



# The Seven Seas Club

‘To promote and foster the comradeship of the sea’

*The official organ of the Seven Seas Club*



*Conway and Mauretania  
Kenneth Shoemith*

Volume 101 No 1 (Modified)

## Summer 2025

[www.sevenseasclub.org.uk](http://www.sevenseasclub.org.uk)



# **The Seven Seas Club (1922) Limited**

A company limited by guarantee, Company Number 11812371, England & Wales  
Registered office: 257a Luton Road, Chatham, Kent NE4 5BN

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Mr Kevin Haag, Mr James O'Neill, Mrs Hazel Watson  
Company Secretary: Mr Gary Hammell

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*President:* Mr James Cameron-Wood

*Immediate Past President:* Mr Ken Bushnell

*Vice President:* Mr James O'Neill

*Hon Secretary:* Mr Gary Hammell

*Hon Treasurer:* Mrs Hazel Watson

*Hon Dinner Secretary:* Mr Kevin Haag

*Hon Almoner:* Mr James O'Neill

*Hon Magazine Editor:* Mr John Callcut

*Additional Committee Members:* Mr Martyn Taylor, Mrs Claire Denham

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Mr Louis Roskell MNI, Mr David Watson, Mr Ray Williams

## **Club Goods Custodian**

Mr Martyn Taylor

### **Hon Archivist**

Mr David Watson

### **Hon Examiner**

Mr Graham Capel

The committee meets on line on the first Wednesday of each month throughout the dinner season.



**James Cameron-Wood**  
President



**James O'Neill**  
Vice-President &  
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**Gary Hammell**  
Hon Secretary



**Ken Bushnell**  
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**Hazel Watson**  
Hon Treasurer



**John Callcut**  
Hon Magazine Editor



**Kevin Haag**  
Hon Dinner Secretary

*Additional Committee Members*



**Claire Denham**



**Martyn Taylor**  
Club Goods Custodian

# Contents

Editorial	page 6
President's report	page 8
Immediate Past President's report	page 8
Hon Secretary's report	page 10
Hon Almoner's corner	page 11
Hon Dinner Secretary's report	page 12
The Baxter and Grimshaw Trust	page 14
Club dates for your diary	page 15
Sister clubs	page 15
Dinner photographs	page 16
The Seven Seas Club — a poem <i>by David Parry</i>	page 18

## *Features*

Naming islands <i>by Chris Esplin-Jones</i>	page 19
Kai: the seaman's food <i>by David Parry</i>	page 21
Naval and marine memorials in London <i>by Lester May</i>	page 22
A different time <i>by John Callcut</i>	page 27
Captain Harvey W Broadbent RNR <i>by Glyn L Evans</i>	page 29
The other <i>Laristan</i> <i>by David Watson</i>	page 31
The story of <i>Southport</i> <i>by David Parry</i>	page 32
The Liberation memorial <i>by Martin Earp</i>	page 35
A letter to the Hon Secretary	page 39
Slop chest	page 40

# Editorial

Life member Paul Antrobus sadly passed away at home on 7 July. It is no exaggeration to say that it was thanks to Paul's enthusiasm and determination that the Seven Seas Club was saved when it was at its lowest ebb. When I was researching the Centenary Book I spent a very enjoyable afternoon with Paul and Angela at their riverside home at Thames Meadow in Shepperton. He spoke warmly about the Club and his father, who was also a former Club president and was such good company. He will be greatly missed.



*Paul G Antrobus (President 1989-90)*

The AGM witnessed a number of changes within the committee. The Club has recently been blessed in having such able administrators as Derek Bevan (Hon Treasurer) and David Watson (Hon Secretary) who have both decided to 'take a well-earned rest'. Thank you, it has been a pleasure working with you. I always think it a shame when we lose past presidents from the committee as they take with them so much knowledge and affection for the Club, but that is the system. However, we are very lucky to welcome Hazel Watson, Claire Denham and Gary Hammell on board. One nasty thought I have had is that I think I am now the longest continuously serving committee member, which makes me feel very old – perhaps James O'Neill will correct me on that!

Our February dinner was held at the Army & Navy Club (The RAG) in Pall Mall. From the numerous reports received after that dinner and subsequent dinners our new venue could be deemed to be a resounding success. We do need to resolve the situation of storing our regalia, most of which still remains on board *HMS Wellington*.

