



# The Seven Seas Club

TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER THE COMRADESHIP OF THE SEA\*

*The Official Organ of the Seven Seas Club*



*Compass and Mastheads  
Kenneth Shoemith*

## Volume 92, No.2.

### WINTER 2016

# OFFICERS

***President*** – Mr. Stephen Wheatley

***Immediate Past President*** – Capt. Chris Esplin-Jones CBE

***Vice President*** – Mr. Louis Roskell

***Hon. Secretary*** – Mr. Ray Kay

***Hon. Treasurer*** – Mr. Derek Bevan

***Hon. Membership & Dinner Secretary*** – Mr. Dominique Watson

***Hon. Almoner*** – Mr. Martin Earp

***Hon. Magazine Editor*** – Mr. John Callcut

***Hon. Archivist*** – Mr. David Watson

***Club Goods Custodian*** – Mr. Neil McAlpine

***Committee Members*** – Mr. Eugene Kelf & Mr. Stephen King,

***Hon. Life Members*** – Mr. Paul Antrobus, Mr. George Kingston,  
Capt. David Matthews, Capt. Richard Woodman LVO., FRHistFNI,  
Mr. Ray Williams & Cdr. John Mankerty OBE., RN.

***Committee Advisor on Historic and Protocol Matters and Father of the Club*** -  
Cdr. John Mankerty OBE., RN

***Hon. Chaplains*** – Revd. Canon Paul Thomas OBE., & Revd. Peter Dennett

***Hon. Auditor*** – Mr. M.J. Buck

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

# CONTENTS

Editorial  
President's Address  
Secretary's Corner  
Dinner / Membership Secretary's Report  
Club Dates and Speakers

## Sister Clubs:

Australia & South Africa

Dinner Photographs

## Features

<i>Stirling Castle</i> off Bijouga Breakers	by Louis Roskell
The loss of the <i>Herzogin Cecilie</i>	by John Callcut
Possible fate of the <i>Veronica</i>	by Malcolm Marston
The <i>Seven Seas</i> – Square Rigger	by John Callcut
The Baxter and Grimshaw Trust	by Paul Antrobus
Annual National Service for Seafarers	
Another Wee Yarn	by Jim Killen
Down the Thames and up the Medway	by Martin Earp
The Strange Case of the <i>ss Wattimoo</i>	
North to Alaska	by Bob Jones
Daring Class Destroyers	by John Callcut
Annual ASTO Small Boats Race	
Remembrance Sunday at the Merchant Navy Memorial	
<i>RMS St. Helena</i>	by Glyn L. Evans

Slop Chest

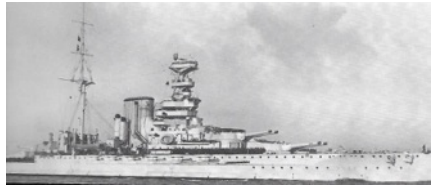
*Front Cover* – ‘Conway’ and ‘Mauretania’ by Kenneth Shoesmith

## EDITORIAL

It was announced in our local paper in October that Vic Viner of Dorking had died at the age of 99. He was the world's longest serving Scout, having joined the movement in 1925 and met Lord Baden-Powell. What I didn't know was that he was a 'beach master' who helped marshal troops onto the small ships during the evacuation at Dunkirk. He spent six days on the beach. Vic was a member of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships, and Ian Gilbert - who was our speaker at the September dinner - believed that he was the last surviving 'beach master'.

Until a few years ago, when a ship was at sea, the Radio Officer was the only person who could communicate directly with the outside world! Terry Llewellyn was a Merchant Navy Radio Officer; one of the 'old school' who spent many hours each day rattling out the ship's messages on the Morse key. Jim Killen introduced Terry to the club a few years ago and he has reported that Terry passed away on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Another Merchantman - an 'Old Hand' - has slipped his cable.

You will see from the front cover that I have rung the changes and put in a fresh picture which was kindly supplied by Glyn Evans. It was painted by Kenneth Shoemsmith and depicts the *Conway*, the *Mauretania* and a battleship. Could it be *HMS Queen Elizabeth* following her conversion in 1927? I'm sure that one of our knowledgeable members will come up with an answer.



It is surely not unreasonable for relatives and descendants of those lost at sea to consider that the ships their loved ones were serving on should remain undisturbed. In November it was announced that HM Ships *Exeter* and *Encounter*, a large portion of *HMS Electra*, an American submarine and several Dutch warships have all been raised for their scrap value, all off the coast of Indonesia. With modern surveillance equipment it doesn't seem possible that this act could have gone undetected!

I would like to thank everyone who has submitted articles and pictures. It is good to see Martin Earp back in the saddle after his frightening accident. Please accept my apologies if you don't find your piece in this magazine ... it is not forgotten.

John Callcut - [john.callcut@btinternet.com](mailto:john.callcut@btinternet.com)



## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



As many of you will know from personal experience, it is both a real and rare privilege to be the President of the Seven Seas Club and I am very much enjoying my term in office.

I have had the great pleasure of presiding over a number of very interesting and thoroughly enjoyable dinners.

We started the season off with a bang with Mr Ian Gilbert - Immediate Past President of the Dunkirk Little Ships Club - who gave us a fascinating account of Operation Dynamo, the evacuation from Dunkirk in May 1940. This was an especially interesting topic for me as my Grandfather, George Dickenson, was in the British Expeditionary Force and was one of those rescued by the Little Ships. Ian clearly enjoyed himself as he has applied and been accepted as a member of the Seven Seas Club.

For Trafalgar Night we were graced with the presence of Admiral (Retd) Sir Ian Forbes KCB., CBE who proposed “The Immortal Memory” and in November we were fortunate enough to have Capt. Guy Brocklebank R.N. who gave us a very interesting and amusing talk about his family firm Thos & John Brocklebank – Britain’s oldest shipping company.

In addition to our dinners I have also been called upon to represent the Club at a number of maritime events.

The first of these was to award the Club’s “First Across the Line” trophy at the end of the Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO) regatta in the Isle of Wight. This year the trophy was won by the Greig City Academy, an Inner London school (located only two miles from my home in North London) which beat off stiff competition from 28 other boats. Sailing at the Greig City Academy has been a great success and is a truly inspirational story, and we plan

to have the man who had the vision to start the programme join us as our guest speaker in the New Year.

The second representative occasion was at the Annual National Service for Seafarers which was held in October in St Paul's Cathedral. I was delighted to be greeted by a substantial group of Seven Seas Club members and their wives, and to find that - in recognition of the Club's standing - we were seated close to the dignitaries under the dome. (If you haven't been to this spectacular service, I would recommend that you get into the Honorary Secretary's ballot early for next year's service, to make sure that you get a ticket.) To round off a very enjoyable afternoon, those present retired to a local hostelry for well-earned refreshment.

The third event was the laying of a wreath at the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill on Remembrance Sunday. As most of you probably know I am a civvy, so have never taken part in a service of this type and neither can I march. It was a very grand and suitably sombre occasion and I am indebted to one of my RNLI crewmates (an ex-soldier) who was, by my good fortune, sat next to me; he kept me on the straight and narrow by whispering very clear words of command to make sure that I got it right. I am not sure what the rest of the company thought but I do believe we did the Club proud. The formal service was followed by a reception in Trinity House as guests of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

As I write this half-term report, my wife Barbara is down stairs wrapping up the ladies' Christmas gifts and assembling the table decorations ahead of our Christmas dinner on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December. I am looking forward to the dinner and hope to meet as many of you and your partners as possible on the evening.

