of the two smallish harbour tugs in getting our tow alongside where a gang of Spanish riggers seem to take forever to get her secured to the quay.

We then disconnect the big towing-nylon from its pendant and are soon moored alongside in San Tourzy. I was impressed with the way Geordie had brought the tow in - I knew we could never have towed her under power straight in. We, most certainly, would have parted the wire in the swell at the entrance and, once through, we'd never have been able to stop her. Not with the breeze right up her stern we wouldn't. There are, usually, no brakes on a tow! The next operation was to remove all our towing gear. The chains that made up the towing bridle, the main towing pendant and the emergency towing gear - identical except that the emergency pendant is twice as long.

Then there are the pumps and pumping gear, the navigation lights and gas bottles and all the rest of the gear we had rigged in Quebec - all lowered onto the aft deck of a small harbour tug and brought back to the *Salvonía* to be checked and re-stowed.

We had moved to a berth in San Tourzy - and the first one ashore is the steward!

We are not yet moored up and he jumps ashore with his bags and belongings. He's had enough of seafaring and never wants to be near another tug in his life again.

Not that I could blame him, he is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese but has only a few words of English. It must have been a lonely few weeks for him - not being able to socialise and converse in a language he was comfortable with. Also he had a tendency to be sea-sick and the constant motion of the tug and his cutlery, plates, buckets and cleaning gear forever taking off downhill as the tug rolled was, maybe, all just a bit too much for

him. He, we think, wasn't even too interested in getting the money due to him – he just wanted to get away from the tug and go home! He stood on the quayside talking with two Guarda Civil police agents until the ships agent came and his pay-off slip, money and cost of a ticket home was handed over to him.

Meanwhile there is a bunker barge alongside – refilling the tug's fuel tanks. Later, in the afternoon, the ship chandler arrives with a lorry-load of provisions. This too is checked, counted and stowed.

Everything stops when the agent's runner boards and, a few minutes later, a bundle of letters is pushed into my hands.

MAIL! that has to be distributed to willing recipients. Work is at a standstill while letters are read. Letters from girlfriends, mother, tax-man, wife, someone else's wife or an irate bank manager. Mostly there are smiles and beaming faces – only one or two are quiet and sneak off to be alone. I'm delighted to learn that Peter and Keith seem to have been kept at a respectable distance. One by one we stow our letters – to be read and re-read at future opportunities – and resume our tasks, and by late evening the tug is back to full readiness – fuel sufficient for 65days steaming, water and provisions sufficient for three months.

O.K. The big question is: Who wants to be night-watchman? No one fancies the job! A sailor, the one who declined a second trip on the work boat, is "volunteered" and warned to stay awake and adjust the mooring lines when the tide comes in. He was a bit less than delighted with his imposed responsibilities.

Then there is a dash to the showers and a queue at the Old Man's cabin. Along with the mail the agent has brought large wads of pesetas – cash for the boys. It is the Sparky who dishes out the cash, the Old Man records the transactions. Each receives the money he has asked for, counts it and signs the cash book. Then each is individually instructed "Be back in time for breakfast."

The Bosun had been complaining about guts-ache for a week or more so, as soon as we had moored alongside, he was packed off to the quack's. Turns out he's got something wrong inside and needs an operation. Word is sent to London to send out a new bosun as well as a fresh steward.

I had a few beers with Geordie Crawford then ambled off ashore myself. A few slurps in various places then, at a not too unrespectable hour, back on board and to bed!

Next morning, breakfast time, and not a soul is stirring below decks. Not many on the upper deck either. The Sparky, as ever, is fiddling with the tuning dials of his radios, The Chief Engineer is sitting on the aft mooring bits, slurping tea from his enormous mug. Geordie, the Captain is in the wheelhouse doing something with charts. I raid the galley

fridge and fry up enough breakfast for the Sparky, the Chief Engineer, the Captain and myself. Then call them to come and eat.

There is still plenty of work that needs to be done – most of the towing gear is still piled on our aft deck – this needs to be checked for damage and re-stowed. A lot of the provisions we had loaded needs to be unpacked and properly stored. Considering the condition of our crew there is probably enough work to keep ‘em occupied for the best part of the day.