Last January we heard from member Cynthia Robinson who told us that she had met up with Ken Messenger from the Seven Seas Club in Australia. Cynthia, Ken, Judy and Barry sat in the Adelaide Park Lands and enjoyed a coffee and a long chat. In the picture opposite it is nice to see Ken looking in good spirits after his recent travails.



*Cynthia, Ken, Judy and Barry in Adelaide*

My wife and I recently had a very convivial lunch with Tony Watts and his wife Mary. Tony is the former editor of *Warships and Navies Review*. He is in fine form and we had a lively discussion about all things maritime.

Lester May has recently sent this succinct letter to *The Times* and Derek Bevan spotted it, in edited form, in the *Brentwood Gazette* of 18 June 2025. I'm sure that Tony Watts would endorse his sentiments.

Sir

'Nothing works unless we all work together' – wise words the Prime Minister heard when he visited *HMS Vanguard*. The Defence Review, launched at a Clyde shipyard, sent a strong message about Maritime Britain, about the importance to our island trading nation of ships, submarines, naval aircraft, sailors and the sea.

Money for our 'fully integrated armed forces moving to war-fighting readiness' is in short supply. The Defence Secretary spoke of 'defence reform' and now is the time to move from three to two services.

Unsentimental re-organisation of HM Forces would help make them 'battle-ready' and would provide huge savings, advancing the Defence Dividend the government desires. After these radical changes, the forces would emerge leaner and more cost-effective but more operationally efficient, with no loss of capability.

'NATO first' would be better achieved by the UK being tasked as the principal maritime power in the eastern Atlantic, the land powers of the Continent providing the principal armies. Defence is too expensive these days not to work together.

Yours faithfully

**Lester May** (Lieutenant Commander, Royal Navy – retired)

I would just like to say how lucky we are to have regular contributors to the magazine. In the past they came under various pseudonyms but now they are not afraid to reveal their names. David Parry, Glyn Evans, Martin Earp, Jim Killen, Lester May, David Watson: where would I be without you?

Finally, I would like to inform our readers that the opinions and thoughts expressed in the articles in this magazine reflect only the author's views and not necessarily the views of the Seven Seas Club.

**John Callcut – Hon Editor**

john.callcut@btinternet.com

# President's report

## A message from the bridge

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for voting for me and placing your trust in me to steer the Club through the next year. I am privileged and honoured to be your President and I will do my utmost to ensure that your trust is not misplaced. I have been more than fortunate to have served under Kenneth Bushnell and alongside the other dedicated committee members of whom we have seen Derek Bevan and David Watson stand down; they have both been assets to the Club. I'm sure Hazel Watson and Gary Hammell will fill their shoes and carry on the good work. I would like to thank James O'Neill for being my deputy and I would like to thank all the committee for their support. I look forward to working with them to rise to the challenges, and to take the opportunities that present themselves, to ensure that the Club continues to prosper.

We have had a turbulent few years, with finding venues, but I feel that we have found a great home with The Army & Navy Club. The committee is mindful of the issues of rising costs, and we will endeavour to keep a watchful eye on this. Due to the cancellation of the cocktail party, we are looking at possibly having another River Thames cruise next year.

I have put in place some interesting speakers for the forthcoming year, including talks relating to the *Restoration of the Cutty Sark*, the navigator of the far east deployment of *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and the Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports.

I also look forward to getting to know more of you at our dinners and other events during my term of office and to share the exciting times ahead to maintain the object of the Club: to promote and foster the comradeship of the sea.

Yours Aye

**James Cameron-Wood – President**

## Immediate Past President's report

One could say I didn't have the best of starts on taking office at last year's AGM, in fact I had to miss it due to being quite ill. Recovery was good and we were up and running for the rest of my tenure.

I must convey a **huge** thank-you to all the members of the committee for their unrelenting support and their hard work mostly behind the scenes.

On taking office one will always face challenges, none so big as to finding and securing a new venue. We were approaching Christmas and our next and last meeting in January 2025 was on board *HMS Wellington* with no venue for February; a daunting task lay ahead.

The committee and I went off in all directions looking for a home venue befitting our fine Club, before finding the Army & Navy Club, also known as the RAG. The club has a long tradition and was founded in 1837. Shortly after opening, the club acquired its famous nickname. Captain (Billy) Higginson Duff was offended by the spartan nature of the fare offered him, on returning from a spree. He described the club as a 'Rag and Famish affair' which was intended as a great insult, since 'Rag and Famish' was a squalid gaming house for broken-down gamblers who played for coppers. Hence the nickname was born *The RAG*.