On your behalf I would like to take this opportunity of publicly thanking the Club's Committee Members. We should never take for granted the time that each of them spends on the Club's business to make sure that it all runs smoothly.

In conclusion with the festive season nearly upon us I would like to take this opportunity to personally wish all of the members of the Seven Seas Club and their families a merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous new year.

Stephen Wheatley

\*\*\*\*\*

Ed. Pictures of the Annual National Service for Seafarers, Remembrance Day Service at Tower Hill and the ASTO regatta appear later in the magazine.

## SECRETARY'S CORNER

It's been a busy time for your Hon. Sec and Committee since the last edition. As well as the usual Dinners, 25 members and guests enjoyed the Annual National Service for Seafarers. After the service in St. Paul's we enjoyed pleasant company and a meal in a local pub. Do remember to put this enjoyable and uplifting evening in your diary for next year. On Remembrance Sunday, our President - accompanied by Barbara - laid a wreath at the Merchant Navy Memorial in Trinity Square. He was supported by a group of members and guests, and again we enjoyed welcome refreshment and comradeship at a nearby hostelry in the Minories after the service.

More generally our club seems to be going from strength to strength. We have had some fine dinners already this season, enhanced by entertaining, illuminating and erudite speakers. The line-up for 2017 promises to navigate a similar route, so ensure your course is plotted to enjoy some good speakers, food and company to brighten the dark winter evenings.

In the same vein, you have recruited some very distinguished new members recently and I am sure they will enhance our dinners for many years to come. New members are, of course, always welcome but our club is growing and we may soon reach a situation where we need to ration places at our dinners, which would be a most unwelcome development.

Over recent months I've been in contact with a small number of older members who can no longer come to our events because the voyage into London has become onerous for them. We will continue to send them the magazine and will offer them as much comradeship as we can. If you know of a member who is unwell or infirm, please do let me or Martin Earp our Almoner know, so that we can offer support, or at least some encouragement and good wishes.

That's it from me for now.

Ray Kay – Hon. Secretary

sschonsec@gmail.com

## DINNER/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Our membership continues to swell, resulting in greater numbers at our dinners.

This is a healthy state to be in when one considers the economy, and the NLC continue to feed us at a very reasonable rate (unchanged for many years) and provide us with good food and service; even their main dining room costs three times what we pay for a dinner. For those who might wonder, we do not need to put a cap on membership, but this is under constant review and we are well aware of the requirement should dinners become oversubscribed. Not an issue yet.....

On the Dinner side of things, the membership is more active and our current President has reaped the benefit with increasing attendances - and interesting speakers who have themselves then joined our Club.

September saw Ian Gilbert (owner of two Dunkirk Little Ships) give us a part 1 talk on the Dunkirk Little Ships, an insight into what really happened and the importance of it all. For me a most personally interesting talk as my Grandfather (a Captain) was at Dunkirk with his minesweeper and my wife's grandfather had had his river-boat commandeered by the Navy, never to be seen again.

In October Admiral Sir Ian Forbes officiated at our Trafalgar night and was pleased to meet up with a number of our members who had served under him, which made it a far more relaxed affair.

In November our own Guy Brocklebank gave a fun and interesting talk on his family company and anecdotes. Those present said that they would happily have let him continue for another hour, such was the interest and light-heartedness of it all.

Now we look forward to Christmas, and our Dinner which at this point in time is sold out (111 places). So all that remains for me to say is Merry Christmas, and may the New Year bring good health and happiness to you all. Thank you for your support in 2016 and we hope that 2017 will be better still.

Dominique Watson  
Hon. Dinner & Membership Secretary  
[dominique-watson@live.co.uk](mailto:dominique-watson@live.co.uk)

### CLUB DATES & SPEAKERS - 2017

26<sup>th</sup> January - Mr Jon Holt, Teacher at Greig Academy and the inspiration and driving force behind *Scaramouche* - winner of the SSTrophy for the last two years.

23<sup>rd</sup> February - Mr Alan Watson, Chairman of Trustees and Captain of the *Medusa*.

30<sup>th</sup> March - Vice Admiral Paul Boissier CB., MA., MSc., CEO of the RNLI.

28<sup>th</sup> April - James Stevens Chairman of ASTO and former training manager of the RYA.

25<sup>th</sup> May - AGM, with Shep Woolley and the 'ansome cabin boys.

### SISTER CLUBS

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

The Seven Seas Club in Australia has recently lost a distinguished member. Brian Allison has written the following: Distinguished Member and Past President Captain Doug Bourne-Jones ,OAM,MN crossed the bar on Saturday morning , 5<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at his Leabrook home in the presence of his family. As we are all aware, Doug has played an important role over thirty years in forming and administering our Club , in developing and maintaining much of our traditions, and generally being a cornerstone of our Club . He will be sadly missed by all. Our thoughts are with his wife, Maureen and daughter Angela.

**South Africa** – <http://www.sevensaasclub.co.za>

We have heard that Will Barker is not too well and has had to have one of his toes removed due to an infection that failed to heal. We have sent him good wishes.

## DINNERS

Photographs: John Callcut and Martyn Taylor

29<sup>th</sup> September 2016 - Attendees 89



*Our guest speaker Ian Gilbert, former Commodore of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships*

Trafalgar Dinner, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 – Attendees 88



*Current and former Presidents*



*President Stephen Wheatley presents the Chip Leonard Anchor to Ray Kay*



*The President with our honoured guest Admiral (Retd.) Sir Ian Forbes, KCB., CBE.*



*‘They also served’ Mick Fryatt, Sir Ian and Dennis Wing*

17<sup>th</sup> November 2016 – Attendees 68



*Capt. Guy Brocklebank RN with our President*

## The *Stirling Castle* off Bijouga Breakers



Every Thursday afternoon at 4.0pm, a Union Castle Liner left Southampton for “Sunny South Africa”, on a round voyage which lasted almost exactly six weeks. Realising that the South American Saint Line was probably not going to last much longer, I joined the Union Castle Line (known as The Lavender Hull Mob) and sailed from Southampton on the *Capetown Castle* as a junior navigating officer. Thus I entered the world of passenger liners where one could know to the minute the time of arrival back in the UK.

A memorable experience was returning from the Cape with the then Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan and his wife as passengers. The rather creaky ship’s orchestra played “Land of Hope and Glory”, as he and his entourage boarded in Capetown. Unofficially, I was a sort of “doggie”, to him for the run home. The ship could carry about 800 passengers as well as lifting 10,000 tons of cargo in seven holds with over a hundred compartments (many refrigerated) in total. We usually carried a quantity of gold, referred to as “specie”, destined for the Bank of England. Ship’s officers had complete access to all public areas (even the First Class Lounge Bar), provided that they were dressed in the correct rig of the day and, of course, behaved like gentlemen.

A year later I transferred to the *Stirling Castle* (pictured above). She was 25 years old and in WW2 had been mostly on the North Atlantic as a troop ship. When I joined her she appeared immaculate but, in the engine room, the aged B&W diesel engines gave the engineers some hard work.

On one occasion we carried the MCC to South Africa and I can distinctly recall the squeak of Titmus’s plimsolls as he dismissed me, first ball, in a game of deck cricket. I was lucky to survive. Sadly, the advent of the Jumbo Jet heralded the end of these great ships. “Times were a-changing”.

Louis Roskell

**THE LOSS OF THE *HERZOGIN CECILIE***

**by John Callcut**

Roland Allen, who is setting up the Seven Seas Club website, invited me to his house and there he showed me a magnificent model of the *Herzogin Cecilie* which was made by J.S. Brown of 93 Telegraph Road, Deal, Kent in 1963. It came with a description of the vessel and her history.