Throughout the morning and early afternoon various dishevelled figures rouse and are seen moping about, slurping strong tea from oversized mugs. Geordie tells me that Fred Fletcher is en-route, the replacement for the bosun that had been paid-off sick the day previous.

Late that afternoon we unmoor and proceed to an anchorage within the shelter of the breakwaters.

Waiting.

The following afternoon Fred, the new bosun and a replacement steward arrive on board. Fred carries yet more mail with him. Then the Sparky is on the bridge with his slip of paper. “Proceed economical Falmouth” reads the decoded message and away we go.

The next afternoon all is changed “Proceed economical Vigo.” is received. We alter course. We are hardly settled on our new course when the Sparky is on the bridge again with a slip of paper in his hand an “X-X-X “ message from a ship half way between us and the Azores. He has “ Engine-room on fire!”

Off we go – this time at maximum power. The weather is as fine as it can get – not a cloud in the sky, flat calm and not a breath of wind. We make good speed.

The casualty then reports – “Fire extinguished – need tug”. That’s us, we reason. Then, we are about fifty miles, or less, from his position and a Bugsier tug connects up and starts towing him towards Falmouth. Dammit – another one missed!

We stop and drift for a day and a half, awaiting instructions from London Office. Then “Proceed economical Marseilles” is received and course is set towards the Gibraltar Straits. En-route we deviate off to the west for an hour or two and connect to a Liberian cargo vessel. They had made a miscalculation of fuel consumption/miles from USA to Spain. They’d not made any great allowance for inclement conditions then had a few days of strong head winds during which they discovered that the last few tons of fuel in their last fuel tank was actually water!

Even though she was a ‘Dead Ship’ – no power at all, it was a simple enough job for us, and we hand him over to harbour tugs a mile or so outside Cadiz. This job had been done

on a “Lump Sum” basis – not nearly worth as much as a Salvage Contract on an Open Form but there were numerous harbour tug companies also bidding for the job. It seems that we got the contract because we were but a few hours away. Still, there would be a Shekel or two extra at pay off – not an awful lot but every penny counts.

The whole voyage from Bilbao to Marseilles was made in calm conditions – not even a wisp of a cloud, anytime, anywhere in the sky. Hardly more than a ripple on the water’s surface. Our wake and bow-wave are clearly visible to the razor-sharp horizon. In Marseilles I purchase a .22 rifle, telescopic sights and 2000 rounds of ammunition. Big Fred invests in some expensive fishing gear.

Everyone has a few nights ashore – if it wasn’t for the attitude of the indigenous, Marseilles would be a wonderful place for a sailor, come night time. During the day we are busy rigging our next tow – we were to take it through the Panama Canal to New Caledonia, an island some way off the North-East coast of Australia.

They called it a ‘Rig tender’ but to me it was just a floating crane.

A big one.

Van Gastel had been in Marseilles prior to our arrival and had given instructions about how the thing should be made ready for towage. Christ knows where they dredged up the gang that did the work, for after Van Gastel had given his instructions and had disappeared I had to spend the next day and a half undoing and re-doing a lot of their work. Geordie Crawford, as ever, was unflustered about the delay but did mention that there was a stage when I had to accept what had been done and we’d be gone.

Myself, I’d have spent another two or three days getting everything to my liking but the Old Man is the boss and he has his bosses breathing down his neck too. So we departed into a blood-red sunset on a warm, almost calm, evening with yachts and speed-boats playing around or returning to their berths, fowls flocking to roost. The wind, when I came on watch the next morning, had freshened and blew from dead ahead.

Nothing too exciting, Bft 5 or 6 with a steep little swell that sent sheets of spray and some light water over the fore-part of the tow.

I had it arranged with Crawford to leave the initial inspection of the tow until just before the Straits of Gibraltar, so we could relax for a day or so and get settled into the daily routine of a long ocean passage.

A vain hope!

A day or so later, at morning-stars time, the wind still just as fresh, the swell a bit heavier and the tow seems to have a slight list – difficult to say, she’s at the end of a bit more than 600 mtrs of towing gear and is regularly covered by sheets of white spray. Also, maybe,

she looks a bit down by the head. Not certain, better call the Old Man. Stars are forgotten and the tow scrutinized through the binoculars. Once on the bridge Geordie Crawford does not hesitate but orders power to be reduced and course altered towards the land.