Tamzin, the events manager here, has been extremely welcoming and helpful, and so far the food has been superb and the service first class. Judging by the very positive comments from members, I believe we have struck gold.

Whilst briefly looking back to our time on *HMS Wellington*, hopes and aspirations were certainly running high and a healthy excitement was felt aboard. One is reminded that this is a ship and there will always be lots of stairs and ladders, so mobility will be an issue not only in the short term but also to the future. This was constantly being raised at committee meetings and there was no easy answer. *HMS Wellington* has huge challenges to its future, none more so than its finances, and here lies the inevitable move for the Seven Seas Club.

I for one was bitterly disappointed in having to move from *HMS Wellington*, I believe we fitted in nicely and thought our future was safely secured, but this turned out not to be.

That all said, we are very happy with the outcome and believe The RAG is our future. If the last three meetings are anything to go by, maybe - just maybe, as I say - we have struck gold.

We have been very fortunate to have enjoyed a very stable committee of long standing and the Club has benefited greatly over these years. Derek Bevan, the Hon Treasurer, retired from that post at the end of 2024. Hazel Watson has taken over from Derek, giving us a nice smooth transition. Also retiring we have Dave Watson our Hon Secretary who over a lot of years has worked tirelessly for the Club. We have Gary Hammell taking over from David, so some great positive movement within the committee.

We wish Derek and David all the very best for the future and tender great thanks for their long service to the Club. We also convey our heartfelt thanks to Hazel and Gary in taking on their respective posts, and we wish them all well.

We continue to monitor our costs and our attendances at our dinners and also our social events and we, the membership, are encouraged to introduce new members therefore ensuring the Club's future. May I thank you for your continued support and entrusting me as your president. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the Club and most importantly securing our new home venue. In conclusion, I am handing over the mantle to James Cameron-Wood, who I know will do us all proud and we will continue to evolve in our progress to maintain the fine Club we have become.

I look forward to seeing you at our dinners and events in the near future.

Kindest regards

**Kenneth F D Bushnell**  
President 2024-2025

## **Financial Director's report**

Firstly, I introduce myself as the new Treasurer and Financial Director for the Seven Seas Club. I have an exceptionally difficult act to follow and give my sincerest of thanks to Derek for his patience and guidance as he shows me the ropes. I also extend my thanks to the rest of the committee for their support whilst the first Lady Member of this amazing club "feels her way".

By way of background, many of you will know my husband Dominique, who has been a member of the club for 23 years now, as well as dinner secretary for many years and also a past President. This has meant that I have also been involved with the Seven Seas Club for all those years, attending events etc and value highly the traditions that it embraces.

As this report comes after the AGM for 2025, the accounts have already been presented and passed, so I will not comment further here.

The first tranche of 2025 has seen the move from HMS Wellington to The Army and Navy Club, which is proving to be a popular and successful move. Although the Club are still subsidising dinners, we are hopefully narrowing the gap slowly but surely. The Club also continues to be fortunate insofar as the generosity of particular members and well-wishers who help to bolster our funds.

As my fellow committee members also say, what we need here are more members to join our wonderful club and enjoy the atmosphere and camaraderie shared at our events.

The Laristan Fund continues to be well supported, enabling us to provide donations to nominated charities and also we are able to assist members who may need a little

support. Our Hon Almoner is on hand to assist; so please reach out to him if you know of any member who needs reminding that we are here!

Finally, as we see significant changes at the helm, moving forward, I extend again my sincere thanks to both Derek Bevan and David Watson for their brilliant work maintaining the smooth running of the Club for so many years.

**Hazel Watson – Financial Director**

## **Hon Secretary's report**

By way of introduction, I started life in naval uniform from the age of 12 as a sea cadet at the Medway Towns Unit and spent time at sea on *TS Royalist* taking part in a tall ships race. I joined the RN as a writer in 1986, serving on HM ships *Invincible*, *Hecla*, *Fearless* and *Chatham*. I left the RN after 27 years as a chief petty officer in Chatham Careers Office. I then transferred back to the sea cadets and took command of Maidstone, Gravesend and Malling units, the last one of which I started from scratch. My administrative background came to the fore in these rôles. I was commissioned in the corps and retired on 31 May this year as a lieutenant after over 43 years in RN uniform.

Committee-wise I spent many a time on ships' welfare committees as secretary, I have experience as the clerk to a special educational needs school's governing body in Chatham and have been vice-chairman of Gravesend Royal Naval Association. In November last year I was elected honorary secretary of the Chatham branch of the Royal Naval Association, in a rôle identical to Honorary Secretary for our Club, including that of membership secretary too. I am also a member of the Chatham Naval Officers' Association and the cadet forces representative for the Medway branch of the Submariners Association.