This vessel was built in 1902 by Rickmers of Bremerhaven as an ocean-going cadet ship for the North German Lloyd Line, and no expense was spared in making her one of the finest vessels of her class, both in construction and appearance. Built of steel with a registered tonnage of 3,242, her normal crew was Captain, four mates, six Petty Officers, eight Stewards and Cooks and sixty to eighty Cadets. Like all big German sail training ships she was run on naval lines, with everything done very smartly; discipline was strict. She had a very large sail plan with 32,000 square feet of canvas. She remained under the North German Lloyd Line until the end of the First World War, but - being on the West Coast of America when war broke out - she was interred in Chile until it was all over. She was then sailed back to Europe and handed over to the French as part of the war indemnity; it is said that the North German Lloyd Line were very anxious to buy her back again and offered France a very high price for her, but with the war still fresh in their minds they refused to consider the offer. What is certain is that France kept her until 1922, and then sold her to Gustav Erikson of Mariehamn, Finland, for about £4,000 - a figure which would scarcely pay for her sails and gear.

During the ten years that she was owned by Gustav Erikson, her passages from Australia to this country with grain averaged about ninety days, the shortest being the one which was to prove her last. She sailed from Port Lincoln, Australia, on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1936, with a full cargo of grain bound for Falmouth. She arrived in Falmouth on April 23<sup>rd</sup> having made the passage in eighty-six days, the shortest of her career. Receiving orders to discharge at Ipswich, *Herzogin Cecilie* left Falmouth

on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. That night there was a very thick fog and a heavy sea running, and in the early hours of the following morning the ship ran hard aground. She sent up flares and distress rockets which were observed by the Coastguards at 3 a.m. on the morning of Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup>, and the ship was found to be on the rocks close under the cliffs in Sewer Mill Cove, near Salcombe, Devon. The Salcombe Lifeboat was quickly on the scene, but - owing to the heavy seas running - she was unable to get alongside and stood by the ship until daylight. With daylight it was seen that the ship was broadside on to the cliffs and only fifty yards offshore, and was being pounded by heavy seas which were running right over her. At great risk to herself and crew the lifeboat at last managed to get alongside and take off all thirty-two members of her crew, including the Captain's wife and one other lady passenger. She landed them all at Salcombe, where they were all cared for by the Shipwrecked Mariners Society. The ship became a total loss, and so ended the life of one of the finest four-masted barques that was ever built.

This model was built from copies of the plans of the original ship and is correct in every detail; it took approximately twelve hundred hours to build.



**POSSIBLE FATE OF *VERONICA*?**

**by Malcolm Marston**

The sad but spectacular fate of ex MTB *Veronica* in a WW2 film was mentioned by Graham Capel in the Summer 2016 edition of our magazine. This prompted me to speculate about *Veronica*. I'm probably wrong but here goes. If nothing else my schoolboy outing might be of passing interest.

Have you heard of the film "Attack On The Iron Coast"? Its plot was based on the St. Nazaire raid where *HMS Campbelltown* was used to ram and blow up the dock gates to deny this facility to the Tirpitz. Although successful in strategic terms, the price paid by those involved was high. The film was released in 1968 (the year I left school) but was made earlier, hence my suspicion of tying in with the dates mentioned by Graham.

My father took me as a schoolboy to the London Graving Dock (now in the Canary Wharf area) where this film was being made, probably in the mid-1960s. An employee of that company, he had been chauffeuring the star of the film - Lloyd Bridges - to the set, and apparently had been given permission to bring me along to see what was going on. I was very keen to go as, apart from all the mention of film stars etc, they used proper spotlights to scan the sky as though an air raid was in progress. I could see these powerful beams of light from my bedroom window every night over a period of several weeks.

The set around the dry dock had been dressed with "concrete" pillboxes, the office buildings draped with huge red swastika flags, and period military vehicles all around. My father and I watched from the side of an Opel truck with real bullet holes in the front mudguard. It was a little disconcerting when someone called (there was a lot of shouting before each take) for the pillbox at the mouth of the dock to be moved and a man simply pushed the thing a few yards along the quayside!

That night, they were shooting the scenes where the Germans were just boarding the ship that had "rammed" the dock gates. The ship looked like an MTB as I recall: it only had one row of windows around the bridge at head height from the deck and it did not seem very big. The special effects of battle damage and apparently blazing stem to stern were really interesting to see. The windows had matt black masking over them cut in zigzag pattern. The glass that was showing reflected the fires and gave the impression of the windows having been shot out. On deck were cauldrons of fires that were ignited for each take. In reality "how it was done" by the set designers was obvious and did not look very realistic, but how they looked in the final film was very different and convincing - probably all down to camera angles. In the film it all ends in an impressive explosion (but I did not see that being done).

Coincidence? I wonder if this was *Veronica*? I have tried Googling and found a massive amount of information about the making of the film but cannot find anything about the vessel that was used.



Paul Antrobus has recently sent me a short film depicting Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts in 1933. It is a very early colour film and amongst all the pleasure launches and yachts is a square rigger called the *Seven Seas*. (Scuttlebut Europe internet daily blog, no. 3653 17 Aug 2016)

The *Seven Seas* was built in Stockholm in 1912 and was named the *Abraham Rydberg*, a training ship for the Swedish Navy. It was later bought by William S. Gubelmann who took out over 5000 patents for adding and accounting machines. He was known as the 'father of accounting machines'. He sailed the *Seven Seas* in races from Newport to Bermuda against another square rigger called the *Joseph Conrad*.

She was acquired by the United States Navy in 1942 and assumed duties as a station ship at Key West. She was laid up in 1944 once the U-boat threat had lessened, and struck from the list later that year.

## **THE BAXTER & GRIMSHAW TRUST**

**by Paul Antrobus**

### ***Changing with the times to ensure continuity with the past***

***New independent limited company, new management structure, two new director Trustees, new email domain, same focus on helping young disadvantaged people to experience the comradeship of the sea afloat***

The Seven Seas Baxter & Grimshaw Trust became operational in 1990, endowed by the combined estates of Club members Lt Cmdr Bernard Baxter VRD RNVR (Club PP 1973/4) and Surg Lt Cmdr Dr Tony Grimshaw. Their sole aim was to help disadvantaged young people under 25 to experience the comradeship of the sea by participating in a sea voyage with a recognised youth marine training organisation.

Now, in line with modern best practice for charities and many clubs, the Trust has become a limited company, the Seven Seas Baxter and Grimshaw Trustee Ltd, incorporated with effect from 18 March 2015. This retains the Trust as an independent entity, with a board of directors, still with charity status and now with protected liability for itself and the directors and no cross-over liability to the Seven Seas Club. The first annual accounts were submitted to and accepted by Companies House and the Charities Commission in August 2016. The sole aim still remains to help disadvantaged individuals who would otherwise find it impossible to take advantage of sea-going opportunities.

The existing trustees became the first directors, with assigned responsibilities as in any company or club committee management structure.

Last March 2016 two long-serving Trustee Directors stepped down. Capt David Matthews, (PP 1982/3), a Trustee from the 1990 beginning and Trust chairman since 2000, signalled a phased transition retirement before stepping down officially, as did Michael Pinner (PP 1999/2000) after 14 years' dedicated service in effect as executive general secretary.

These losses of first-hand experience of the Trust were balanced out by two new directors joining the board, Club members David Watson (PP 2009/10) in May and immediate Past President Christopher Esplin-Jones in June, bringing new energy and relevant experience to the Trustee company.