“We’ll get her into the lee, take the boat, go have a look-see”. says he.

He scribbles a message for the Sparky to send off, tells me to keep a close eye on her and goes back to his bunk for an hour or so. Cool!

That afternoon and we are anchored in very shallow water within the shelter of Almeria Bay and two diesel salvage pumps are spurting out the water that had flooded down the spurling pipes. ‘*Cingalaise*’ had four anchors, each with chain cable. One at each corner.

Now, the way to cement up a spurling pipe is to first stuff a bundle of rags halfway down the pipe then fill it with a strong mixture of sand and cement. A handful of soda in the mix will significantly shorten the setting and curing time. What our French friends had done was to cut a disc out of triple-plywood, slotted it over the chain and plastered the lot over with a handful or two of cement. Indistinguishable from a properly done job but much easier and quicker.

Of course breaking seas had been sweeping over the deck and had dislodged the lot, and the tow had started to fill through the spurling pipes. It took more than a full day to get her dry and re-plug the four spurling pipes. It was always a pleasure working with Crawford on a job like that.

He’d ask you what you were going to do, sometimes add a bit of advice of his own and finish with, “Aye, Jimmy?” and look you straight in the eye, “Aye?” You would answer with “Aye!” and he would leave you to it.

Captains Crawford and Leggate were the only people that I ever let call me “Jimmy”

Big Fred, was the bosun, Geordie Hatch the senior A.B. and you didn’t have to tell either of them too much about tugs or towing either. Fred was big and very strong and knew tugs and their gear and what could be done with them. Hatchy, the A.B. was stocky and had a very pleasant nature, it was great working with him as well. The Second Mate had spent many years in distant water trawlers, a good enough seaman but knew very little about anything to do with towing. To our Second Mate, dragging a net along the bottom of the sea was “Towing”.

Eventually the for’d compartments of the tow were pumped dry, the four spurling pipes properly cemented up and we weighed anchor and continued on our way. Well, we had done our tow inspection, maybe a day or so earlier than initially planned, so the next one would be awhile after we had passed Gibraltar - and so the voyage was resumed. While

we were hauling the tow offshore from Rocas Bay, within Almeria Bay, the wind dropped to dead calm conditions and, within an hour or so, fog set in.

Thick, evil and dripping!

Thereafter, until the fog lifted, it was doubled-up watches, continuous radar plotting and, to keep us awake and on our toes, there were numerous close shaves with Kamikaze Spanish fishing boats. High speed tuna fishers.

We skirted close to the south Spanish coast, taking advantage of the occasional west-going counter current that may be encountered there. Never did we get a glimpse of anything in our thick swirling shroud though. The tow-wire had been kept short, two or three hundred metres or so and we, for days, could not see even a vague outline of our charge, so thick was the fog.

Very early in the morning, all is pitch black, and it feels like I've been radar-plotting for most of my life – Crawford calls me from the radar set to the starboard bridge wing.

“Look up” says he. I look vertically upwards but see nothing.

“Over there!” He twists my head in the approximate direction. Nothing. Then, a red light in the sky, flashing.

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“G B GB GB”

“Gibraltar Aero beacon – fog’s about to lift!” says he. And so it did, a few hours later and it started to break into banks. Then Europa light was showing clear; shortly thereafter the lights of Gibraltar, too, could be clearly seen and there wasn’t as much as a wisp of fog to be sighted anywhere. We lengthen the tow-wire out an extra few hundred metres and Europa Point is just abaft the beam to starboard.

“Right, Jimmy. We can go onto normal watches again” says Crawford, “Give me a shout if there is any change in the weather” and finishes with his customary “Aye, Jimmy?” then the look, “Aye?” “Aye” says I, but he is already halfway to his cabin. I look at the bridge clock 03:45, almost my watch – shit!

The second mate had proved to be a bit slow and uncertain with his radar plotting so had been excluded from most of that bit of fun. That meant, except for the occasional snooze, that I had been, almost continually, glued to the radar set for a few days. Dense fog with sometimes a dozen or so erratically moving targets on the screen is no time to start practising the exercises taught at nautical college – there is, maybe, a wee bit too much at stake and the results of a plotting mistake may not always have been correctable! That was

a long, long watch and Tarifa was approaching four points on the bow before Crawford again arrives on the bridge.