I look forward to working with you all. Don't forget: if I do a good job, tell the President; if not, come and tell me!

**Gary Hammell**

Director and Hon Secretary, The Seven Seas Club (1922) Limited

# Hon Almoner's corner



*Almoner, a definition: (noun) an official distributor of alms*

*Alms, the meaning : gifts of money, clothes or food*

*So that is my job description!*

## The Laristan Fund monthly dinner collection

### Do you know what it is about?

Firstly, thank you Seven Seas Club membership for your generosity at the Club's monthly dinners. You really are a lovely bunch of 'ship mates'. Without you the fund would not work or survive. A big thank-you. It's your fund!

### What it's about

Helping your fellow 'ship mates': those mates whom you sit next to at dinner, take wine and beer, break bread, swap stories and yarns. Suddenly you remember you haven't seen them for a while ... .. they may **just need** a helping hand.

This is where the Seven Seas Club needs you!

We need your help to ensure that we know about those 'ship mates' in distress. The monthly Laristan Fund collection at our dinners is first and foremost best described as a simple charity to help our 'ship mates' in many differing types of ways.

The Laristan Fund tries to improve quality of life during illness and convalescence, with get-well cards, flowers and plants; help towards the expense of travelling to our dinners; financial problems maybe; perhaps help with mobility equipment. There is support during bereavement and the loneliness which often follows it. Whatever is the reason, we want to help if we can.

Over the last 100 years or thereabouts, we have helped with and/or funded Christmas and birthday cards, funeral flowers, financial problems, store vouchers, hampers, dinners, safety aids, rail and taxi fares, disability aids and many more benefits.

All grants or other benefits are made in absolute privacy and discretion is absolutely assured. Application for help is easy and simple to make, nothing complicated about it.

Most years, we are delighted to be able to make donations to other charities. They are gratefully received, well applauded and recognised but that is not the original intended purpose of the Laristan Fund collection, which is to help and assist our ‘ship mates’.

### **Charity starts at *home***

Who are the beneficiaries? Seven Seas Club ‘ship mates’ and their widows or widowers, or partners or dependants, all of whom may also benefit from your monthly donation to the Laristan Fund.

We are always on the lookout for smaller organisations who would benefit from our Laristan Fund donations, preferably those with a connection to youth and with a maritime bias.

The Laristan Fund is not an asset of the Seven Seas Club. It is administered by the Club, with separate annual accounts and audit, and with its own banking facilities.

Your continued generosity makes the Laristan Fund something of which you should be proud. Most importantly, please use it.

Happy to meet – happy to meet again.

Enjoy your summer. *‘See it, report it, we will do the rest.’*

**James O’Neill – Vice President, Director and Hon Almoner**

mobile 07970 467961      email: jamesoneillssc@gmail.com

## **Hon Dinner Secretary’s report**

This season has seen us relocate our dining base to The Army & Navy Club (The RAG) in Pall Mall, and what a great move it has proven to be! A number of areas stand out:

- the ambience at the club has shown to be equal to, if not beyond, our expectations
- food and service levels at each event have been equal to the location.
- the events management personnel are a delight to deal with, and nothing seems to be too much trouble.

### **Events so far in 2025 following the move to the Army & Navy Club**

#### *February 2025*

- Our inaugural event at The RAG was attended by 49 members and guests.
- The talk was given by member Glyn Evans covering the collaborative work of John Masefield, a writer of maritime poetry and prose, and Kenneth Shoemith,

a marine artist.

- Much positive feedback came from those attending as to the venue, the dinner-and-wine-package offering and the service level received. The high-level quality of service is evident from the bar, the waiting staff and the behind-the-scenes event-management team.

#### *March 2025*

- 36 members and guests attended.
- The talk was presented by Nick Beattie, President of the St Nazaire Society, and it covered Operation Chariot, the St Nazaire raid.

#### *April 2025 (Partners' evening)*

- 48 people attended.
- Our guest speaker was Louise Parkin, Head of Grants at The Seafarers' Charity, and she spoke about the work of the charity.

#### *May 2025 (AGM dinner)*

- 48 members, including some guests, attended.
- Graham Capel gave an interesting and highly entertaining talk as to his work with the Greek Line cruise ship *SS Arkadia*.