SSB&G Trustee Ltd directors now comprise:

Paul Antrobus (Chairman), Cdr Duncan Matthews MBE RN (Grants Sec), Tristan Miller (Treasurer), Ray Williams (Finance Director), George Kingston, David Watson, Capt. Christopher Esplin-Jones CBE RN.

During the change process, grants activity continued unabated, managed by the Grants Secretary.

Grants are made to qualifying individuals towards the cost of sea-training voyages with recognised marine youth training organisations such as the Sea Cadets and Jubilee Sailing Trust. Never the full amount but enough to make a difference, leaving the applicant supported by the involved training organisation to raise the balance. They are typically benchmarked at around 50 per cent maximum and there are typically over 100 grants a year.

The Trustees have two prime responsibilities:

- to maintain the relative value of the invested portfolio, led by Finance Director Ray Williams (PP 1991/2) working with financial adviser firm Charles Stanley Ltd (replacing Brewin Dolphin).
- to assess applicants and make grants up to a yearly budget of the annual income of the capital fund (dividends and interest), typically around £15,000 p.a., led by the Grants Secretary and involving all directors in the decision-making process.

Active fund raising is not part of the brief, thus avoiding being in competition with or fishing in the same pool as the very charities the Trust is indirectly supporting through the individual grants.

In the full calendar year 2015, 131 grants totalling £11,000 were made.

In the six months April to November 2016, 115 grants totalling over £14,000 were made via Sea Cadets (19 separate units), Colchester Institute (Sea Change Sailing Trust), Greig City Academy Scaramouche Project, Jubilee Sailing Trust, Whitehaven Harbour Youth project, Norfolk Home Educators (Cirdan Trust), and Worth Unlimited (Morning Star Trust).

Primary contacts are the Grants Secretary, Cdr. Duncan Matthews MBE, RN, [grantsec@ssbgtrust.com](mailto:grantsec@ssbgtrust.com) or Paul Antrobus [chairman@ssbgtrust.com](mailto:chairman@ssbgtrust.com).

For further information see the leaflet inserted with this magazine. Its purpose is to advance awareness of the Trust, how it works and what the broad criteria are for a grant.

**What does 'disadvantaged' mean?**

Assessing the degree or type of ‘disadvantage’ an applicant has in order to meet the Trust’s rules is not easy in these days of confidentiality of personal data. The Grants Secretary has to use his experience to read between the lines with the training mentors’ and the applicants’ own letters. The letters, mostly hand-written and revealing a regular thread of financial and social hardship in the family (often single parent), learning difficulties and ‘doing my best’, are heartrending – and the thank you letters are heartwarming.

One wrote to ask for help to go on the *TS John Jerwood* (SCC’s 75 foot motor-ship kitted out for sea training) this year as he isn’t old enough yet to go on *TS Royalist*: “I would like to ask you for your help to go on *John Jerwood* in October. I am 13 years old, I am an cadet 1<sup>st</sup> class. I do enjoy boating and would like to go on *Royalist* next year, but my mum may not be able to afford it as my dad has left us a month ago. I help out at all unit events and attend all parades. Yours...”

Another boy wrote: “I am fifteen. I have been offshore before and enjoyed it. I love seaman ship and found that this help me with what I have done in the unit. Sorry about my writing but I do find it hard and find hands on learning easier. I do help out with things the unit is doing.”

To which the unit CO added “... he has tried his hardest writing this letter. He would like to go on our (October) trip. I have added this bit as he was getting stressed.”

And in a thank-you note a girl cadet wrote:

“To whom this may concern

“I would like to thank you for funding on my voyage on the *Royalist*. It was a great experience and one I will treasure.

“I am 14 years old and have been a Sea Cadet from age of 10 then changed to RMC just over a year ago being a cadet has enabled me to do so many things that I am interested in Shooting Sailing Navigation Communications and fund raising for (our unit). I am going to carry out my Duke of Edinburgh Award this year. Without your kind support I would not be able to do such things, and I really appreciate your funding, as I am not missing out on these team building Courses the RMC is like a family and its great to be involved.

“Thank you once again.

“Yours faithfully...”

### **Bernard Baxter’s legacy**

George Kingston and Paul Antrobus (and former member Charles Scoones now removed to New Zealand) are the only remaining Club members who actually sailed under Bernard Baxter’s command in the 1960s, as crew on an aged, almost classic 50ft Fife designed ocean racer *Evenlode* out of Burnham on Crouch.

The late former Club member John Grundy was also in the crew. He ran the Mandy's Corn Exchange restaurant and then the Quayside restaurant, St Katherine's dock, where our Club dinners were held for many years. When John retired we came (thanks to Ray Williams) to the National Liberal Club, our first dinner 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1990.

*Evenlode* mainly participated in the East Anglian offshore racing programme, plus a Fastnet and Cowes to Dinard and Harwich to Hook of Holland races. Baxter was skipper and navigator and ran the yacht along Naval lines, 1<sup>st</sup> mate, 2<sup>nd</sup> mate and proper Naval watches. This was not the B&G Trust at work but maybe an early trial, mentoring young (early twenties) crew on how to sail overnight and handle a run ashore, and what is expected at a more formal booted and suited Mess-like club dinner.

When the owner sold, Baxter's disciplined training had set up the crew to move on to different things. Bernard jumped aboard *Nora*, a typical 32 footer of the era, owned by the late Ernest Silverman (PP 78/79) sailing out of the Crouch Yacht Club.

'Bern-ard', as Ernie called him, with the emphasis on the second syllable, coached and coaxed Ernie to achieve his pinnacle ambition to sail *Nora* over to Ostend. Tony Grimshaw sailed with them too for several years until Bernard hung up his sea boots and moved from London to Leeds where Tony was still a practising surgeon.

George went on to own and race his own Trapper under the Crouch Yacht Club burgee with family as crew, passing on skills and sailing enthusiasm to next generation. He then owned a Beneteau for a transatlantic trip to do a Caribbean season.

Paul went on to crew in world-class offshore racing yachts, competing in the Admiral's Cup, more Fastnets, Sydney-Hobart and Newport- Bermuda races. In 1972, he was sailing master on the Newport-Bermuda overall winner *Noryema VIII*, a 48 footer. Then and to this day she is still the only non-American yacht to win this ocean racing classic. There followed five transatlantic crossings and one passage through the Panama Canal. Meantime introducing his next Antrobus generation to the comradeship of the sea, first in dinghies then offshore.

Charles came back to write with Paul the book 'Swatchway Magic' (published 2012) which revisited the magic of sailing the East Coast rivers and creeks, an appreciation implanted over 50 years ago by the Baxter factor.

Exemplary outcomes from the nascent Baxter Academy which now the B&G Trust can emulate in theory for eternity! The Trustees have a serious duty to make this come true.



*Evenlode*



*T.S. John Jerwood*



*Bernard Baxter c. 1962*

## THE ANNUAL NATIONAL SERVICE FOR SEAFARERS

On the 12<sup>th</sup> October twenty-five members attended the moving Annual National Service for Seafarers at St. Paul's Cathedral. Afterwards we had a convivial meal at the Williamson's Tavern just off Watling Street.



## ANOTHER WEE YARN

by Jim Killen

Captain Leggate had sailed on the old *Metinda III* during the wreck removal of the German First World War warships scuttled in Scapa Flow. He had built up a good relationship with the locals – was well up in the K.T. there.



*Metinda III*

He persuaded Overseas Towage and Salvage to let the *Neptunia* be placed there, on salvage station.