That handover surely ranks high on the list of fastest handovers in maritime history. I was gone from the bridge and asleep before the Old Man had wedged his tea-mug into the rack just for'd of the radar. When I next showed up on the bridge, that afternoon, Cabo Espartel was away abaft the port beam – we were away and clear from land. The shipping was getting more scarce and by the time Geordie again took over at 20:00 there wasn't a light to be seen anywhere. That was the way things were supposed to be – we could then fit into the regular and relaxing fair-weather towing routine.

After leaving the Gibraltar Straits there followed a few days of fresh, breezy weather then a long period of calm with a low glassy swell, scattered light cumulus, sargasso weed and flying fish.

On Saturday mornings the boat would be launched and I'd go have a quick shufti that all was O.K. on the tow. There was never anything remarkable. I'd give the diesel pumps a turn or two with the starting handle and be back on board within the hour. Then, in Trade Wind conditions, the islands of Marie Galante and Dominique are passed and the Caribbean is entered. The wind continues to freshen slightly and cloud cover increases. The rain showers become more frequent, squally and heavier – then we are off the breakwater to the northern entrance to the Panama Canal.

Out come a pair of Yankee harbour tugs and take over the tow from us. Seems that we will not tow the *Cingalaise* through the canal but that we will receive her once again on the Pacific side, the Yankee tugs will take her through. It transpires that the owners of the unit had sent a couple of engineers to assess the damage that had been done by the water that had previously flooded into her.

Great!

We would not even have to look after our own tow. That means a night ashore!

Colon is, maybe, not the world's nicest town but there are bars enough and dives a'plenty, enough to accommodate all who would care to visit. Not the best and safest place to go ashore on your own though, not at night it isn't. Anyway, there is Fred the bosun, Hatchy an A.B., "Hoefin-Loefin" the second engineer and myself in a pokey wee bar, well after midnight. Cuba-Libre is the drink of the night and we are all pleasantly sloshed when a couple of military police saunter in, sleep-sticks swinging.

One a Yank and the other a Panamanian – seems they have to work together. The Yank says something to Fred who tells him to 'eff off. The Yank takes offence, he's a big bugger – bigger than Fred who is big enough. So the Yank and the Panamanian Military

Police hustle Fred out the door. There is no way we are going to let this go on, and chairs and the table are overturned in our haste to rescue Fred.

I'm first in line as we burst through the door – the Panamanian is waiting and I get the point of his weighted night-stick prodded into my solar plexus – rather more forcibly than the situation warranted! Cuba Libre comes squirting out my nostrils – I cannot breathe! The rest are behind me, jostling and pushing to get out. I get a second severe jab in the same place, vomit up some more juice and feebly try to take a swipe at the bastard. Then there is a white painted sleep-stick across my throat and I'm shoved against the wall, helpless.

Seems that the Yanks work in pairs and so do the Panamanians, so there are four to a patrol – we didn't know this. I'm helpless and the rest are taken aback by the sight of the other three with their long, weighted, sleep-sticks at the ready; they all have large pistols in their belts. There is no further attempt to rescue Fred. Fred is forced to apologise individually to each of them. Then each one of us has to go through the same routine. They then saunter off to inspect the next bar, sleep-sticks swinging.

The Panama Canal was transited, mostly in torrential rain, and we moored up in Panama City on the Pacific side. Transpires that the engineers from France are doing things to the machinery on the tow and there is time for a second night ashore. This time Hoefin-Loefin stays aboard – we have to, as usual, bunker to the brim and that is his responsibility.

If Colon was pretty lawless, Panama City was dangerous – at least the bit that we ended up in was. Each time we entered a bar, the buzz of conversation would still and every face in the place would turn our way. Apart from the occasional negro, every face in those bars was brown. Glaring animosity visible in each pair of eyes.



*Cheers!!*

A quick drink, Cuba Libre, gulped down in haste, and we'd move on. Then a bar where, mostly, the faces were coffee coloured or lighter. Still the atmosphere was tense and the feeling of eyes-on-the-back-of-the-neck was overpowering.