#### *Attendance and event administration*

- The change in venue has seen our average attendances increase favorably to 45, compared with 38 at *HQS Wellington*.
- Last-minute applications to attend events continue to arrive, albeit at a lower level. This causes difficulties of administration and co-ordination with our venue. Changes have been made to the text of the calling notice, to help reduce such occurrences, and I would ask members to observe the up-to-date procedure in future.

To close, thanks to all the members who support our events, the change of venue has been valuable in every respect.

**Kevin Haag – Hon Dinner Secretary**

e-mail: [kev\\_haag@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kev_haag@hotmail.co.uk)

# The Baxter and Grimshaw Trust

The Seven Seas Club Baxter and Grimshaw Trust is an integral part of the Seven Seas Club. It was set up in the mid-1980s by two members, retired Royal Navy officers Bernard Baxter and Tony Grimshaw, aided by the then secretary of the Club, the much loved and still missed Frank Wymark. It was a simple affair with its constitution and purpose handwritten on a single sheet of lined paper. Since then the trust has become a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The trust presently has assets of just over £500,000. We invest this money carefully and spend the annual income of about £20,000 on fulfilling the objectives laid down by the founders, whilst preserving the capital. We allocate grants only to fund young people to undertake voyages, usually by providing partial funding to add to funds the young people have raised elsewhere or provided through families or other sources. We do not fund organisations or capital expenditure.

As well as being members of this Club, Tony and Bernard were enthusiastic sailors and yachtsmen. They sailed and raced on the east coast often taking younger Club members, including the late Paul Antrobus and the late George Kingston, with them. Tony and Bernard bequeathed a considerable amount of money to set up the trust with the aim of giving disadvantaged young people, aged 18 to 25, financial help to get to sea on voyages which had to include overnight sailing.

Many young people have difficult lives and limited access to the world that we know. Getting them to sea for a few days on a sail training voyage can be a challenge for them but often shows them that there is a world of opportunities and people that they often don't know to exist. It works, and we have many moving stories of young lives transformed. Indeed those of us who have taken part as skippers, crew or organisers have seen this for ourselves many times.

In the mid-1990s the Club (not the trust) bought the Seven Seas Club trophy, a magnificent silver vase which is presented each year as a prize in the annual Small Ships Race organised by ASTO, the Association of Sail Training Organisations. This is held in Cowes and the Solent every October. It brings the various sail training organisations together for a convivial weekend. It is a sociable, competitive, and spectacular event which gives many young people from all over the UK the chance to take part in a major sailing and social event, something which many of them, in their usual lives, could hardly imagine. The trophy has contributed immensely to this event over the years and winning it has given great pride and encouragement to many organisations and individuals. The trust often helps with grants to aid young people to get aboard.

For more detail of our finances and recent grants made please have a look at the article, written by our Grant Secretary, Clive Carrington-Wood on page 13 of the winter 2024-2025 edition of our Club magazine. The trust continues to operate

effectively and to provide this vital service to young people and society. It is the main charitable activity of the Seven Seas Club.

I am reminding you of this for two purposes:

**1** We have the opportunity for two new people to join our team, as directors and trustees. It is an interesting job mainly done online. You get to see and approve (or not) all of our applicants, and to have a say in our management. It is most worthwhile and not onerous. The trust would like to follow the Club in becoming a bit more diverse, so if you can help, please speak to me, our secretary David Watson, Tristan Miller, Duncan Matthews or Clive Carrington-Wood.

**2** We want to increase our funds for this vital work. So one Laristan Fund collection per year is going to be donated to the trust and we ask you, as individuals, to consider following the example of Messrs Baxter and Grimshaw by leaving the trust a bequest or by making a donation if you can.

**Ray Kay – Chairman**

## Club dates for your diary

The venue for the Club's dinners is now the Army & Navy Club (The RAG) in Pall Mall, London

25 September	Dinner	Honorary Life Member Ray Kay
24 October	Trafalgar dinner	Commodore Sarah Oakley
20 November	Dinner	Cmdr James Mitchell, former navigating officer of <i>HMS Queen Elizabeth</i>
18 December	Christmas dinner	
29 January 2026	Dinner	Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB DSC ADC DL FRAeS

## Sister clubs

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

**Australia**      <http://sevensseasaustralia.com.au>

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

# Dinner photographs

**30 January 2025**

Attendance: 44



*President, Ken Bushnell, welcomes our guest Geoff Hunt*



*Terry Haragan, David Greenwell and Arthur Hornblow receive their ties 10-year ties and Past President Bill Murray receives his 25-year tie*