There was a horrific weather forecast as we sailed at 'economical' speed north northwest from the Maas. It didn't take long before we were over the Dogger Bank, still heading north northwest. It took more than a full day for the forecasted severe storm to materialize. By the time it had started to blow hard we were off the north-east corner of Scotland. We had just entered the Pentland Firth, heading for Scapa pier, when there came news of two fishing vessels in trouble away up to the northwest of the Shetlands. We were directed to go see what we could do to help.

The transit of the Pentland Firth was interesting enough and by the time we were through and clear the wind was screaming and a very heavy swell was running. The fishermen seemed, to me, to be a very

great distance away – up to the northwest directly into the teeth of the storm. Not much chance, we thought, but still we ploughed on at maximum power, towards the helpless fishermen.

On watch, and I felt most uncomfortable. Heavy snow mixed with spray had reduced the visibility to almost nothing. The swells ran higher than our wheelhouse and it wasn't until I sighted a bundle of lights, fairly close but out abeam to starboard and along the trough of the swells, a fisherman running for shelter, that I realised the risk we were running.

Each time we crested a breaking swell, everything would be blotted out by flying spray and snow. Then the tug's bows would dip and by the time the snow and spray had partially cleared, all that could be seen was the massive, up-welling face of the next greybeard.

The radar screen, too, would be blotted out for the scanner would also be 'looking' directly at the face of the swell – unable to 'see' over the breaking crest!

Then, for a few seconds, we'd be in the trough of the swell – a mountain ahead and a similar one astern, snow and spray still flying. Visibility to the sides, along the troughs, a bit better but not much though. With the bridge and the radar scanner both below the swell crests, everything on the other sides of those mountains was invisible. Then, as the next monster was challenged, water would come crashing over the foc's'le and spray would obliterate all view in every direction. The foreship would lift and climb the face of the greybeard and again the whole tug would be covered by spray as the breaking crest crashed against the bows. And so the cycle continued, sometimes - for no apparent reason - there would be a quiet spell as if the wind had stopped; snow would quietly fall. Then the wind would jerk back into life again and spray would lift off the waves once more.

Only for a second or two, while cresting a swell wave, would the radar give any sort of reasonable return. Even so the sea clutter stretched out from the centre of the screen, for many miles. Sea clutter would certainly hide a weaker echo.

I spent a lot of that watch glued to the radar though!

The steering compass, sited on the monkey-island was sighted through a periscope arrangement. The dimmer switch of the compass illumination lamp was on the side of the binnacle. The helmsman had complained that he couldn't see the compass clearly as it grew darker. It was a simple job to climb onto the monkey island to adjust the brilliance of the compass lamp.

With the binnacle lighting adjusted to near maximum I stood and watched for a moment as the tug slammed into a particularly vicious steep swell and completely submerged her bows.

Heavy spray everywhere as she lifted, and kept on lifting – then, for an instant, spray was blowing along the whole length of her keel!.

For a second or so the whole tug had been airborne, completely free of the water!

Then, a few seconds of free-fall when I felt that she'd bury herself into the face of the next swell. But no! She shuddered a bit as she fell back into the water but instantly settled down to do battle with the next upwelling greybeard.

That watch I felt really anxious, for we were almost in the direct path of the distant water and Iceland trawlers that were running before the storm. Had one been directly in front of us the chances are that I'd never have seen it until it was too close to avoid. A collision in those conditions would have only one outcome!

I was glad when the Old Man came up onto the bridge. After being relieved, when I was in the galley trying to make a mug of cocoa, I felt the engines slow down. Then, after a few moments, they speed up again and we are rolling to our beam ends! Then the engines slow again and the waves are running in from astern. I mop up the cocoa that has been spilt over the galley deck, make a fresh mug, and scramble back up to the wheelhouse.

The sparky and the Old Man are there – it seems that the distresses had been cancelled. The fishermen had either both foundered or had fixed whatever predicament they had landed in. If they had foundered there was nothing we could do for them. Too far away, the water far too cold to survive more than a few moments, the weather too wild. I slurped empty my cocoa mug, went below and crawled into my bunk. We arrived alongside Scapa pier with hardly a breath of wind blowing, fine powdery snow slowly drifting from the heavy overcast skies. If the temperature had been just a few degrees higher it would have been drizzle. Then, within hours, the weather deteriorated again.

“Good salvage weather” we assured each other. But no! There were no casualties within striking distance. The sparky, ever twiddling at the knobs of his receivers, listening to marine radio-traffic, never mentioned any emergency or urgent radio communications. Except for the sound of the wind, the creaking of the fenders on the rubbing strake and the phud – phud - phud of our harbour generator, all was still; still as the grave. Patience was the name of the game – some ship was bound to get itself into trouble, bound to, at this time of the year, in this weather.

We waited, day after day, glum, bored silly and irritable. Sometimes the weather was fair sometimes foul, sometimes wet sometimes dry, sometimes calm and sometimes stormy, and not a casualty within a thousand miles was heard yelling for assistance.

All that Sunday morning the wind had blown between severe gale and storm force. Spray from breaking waves mingled with snow, rain and sleet lashed the tug moored on salvage station at Scapa Jetty. Sunday, being a day when only essential work was done, saw most of the crew below in the mess or asleep in their bunks. Any work that I had to do could wait until Monday or Tuesday, or later. There wasn't a magazine or book on board that I hadn't read. A walk into Kirkwall against the stormy conditions did not seem all that attractive. The Old Man and Archie the chief engineer had been picked up by the agent in his car and had gone off somewhere for lunch. They had not returned.

When I looked into his cabin, Bob, the bo'sun, was trying to teach his budgie to swear but was getting annoyed when it would only twitter in its own language. Gerry Meijers, the cook, stretched out on top

of his bunk, grunted a greeting as I flopped into his chair. Bored silly, I perused a few of the magazines scattered on his table top. An article on home-made wine caught my attention.

“Gerry, d’ye know what we’re going to do?” I asked him.

“No! What?” He eyed me suspiciously.

“What about making our own booze?”

“What?”

“Make our own booze!” I repeated.

“Uh? How?” Gerry, ever the Dutch realist, was, as usual, pessimistic about any idea I came up with.

“Look, it says here how to go about it.”

Gerry, having spent all the money due to him, had subbed his wages far in advance and had spent that also. Geordie Leggate, the captain, had refused the request for a further advance into, as yet, unearned salary. In short, Gerry was skint and had not been ashore for a week or so. He, like myself, was fed-up and bored witless. It didn’t take long to scrub out a couple of large plastic storage bins and bring them to the galley. The very explicit instructions in the magazine article were ingeniously adapted to circumstances and availability of ingredients.

“Jerry, d’ye think onions would add to the flavour?”

“I dunno, maybe.”

So half a sack of onions were peeled, put through the mincer and joined the mush at the bottom of the bins. Onions, carrots, potatoes, porridge-oats, barley, tinned fruit, dried fruit, fresh fruit, rice, orange juice, the contents of a couple of large cans of black molasses, tins of tomatoes - along with a very significant number of scoops of sugar and a couple of blocks of baker’s yeast - were all added into the two plastic bins and mixed with much gusto and expectation. The bins were then filled two-thirds full with warm water. It was obvious that it would take more than a day or two for our concoction to ripen. The problem of where to store it was solved when we manhandled the drums into the salvage hold below the crew’s accommodation. Every day Gerry and I would go down and give the mixture a good stir and maybe take a sample or two. Progress was deemed excellent even though it did tend to smell a bit.