A couple of drinks, then the bartender leans over and whispers, "Amigoes, Maybe better you go home. Maybe better you go home soon".

We needed no second warning and so our night's revelry fizzled out and died.

**To be concluded**

## The Royal Navy Sword (Part 1)

by Glyn L. Evans

On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1580 the Queen's Court issued an edict that "no person shall wear any sword, rapier or suchlike weapon that shall pass the length of one yard and half a quarter of the blade, at the uttermost." By my calculation that equals 40.5 inches, almost 10 inches longer than the current 31 inch blade adopted as standard for the Royal Navy in 1929. The edict is taken from "The Mark of the Sword by Tom Girtin, a Narrative History of the Cutlers' Company 1189 – 1975" a copy of which I found by chance in the Library of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners aboard *HQS Wellington*.

In September, 2011, I had taken the opportunity to examine the HCMM collection of Royal Navy swords kept in the Library, and was delighted to find there were no Government Health & Safety notices warning of the dangers of handling swords or restricting same to persons over the age of 18. Thus I was able to take a close look at the three swords there [another was out on loan] all with the benefit of their original scabbards. The latter, made of black leather, have three gilded brass reinforcements, the top and middle each having a ring for the sword belt and the bottom having extra reinforcement against wear and tear when possibly dragged along a deck or parade ground.

Signs of etching on the oldest blade have all but gone although the circular "proved" mark is there, just under the hilt on a blade that is still bright metal with no sign of rusting. Manufacturers recommend that owners give the blade a thin coating of Vaseline to prevent rusting and that, when handling the blade, cotton gloves should be worn. One easy way to achieve a badly tarnished sword blade is to cut a wedding cake with it! Fine etching is retained on the other two swords with the Royal Coat of Arms on one side and the Royal Navy fouled anchor surmounted by a crown on the other. I had hoped the blades might reveal, by the etching thereon, the names of the owners, through which to trace age, history and provenance, but this was not to be.

Mention UK sword manufacture and the name most likely to spring to mind would be that of Wilkinson, despite the fact that this company ceased sword-making in August 2005 to concentrate on the razor side of the business. The proof of the quality of Wilkinson swords lies in their continued existence, either in museums, private collections or in Service use today. These latter examples are often 100-year-old swords, handed down through three generations of naval families and still in first class condition, although possibly refurbished. For cadets passing out as Royal Navy officers today, looking to have an old sword refurbished or to buy a new, top quality, wholly British manufactured sword, their search might take them to a workshop deep into the Sussex countryside, where the tradition of excellence in sword manufacture and refurbishment continues.

Recently, wanting an old sword of mine refurbished, I contacted Crisp & Sons of Framfield, East Sussex, and was invited there by the Sales Director, Malcolm Ordever, to have a conducted tour of the works. The outside of the premises, long, single storey

former agricultural buildings, gave no hint of the industry carried out within. Craftsmen using tools, machines and methods almost 200 years old are turning out exquisite examples of the sword cutler's art, with each stage of the process requiring a Master of that particular skill. The range of new swords offers fighting quality, high carbon tempered and acid etched blades, fish-skin covered wooden core grips and highly decorated hilts manufactured to MoD specification.

The Sword Cutler was traditionally an assembler who bought in the component parts from skilled craftsmen to assemble and produce the finished article. The Cutler then sold unmarked swords to retailers who had the right to etch their own names on the swords they sold. Crisp & Sons bring under one roof many of the trades and experts still employed in sword production today. The standard blade for a Royal Navy sword starts as a bar of special sword steel, smelted and forge-rolled to specification, being then cut and ground to the correct section. In the hands of the Master Polisher the blade passes through six stages of polishing to obtain the final mirror finish. By a wax transfer process the Master Etcher then puts the design on the blade, hand-painting the areas not required to be attacked by the acid during the final etching process.

The handguard components are either cast or stamped out of brass, dished in a press to give them the required contour then finely polished prior to being gold-plated. The grip has a wooden core covered with sunray fish skin, bound with gold-plated wire. Rawhide scabbards are hand sewn wet over brass mandrels then oven baked to harden them. Finally the sword is assembled and finely fettled by the Master Cutler, its serial number being entered into the record books, the records then presented to Leeds Armoury for historical preservation and reference.