**27 February 2025**

Attendance: 49



*Our President greets our guest speaker Glyn Evans*



*Guests gather for pre-dinner drinks*

**20 March 2025**

Attendance: 33



*The president with the guest speaker, Nick Beattie*



*Glyn Evans receives the Chip Leonard Anchor*

**25 April 2025, Partners' evening**

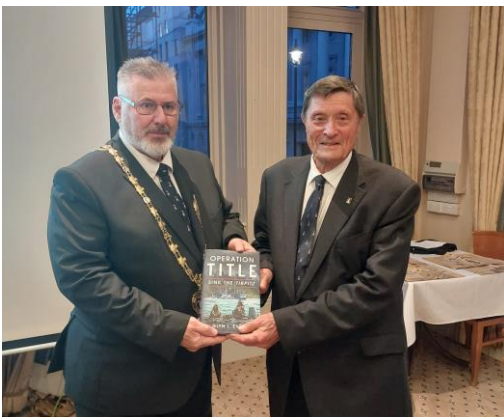
**Attendance: 43**



*Louise Parkin, our guest speaker, with President Ken Bushnell*

**29 May 2025, May dinner and 101st AGM**

**Attendance: 48**



*Our new President, James Cameron-Wood, thanks our speaker Graham Capel (left) and presents new member Matt Burrows (right) with his Club tie.*



*Derek Bevan, our retiring treasurer, receives the Club regalia upon being appointed as an Honorary Life Member*

# The Seven Seas Club

*by David Parry*

The schooner *Emma Ernest* had humble beginnings,  
taking goods round Britain in the coasting trade.  
Or sailing with sugar and salt trans-Atlantic,  
to meet the requirement, her rig it was made. <sup>1</sup>

This was a time of Britain's supremacy,  
ruling the seas and the mercantile marine,  
liners and freighters, from Shanghai to Southampton,  
in command a Conway boy was oft to be seen.

But command at sea is a lonely affair,  
and when in port they wanted their ease.  
Somewhere to meet, converse and dine well,  
so the *Emma Ernest* was a moment to seize.

They berthed her in London, in the heart of the city, <sup>2</sup>  
and dressed her to look like her new role. <sup>3</sup>  
Given the name *Friendship*, reflecting their image,  
then *Seven Seas* which was close to their soul. <sup>4</sup>

She prospered and flourished until the wartime,  
when bomber or barge put an end to her days. <sup>5</sup>  
*Seven Seas* needed a home, and one was forthcoming,  
they joined the Liberals to continue their ways. <sup>6</sup>

The Club enjoyed the magnificent surroundings,  
and fraternity was succoured for many a year.  
'Til crisis-pandemic put an end to the era,  
and the Seven Seas Club was out on its ear.

For salvation, the Club did not have to look far,  
for *Wellington* was berthed on Temple Steps Pier. <sup>7</sup>  
The Club is afloat again, back to its origins,  
to offer its members many more years of good cheer.

Sadly *Wellington* turned out a false hope,  
causing the Club to once again roam,  
but it found a refuge in the heart of the city,  
and the RAG has become its welcome new home.

<sup>1</sup> She was variously a brig, barquentine and schooner

<sup>2</sup> Opposite Charing Cross station

<sup>3</sup> She was painted like a sailing-ship frigate

<sup>4</sup> She was re-named twice

<sup>5</sup> It is not clear what caused her demise, either a bomb exploding nearby or being hit by a barge

<sup>6</sup> The National Liberal Club

<sup>7</sup> Headquarters Ship *Wellington*, formerly home of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, now owned by The Wellington Trust. She is a Grimsby class sloop that saw extensive WW2 service.

# Naming islands

*by Chris Esplin-Jones*

In 1962 I was serving as an acting sub-lieutenant in *HMS Protector*, a net layer launched in 1936. She was modified after the war to become the Royal Navy ice patrol ship. The net laying bow was removed and a bow suitable for the South Atlantic seas was fitted, along with a hangar and flight deck suitable for two Whirlwind helicopters. The ship retained its main four-inch gun armament.