The odour led to our undoing for it wasn’t long before a few of the crew complained about the pong. Where now could we store it where it would remain warm and be away from the accommodation? The solution came to me in a flash.

The funnel!

There was a door into the funnel from the boat-deck. At a platform near the generator exhaust silencer, there was exactly enough space to fit two large plastic bins. The place was warm, protected from the weather and well away from the accommodation.

Excellent! Made for the job, we reasoned. It didn't take too long before we had both bins lashed in the funnel, secured against any movement in a storm. What was most impressive was the increase in the rate of fermentation in the warmth of the funnel. The stuff really started to gurgle and bubble. The resulting brownish-yellow scum had to be scooped off at least twice a day to prevent it overflowing onto the engine-room control console directly below. Samples indicated a daily improvement in strength, body and flavour.

There was a subdued freneticism in our collecting and washing-out of bottles and canisters in preparation for the great day when we could begin bottling operations. The day before Christmas Eve proved as stormy as the day the home-brew idea had been conceived. It was at a quarter to five on Christmas Eve morning, when the captain informed me of a casualty drifting not far from Innistrahul, off the north coast of Ireland.

It was blowing harder than ever.

Within twenty minutes we had let go and departed into the northwesterly blizzard. The short passage to open waters was used to stow loose ropes and gear and batten down ready for the passage through the Pentland Firth into a fully developed Beaufort 10 storm. Even though the main engine was fully governed to prevent over-racing when the propeller came free of the sea, Archie, the chief engineer, would be at the controls, hand on the throttle lever, nursing his engines through the wild fluctuations in loading and revs as we plunged through the darkness. He was a good engineer and could nurse the maximum out of his engines. He was a short, tubby Glaswegian who was invariably preceded by a cloud of smoke from his oversized pipe. You'd see this cloud of grey smoke and know that, should the wind change and the smoke be blown clear, Archie could be found under it. I was a bit surprised at his appearance at the bottom of the chart-room companionway that morning.

"I'm gonna f..... murder that f..... bastard" he was muttering round the extinguished pipe, clenched hard in his teeth, yellow-white foam dribbling from his chin – not unlike an over-exerted horse.

He was covered in the most awful goo imaginable, his boiler-suit sticking to his skin. Bits of what could have been long dead apple-peel were stuck to his bald dome. It took an instant to realize what had happened and that the "F..... bastard" he was on about was me! Further, the spanner he held was meant to be bounced off my skull!

I did not wait to discuss the matter but took off like a shot. Out of the wheelhouse door and to the weather side of the bridge. With Archie in close pursuit, I circled the wheelhouse and chartroom a few times, then Archie slipped and fell to the deck. Winded and unable to talk, the fight was knocked out of him. I kicked the spanner into the scuppers and helped him out of the heavy spray, snow and wind, back into the wheelhouse where his breathing became less laboured.

Not long after that we learned that a German salvage tug had left Glasgow and had been contracted to assist the tanker in distress so we turned back to Scapa Flow to take up salvage station again.

Geordie Leggate whispered a word or two in my ear after that episode. Things like; ‘...conduct of an officer...’, ‘...lack of discipline...’, ‘...immature...’, ‘.....don’t know what I am supposed to do with you’, ‘....lack of judgement....’, ‘...intolerable....’, all that sort of thing.

Full of remorse and feeling a bit giggly, I humbly apologized to Archie and duly cleaned up the gloop from the fermenting bins that had slopped over him and his beloved engine control panel. It took a while before he would look at me, and a longer while still before he would speak to me without swearing. However, in the end, we became pals again.

Subsequent inspection indicated that the bins were more than half full, so in fact we had lost only three or four buckets-full of the stuff. Mostly just the crust of yellow-brown foam and some of the floating goo had gone. Meijers and myself set about the laborious task of filtering the remaining sludge and bottling what we could.

We ended up with a few crates of a wine that looked more like dilute porridge. A week or two later the sediment had mostly settled and the top two-thirds of each bottle contained a clear and fairly palatable, very potent, semi-fizzy liquid that we named “Neptunia Champagne”. A bottle was shared between the two of us each evening and the stock lasted for a month or so. Anyway, at least until Gerry and I had accumulated enough in salary to again afford an excursion ashore.

Scapa Flow pier is only a mile or two from Kirkwall. Kirkwall is a fairly close knit community. In the event of another casualty call-out it would take but a short time to mobilise a taxi and a fairly easy job to round up any of the crew who were ashore. So we got to know the people of Kirkwall as we waited for something to happen.

“It’s no the Ball!” I was informed, “Its ‘The Ba!’. There is a Boy’s “Ba” at Christmas and the Men’s “Ba” is on New Year’s Day and the “Ba” is no a game!”

I was intrigued at the thought of the tradition of the “Ba”. It had originated, they said, at the time of the Vikings or some other marauding horde. They’d hack the head off their enemy and the “Downies” would try to get it over the Church wall. Whence the name of the main town, Kirkwall, is reputed to come. The “Uppies”, on the other hand, had to get it into the harbour. There seemed to be no rules in the contest. The decapitated head had, for many years, been replaced with a small hand-sewn leather “Ba”.

The “Uppies”, hundreds of them, men and boys, were at one end of the main square. All the “Downies” were milling at the other.

All participants were either “Uppies” or “Downies” and there didn’t seem to be anything to distinguish the one from the other. Spectators, if they were male, would be free to join in and if anyone had enough of the “Ba” they could become a spectator for a while. I never noticed any girls or women in the throng though; they were apparently permanent spectators.

Prior to the “Ba”, Kirkwall undergoes a sort of metamorphosis. All the shop doors and windows get rigged with very substantial protection, wooden beams and thick sheets of plywood and such. There are

wooden beams across doorways and from the looks of the place you'd think they were expecting a military invasion or, at the very least, a full scale riot!

"Uppies" lived in the "Up" side of the Island, everyone else was a "Downie".

I was given a temporary status of either "Uppie" or "Downie" - I cannot remember which now, and it wouldn't have made one iota of difference on whichever side I was designated. Comes the day of "The Boy's Ba!", none of the rest of the crew want to be involved in this potentially barbaric ritual. I think a few yarns overheard in the pubs had scared them off - I'm the only representative from the *Neptunia*. Leggate cautions me to be careful but not to let the side down.

I arrive in good time. There are hundreds of Orcadians milling around the main square. Two distinct crowds of them - nothing to distinguish one from the other. From the challenges yelled from one mob to the other, it appears that everyone is on first names terms with everyone else - I feel very foreign.

The Mayor or some such dignitary stood in the middle - there was but a few yards between the two mobs. He lifted his arm and not a word was spoken, not a grunt, all was still and the steam from five hundred or more breaths drifted in the frosty air. A whistle shrills, the mayor chucks the "Ba" in the air and the mobs come together! Within no time at all someone has it stuck up his coat! That didn't seem to make much difference for the whole mob just seemed to surge gently and sway slightly. Feet moved only a few shuffle-steps at a time. This wasn't going to be a fast -oving tussle like a game of rugby, football or hockey.

No sir!

Not only did there seem to be no rules but there was no time limit and no breaks for a rest either. Endurance was to be the name of the game. I shuffled into the crowd and placed my arms round my next two neighbours - thinking that it was something like a rugby scrum. I'd be able to lower my shoulders and exert a bit more pressure!

"Keep yer arms down!" a half-dozen voices hissed at me.