From cutting edge technology to ceremonial use, The Royal Navy Sword (Part 2) records my visit to Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth to see the Cadet Officers being put through their Parade Drill.

**Part 2 will be published in the next magazine**

This event took place at The Royal Beach Hotel in Southsea on the 24th/25<sup>th</sup> July this year. The aim of the event was to introduce a “family feeling” amongst the members and their guests in a somewhat less formal and short occasion than a function such as Ladies Night.

Some of us assembled on the Friday night where we had a table in the restaurant with excellent food and everyone going to bed much later than expected.

After breakfast on the Saturday morning, many of us took the opportunity to witness the “Americas Cup” yacht racing whilst others visited attractions such as HMS Warrior/Victory/Mary Rose etc. The Social programme found us at the Invincible Suite of the hotel for our Gala Dinner which started with “Up Spirits” (a tot of Naval Rum) followed by a wine reception and an excellent meal. Unfortunately, only 35 members and guests from our Club took advantage of this brilliant event.

Our Isle of White Tours Representative was Gloria who met us on arrival and looked after everything throughout our stay, ensuring that all ran smoothly; she was even there to see us depart!

I asked those who attended this event to submit comments on the occasion and also if they would attend again should it be rescheduled; some of the comments I received are as follows: -

*“The hotel was excellent with the staff & food likewise. My wife & I were made to feel very welcome and it was a pleasure to take part”.*

*“I cannot think of anything which would have improved the Gala Dinner and my wife and I enjoyed the evening in full and would most certainly attend next year should the event be repeated. We would be happy to stay in Southsea as there is always a lot to see there but we wouldn't rule out a different location. We would stay for at least two nights anyway”.*

*“I was very happy. I have a hesitation about saying yes as members who turned up for 2 nights were limited in number and those extra that attended the Gala dinner were local or hard core members”.*

*“The Saturday evening reunion dinner was excellent. The venue was ideal and the catering organisation was first class. The meal was first class and plentiful. (Excellent choice of menu John!) My wife and I both had a very entertaining evening and really enjoyed ourselves with the splendid company on our table. Very little could have made this particular event better. It was well organised, executed and had a relaxed atmosphere to it, this allowed everyone to enjoy the evening”.*

Everyone stated that they would attend again should the event be repeated.

I have contacted IOW Tours concerning a repeat during the summer next year but, with such low numbers attending this year, it might not be possible for the hotel to hold the rooms we would require. When I first had the idea I felt that - with our membership being in excess of 200 and with a similar number of wives and partners - it had the potential of being a "sell out"; unfortunately you can't win them all.



*Capt. Chris Esplin-Jones welcomes everybody to the Reunion Weekend at Southsea*

## Remembrance Sunday at Tower Hill



Our President, Captain Chris Esplin-Jones C.B.E. R.N., laid our Club wreath at the Armistice Service held at the Merchant Navy Memorial in the grounds of Trinity House. The weather kept fine throughout the proceedings and many of our members attended in support.

The pictures were provided by Alan Cash.



# The Seven Seas Club

TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER THE COMRADESHIP OF THE SEA

## SLOP CHEST

### Club Tie

Multi-motive	£20.00
If posted	£22.00

### Ten Year Silk Tie

Multi-motive Roman Numeral <b>X</b>	£20.00
If posted	£22.00

### Twenty Five Year Silk Tie

Single-motive Roman Numeral <b>XXV</b>	£20.00
If posted	£22.00

### Shield

The Club Crest in enamel, mounted on a wooden shield	£20.00
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### Club Burgee

18 inches, 12 inches on truck	£15.00
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### Cufflinks

Bearing Club Crest, per pair	£15.00
New Version	£17.50
Postage	£2.00

For any of the above please contact

Neil McAlpine . Tel: 0208 397 3094, e-mail: nmcalpine1952@hotmail.co.uk

### Seven Seas Sweatshirts

Members are reminded that Sweatshirts

In Navy. Grey & Red are available in standard Small,  
Medium, Large, Extra Large & Double Extra Large sizes  
from Jeremy Miller at [jeremyandjuliet@btinternet.com](mailto:jeremyandjuliet@btinternet.com)