*Figure 1: HMS Protector at Portsmouth viewed from the Ryde-Portsmouth ferry on 14 October 1963 on her way to the South Atlantic*

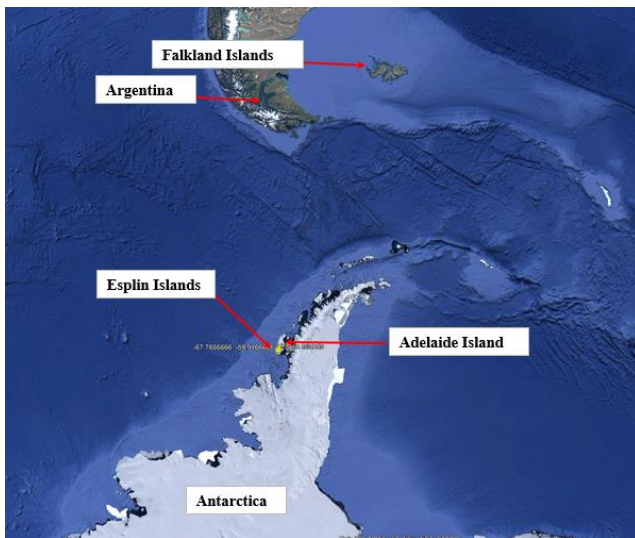
On the annual voyage south there was plenty of time to earn my bridge watchkeeping ticket and create a number of *ocean passage* charts – recording depth under the ship's track – which were submitted to the Hydrographer of the Navy for incorporation into existing charts. The ship's rôle in the South Atlantic was to carry out scientific data gathering, to maintain a UK presence in the disputed land borders in Graham Land and identify and survey potential anchorages. The *Royal Survey Ship John Biscoe* was also operating off Graham Land.

In December of that year, I volunteered to move with the specialist survey team across decks to the *John Biscoe*. Over the next three months we were to carry out a survey and chart the Adelaide anchorage at Lat 67 degrees 46 minutes south and Long 68 degrees 55 minutes west.

In the pre-GPS days chart work was done by sextant, depth sounders lead line, using triangulation points, aerial photography and, in shallow water close to land, corrected for tide. The party operated a 32ft cutter with kitchen-rudder steering gear. All measurements were made simultaneously when the leader called 'Mark.' Data was then recorded and, at the end of the working day, taken to the chart room in the *John Biscoe*, where it was incorporated into the master chart. Recording each mark required a deal of concentration.

As the chart neared completion, prominent features of the anchorage were given names based on members of the survey party. *Esplin Islands* came up because, together with an armed Royal Marine, I spent two days on the island operating a distance measuring device. We were working with a second remote party, out of contact with the main team and dependent on a helicopter to return to the ship. I also carried out the bottom sounding for the entire anchorage. The name was approved by the Antarctic Place-Names Committee.

It was all a long time ago and I look back on the absolute lack of fear shown by the wildlife sharing the islands (particularly the aggressive skuas) and the cleanliness of the sea.



*Figure 2: The Esplin Islands in relation to Argentina and the Falkland Islands at the southern tip of Adelaide Island*



*Figure 3: Chart of the Esplin Islands*



*Figure 4: The Esplin Islands; the distant shapes are icebergs and bergy bits*

### ***HMS Protector A146***

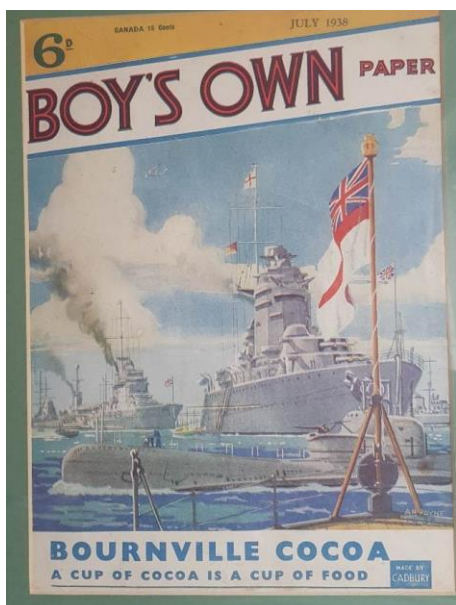
*HMS Protector* was an Antarctic patrol vessel of the Royal Navy between 1955 and 1968. She was built in 1935 as a net laying ship.

She was laid down as a fast net layer by Yarrow Shipbuilders at their Scotstoun, Glasgow, shipyard on 15 August 1935, launched on 20 August 1936 and was completed in December 1936, commissioning on 30 December 1936. Her design was based on that of *HMS Guardian*, built in 1932 but with more powerful machinery and improved equipment for handling nets.