My neighbour then tells me that if the crowd moved, in a swirl, I could get my arms broken. So tight were we squeezed together it took awhile to get my arms down by my sides, and like the rest of them I was subjected to the squeeze and flow of the crowd. There did not seem to be much control as to what direction you wanted to go in. At one stage, without having the slightest bit of influence over the matter, I found myself at the edge of the throng and was facing outwards. I decided to partake in a little light refreshment and slid through a thinning crowd into the nearest bar for a quick rum, and then another. On my return to the "Ba", they hadn't moved very far. I stood clear for a time and watched what was happening - I wasn't the only one who had worked, or been worked, to the periphery of the crowd.

It seemed that there was a hard core somewhere in the middle and there would be instructions yelled and questions bandied about where the "Ba" might be. Very few were in any way certain about its whereabouts and those who knew were not saying. There were a few feints when someone pretended to make a break only to be hauled down by a dozen or so of the opposing force - each time it proved a

false alarm. Those of us forming the bulk of the throng seemed to rotate slowly one way and then the other with neither rhyme nor reason. My previous neighbour came staggering past, chubby red face streaming with sweat, and headed through the side door of the pub. The main entrance being boarded closed. I realized that everyone was at it. Ease into the crowd, push and shove for a bit, then ease out and sink a quick dram or two. The throng tussled its way through the narrow streets, nightfall came in mid afternoon, and steam from their breaths and over-hot bodies mingled with fine snowflakes in the lamplight. Like bullocks crammed into a country-market pen, there wasn't really much noise, neither was it quiet. The laboured breath of a few hundred half-sloshed men, along with the scrape and shuffle of hob-boots on cobbles, and the occasional grunt or call of encouragement, makes a special sound all of its own.

From a helicopter it would have looked like a swarm of oversized bees. Once or twice came the call that one was down! Someone had fallen! As if by magic the crowd would separate and the fallen helped to his feet and eased to the periphery. The danger was recognised; someone down would pose a trip threat for others and there was a real danger of getting trampled or suffocated in a pile of bodies. Surprisingly there seemed to be little aggression. I know if it had been a Belfast mob they'd a' been punching and kicking the bejesus out of each other within the shortest time. In Belfast, under the same circumstances, minor differences would have been settled by the odd flying half-brick!

It is late evening, the core of the throng are at the wall of the church, there is much yelling – no-one is certain who has the “Ba”. Then, there are a few are on the wall of the church and - with a deep throated roaring bellow - a whole bunch of them are scrambling over it and into the churchyard.

The “Ba” is over the Kirkwall and the game is won - or lost - according to which part of the Orkneys you come from. There doesn't seem to be enough space in the pubs to accommodate the red-faced steaming mob that subsequently finds itself in desperate need of a serious pint and a wee-nip or two as a chaser.

## **DOWN THE THAMES AND UP THE RIVER MEDWAY**

**by Martin Earp**

This is a story of three days in my life. I was asked by a dear friend, Roger Beale, to help him to move a day boat from Shepperton marina to Hoo marina on the river Medway.



The boat's name was *Screwloose*; she needed to be moved from Shepperton marina because her owner had passed away. The family were going to sell her to the highest bidder, but in the time leading up to her sale she was going to be moored at the most reasonable priced mooring in Kent, at Hoo marina on the river Medway.

However, we had to get her there first.

Soup and roll in the pub to decide the days to come and time needed to move her to her new mooring. We decided to move her midweek, less traffic on the river and the tides were in our favour. *Screwloss* had not been moved for some time. So Tuesday morning we got the boat cleaned off and tided her up, refilled the water and paid the bill. Started her up and checked her out, untied her from her moorings, and took her out of the marina down the canal to the river Thames and turn to port.



This is Fullers Brewery from the river, at Chiswick. It is in the gardens of Bedford House Chiswick Mall, and has been on the same site for 350 years. Roger said he would buy me a pint of Fullers but they were not open for boat traffic.



On the Thames we are making good time with the outgoing tide. Lock after lock, we carry on under bridge after bridge then Kew Pier, on to Kingston and Hampton court for lunch.

Yes lunch! As well as some sight seeing; below are some golden gates on the river towpath which are missed by most visitors to Henry VIII's palace.



A free mooring! Perfect. So we went for lunch at a pub over the bridge. In Hampton Wick, we also brought lottery ticket and papers. Good weather too.



Back from lunch, on to London, So far all the locks have been open for us; the sun has been shining on us too. It has been fun. When we got to the Thames Roger gave me the helm for which I said “Thank you - does that make me captain?” We will continue to London and our overnight moorings in Greenwich.



We continue past the House of Commons. I know all the buildings on the river bank, but today I am watching the river traffic. And then I saw a bridge you all know; yes I am at the helm of a boat going under TOWER BRIDGE for the first time in my life.



*Looking back at the pool of London and HMS BELFAST in the distance*



*The Royal Air Force Memorial Eagle has stood on the banks of the river since 1923*



Metropolitan police station on the river, just down from *HMS President*, then past Surrey Docks we continue downstream to the mooring for our overnight stay at Greenwich Sailing Club. Still looking for the sailing club at Greenwich, and the sun is going down.



Shore establishment *HMS PRESIDENT*.



*HMS BELFAST*

It is going well but the evening is closing in when we see our destination on the starboard side and it's time for me to give the helm back to Roger. He turns her about and reverses her onto the pontoon with great ease. I jump with the rope and tie her with a spring as well, Roger checks my work and we go to pay for one night's stay.



*PRESIDENT 1918 moored on the embankment.*



(Look – Sky-cars in the background above the O2 arena)

We washed and changed, shook hands with each other in recognition of a good day, and went for a drink. The first night out - we ate chilli and rice, then became part of that week's awards ceremony! At the break of day you can see where we moored for the night, good food & drink as well.



Early the next day we walked beside the river on a footpath, back towards London, to the office to pay for a Sky-car over the Thames to London ExCeL. We spent the morning there, and then back onboard the boat to continue our journey down river, with the tide to Gravesend, to find a grave of an Indian princess in St George's Churchyard. Gravesend's town pier is the oldest remaining cast-iron pier in the world and was designed by William Tienwey Clack in 1834.



*We found her at St. George's Church*

We had full English for breakfast - cooked by a man from Poland but all was good.

We need a lot of water under us by the time we get to Hoo but that means the tide will be against us for most of the morning; we will continue to keep an eye on the depth. When we reach the Medway estuary “Ok captain” I said.



Now we were off to the River Medway, but first The London Gateway Port. The Thames is very wild at this point; we keep to the shipping lane and off the mud banks, checking for low water, both keeping a lookout.



*The wreck of ss Montgomery - A 3,000 ton time bomb*

**DANGER ZONE!**



*The Medway River Fort*

We reached the mouth of the Medway with time on our side, and followed the mouth of the river keeping an eye on the depth. We continued - true to the starboard down the middle of the Medway we went. "Still some way to go" said Roger as he sipped on a beer. He also pointed out the tide was falling fast. We both spoke about times we had run aground in the past. We still had some way to go before we reached the destination for the day, and where Roger's good lady was picking us up later that day after we had washed the boat down.



*Fort Hoo in the middle of the river Medway*



*Looking backwards to Kings North power station on the Medway*

When we made the stretch of the river where the marina was meant to be, the sun was setting, the river was dropping and mud was showing. Roger made a phone call to the Hoo Marina. A lady said “thank you for your call and I am sorry but I gave you the wrong times the other day. I gave you low water time not high water. Please tie up to the barge in the river and my son will come to your aid at high water at three in the morning and he will show you where to moor your vessel, thank you”.



This is the entrance to the Hoo Marina when wet. When dry it is marked by a line on each side of a deep channel with willow branches .



Hoo Marina and we are too late to get over the bar, the mud is stopping us and the tide is still going out. Where do we go from here - moor up to a barge?



*The barge we moored against, and this is Hoo Marina*

We could see the entrance but could not get in. At this point Roger phoned his good lady and asked her not to come to pick us up until tomorrow. She was very understanding even though she was just in Dartford. She turned the car around and went home.

We tied up to the barge at 1610 hrs and played cards until bed time. The next day at 01.30 hrs there was a knock on the side of the boat – it was the son of the marina owner. The helpful son gave Roger some advice to vive up the engines, and get a lot of water. To help us get over the bar and gain entrance to the marina. We followed the son across the mud flats with very little water under his boat, to the moorings inside Hoo Marina. Job done! Rogers's good lady collected us later that day, and brought us back home to Surrey.

Thanks Roger for the experience!

I would like to think it is apparent that I am very privileged to know Roger and his good lady, and to spend time with a companion such as him. He did not have to give me the helm of *Screwloose* through London that afternoon. But I was so grateful for the opportunity to take her under Tower Bridge, for which I thank him most sincerely.



**BOAT FOR SALE. Sorry it has been sold!**

## THE STRANGE CASE OF SS WARRIMOO

This note was sent to me, having been previously published by the Company of Master Mariners in Australia. (Ed)

The passenger steamer *SS Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia. The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the result. The *Warrimoo*'s position was LATITUDE 0° 31' N and LONGITUDE 179° 30' W. The date was 31 December 1899.

“Know what this means?” First Mate Payton broke in, “We’re only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line.” Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double-check the ship’s position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed.

The calm weather and clear night worked in his favour. At midnight the *SS Warrimoo* lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part (bow) of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and the middle of summer. The rear (stern) was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter. The date in the aft part of the ship was 31 December 1899. Forward it was 1 January 1900.

This ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two different seasons and two different years, but in two different centuries – all at the same time!



## NORTH TO ALASKA

Our intrepid members certainly get about. Bob Jones rode his Kawasaki Motorcycle north from Vancouver to the Arctic Circle for charity. A distance of some 5,500 miles. Here is a record of his amazing achievement:

# North to Alaska 5,500 miles Charity Motorcycle Ride, June 2016



Kawasaki  
KLR 650

Oxford  
Motorcycle Products

Nolan Helmet



Retired Royal Navy Warrant Officer, Bob Jones, will be riding 5,500 miles from Vancouver, North through British Columbia and the Yukon to Alaska, including a stop at the Arctic Circle on the infamous Dempster Highway in support of Larry Lloyd, the

President of the Royal Naval Gunnery Instructors Association's Annual Charity Fundraiser; which this year is dedicated to the Royal Navy Royal Marines Children's Fund.



Please support Bob and donate at:  
[justgiving.com/rngia-rnrmcf](https://www.justgiving.com/rngia-rnrmcf)





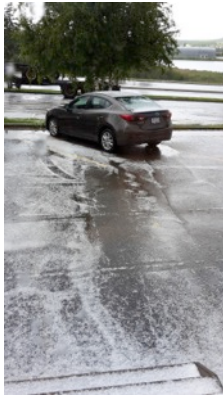
*Fully loaded*



*The Matanushka Glacier*



*Mount Wrangell from the Alaska Highway*



*A summer hailstorm in British Columbia and entering the Yukon Territory from Alaska*



*Two 70 year olds at the Dempster Highway – not for the faint hearted*



*Bob at the Arctic Circle - 11pm 28.06.16*



*and a narrow shave!*

## DARING CLASS DESTROYERS

by John Callcut

There was a lot of publicity in the papers last summer when it was reported that all the Type 45 destroyers were berthed at Portsmouth at the same time. In late August I visited the docks and took these pictures. *Daring* was scheduled to leave that day but a technical problem delayed her departure. *Illustrious* looked particularly sad.



*HMS Diamond*



*HMS Diamond and HMS Daring*



*HMS Illustrious*

On the 7<sup>th</sup> December, *HMS Illustrious* was towed out of Portsmouth on her way to be scrapped at the Loyal scrapyard near Aliaga on the Aegean Coast in Turkey.

# Annual ASTO Small Ships Race





**REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE  
TOWER HILL – 13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2017**

*Photographs courtesy of Alan Cash*





Louis Roskell's painting of the Liberty ship *St Helena* on which he served (scrapped 1963 - the ship that is, not Louis) brought to mind the current ship of that name, over which a Sword of Damocles hangs. When, in 1977, ships of the Union-Castle Line withdrew completely from the occasional service they provided to the islands of St Helena and Ascension, the British Government had to fill the void by the purchase of a dedicated ship. *Northland Prince* (built Aberdeen 1963) was bought, re-named *St Helena* and refitted with accommodation for 76 passengers. She was used by the Royal Navy during the Falklands War as a minesweeper support ship. However, by the mid-1980s she was proving too small for purpose and was replaced by the current RMS *St Helena* which entered service in 1990. With a crew of 56 she is equipped to carry a wide range of cargo and has berths for around 150 passengers for whom a swimming pool, shop, lounges and well-equipped medical facilities, complete with a ship's doctor, are provided.

A break-down of the vessel in 1999, with its attendant non-delivery of vital supplies, served to re-ignite the call by the islanders for them to be provided with an airport. Work on this commenced in 2012 and was completed in 2016 at a cost of around £240 million. The first test flight, by a Boeing 737-800 flown from Johannesburg, landed only after experiencing strong wind shear as it made its final approach. This disturbing aspect has put a big question-mark over the future viability of flights in and out of the new airport. Thus, what was advertised as the last voyage of RMS *St Helena* sailing from the UK on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016, became just another sailing with her schedule extended to run until July 2017.

As reported in "Sea Breezes" Magazine, August 2016 edition, she had arrived in the River Thames on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2016 as part of her farewell tour, to be followed by retirement and sale after 26 years' service. She berthed in Tilbury Docks before a trip up-river under Tower Bridge to moor alongside HMS *Belfast*. The report included the item below.

The St Helena Government has issued this press release:-

"Following certification of St Helena Airport on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016, all parties are working to overcome the challenges of wind shear identified by the first few flights into the Airport. The work includes the development of appropriate operational procedures needed to allow services to use the northern Runway (20), where wind shear has been identified, as well as options for using the southern Runway (02), where wind shear has not been identified. While this work continues, we recognise there are St Helenians in Cape Town, the UK and Ascension who are ready to return to St Helena and do not have a confirmed means of doing so. Others will be planning journeys in the coming weeks. St Helena Government will therefore honour its commitment to maintain access by extending the service of the RMS as an interim measure and for a limited period until air services begin. This service will be for passengers and freight. This situation will be kept under review and, should an air access solution be found quickly, we would need to reassess the plans for the RMS *St Helena*. The public will continue to be informed of progress."



*RMS St. Helena* painted by Glyn Evans



*RMS St. Helena* passing under Tower Bridge



# 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 <u>X</u>	£20.00
If posted	£22.00

### Twenty Five Year Silk Tie

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

### Shield

The Club Crest in enamel, mounted on a wooden shield	£20.00
If posted	At cost



### Club Burgee

18 inches, 12 inches on truck	£25.00
If posted	£27.00

### Cufflinks

Bearing Club Crest, per pair	£17.50
If posted	£19.50

### 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.	£25.00
If posted	At cost

For any of the above please contact

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

Please note the prices are 'while stocks last' and will be altered to reflect any increase to the club on re-ordering.