*Protector* was 338ft (103m) long overall and 310ft (94m) between perpendiculars, with a beam of 53ft (16m) and a draught of 13ft 9in (4.19m) at deep load. Displacement was 2,820 long tons (2,870t) standard and 3,610 long tons (3,670t) deep load. Two Admiralty three-drum boilers fed steam to Parsons-gearred steam turbines, which drove two propeller shafts. The ship's machinery was rated at 9,000 shaft horsepower (6,700kW), giving a speed of 20 knots (23mph, 37kph). The turbines were replaced in 1945 by British Thompson-Houston geared turbines.

## Kai: the seaman's food

*by David Parry*



Cocoa was important to the nation's morale during the Second World War but, like everything else, it was in short supply and the big commercial companies worked hard to make the best of matters. Cadbury introduced *economy red label drinking chocolate*. With added saccharin and in emergency grey wrapping with red print, it was claimed to be double strength. In 1941 Fry introduced its *cocoa shelter service*, which was a Ford van fitted with an urn and cups and ready to travel to any area near Bristol affected by bombing. In its final week of service, in bomb-hit Bath, the service gave away 12,000 cups of cocoa and by the end of the war in 1945 Fry's cocoa was a big seller dubbed *the family food drink*. Not to be outdone, *Brooke Bond Dividend*

*Cocoa* was so-called because each tin had a dividend coupon inside. A full dividend card was worth five shillings in cash. But Rowntree was selected by the government to make *national milk cocoa* (NAMCO), devised by a scientific adviser as a high protein drink for the under-18s at work. It was introduced in November 1943 at a maximum of a penny a cup. Some contemporary accounts reckon NAMCO to have been quite pleasant, and that some people even ate the powder dry.

The Navy, too, had cocoa and it was essential to sustaining the life at sea: 'They had been at action stations for virtually eight days on end, missing hours of sleep, making

do with scratch meals of cocoa and corned-beef sandwiches.’ Navy cocoa, however, was not the powdery stuff; the Navy had good solid bars of chocolate and a special recipe to make its own version of cocoa. Kai or kye, as it was called in naval speak, became something of a tradition and certainly a ritual that lasted well into the 1970s. I well remember my first trip across the bay in the frigate *Torquay* in a force 9: having been violently seasick, going to the wheelhouse (go and get a bucket and hot water and clean it up – the only way to overcome seasickness!). I had to make the watch kai. This meant grating the chocolate bar with my pusser’s knife (blade with marlin spike as if we were still in sailing ships!) into a large *fanny* (aluminium cooking vessel) then adding a couple of cans of condensed milk and additional sugar. When ready, it was a trip to the boiler room (another place to avoid in a heavy sea) where there was a steam tap. Fill the fanny without scalding yourself and then take it around the watch-on-deck positions, which meant a tour of the ship: lookouts on the bridge, helmsmen and telegraph operators in the wheelhouse, after lifeguard on the poop (undoubtedly sheltering in the mortar well), and boat’s crew (most certainly sheltering in the schoolroom on the upper deck – the *Torquay* was part of the Dartmouth Training Squadron: Type 12 frigates modified to take cadets for initial sea training).

The denouement to this tale is that, when I returned to the mess in search of my hammock and peace, it was a sight out of Dante. The cadets’ mess was right aft above the propellers, so as the ship pitched the whole back aft vibrated. There was water swilling around underneath the slung hammocks with vomit buckets skidding around. The smell of confined bodies, diesel and vomit was indescribable. I spent the rest of the night locked in a signal locker on the upper deck. And boy, did I get a bol\*\*\*\*ing when I was found. Halcyon days!

## **Naval and maritime memorials in London**

*by Lester May*

There are numerous naval and military memorials throughout the British Isles and still more overseas.

The upkeep of these is an expensive business. Today, the country is described as being in a cost-of-living crisis and Whitehall and town halls claim there is nowhere near enough money to maintain the nation’s services and infrastructure. In such circumstances, contributions from the public towards maintenance of memorials are likely to be few and, bar in some exceptional cases, contributions from the public purse will be few too.

Some memorials are well looked after and there are groups and organisations that do

sterling work in this regard.

Peace in our time is a vain hope. Calls for memorials in the future will doubtless be made. All memorials out in the open will weather and the wording on some becomes unclear as the years pass. Memorials cost money and maintenance costs more money.

Every naval and military operation is backed up by an ‘army’ of unnamed uniformed personnel and civilians ashore, and seldom are they recognised in memorials. The Royal Navy was a huge industrial enterprise in the age of sail, and we recognise the contribution of civilians to Nelson’s victories, for example, without a separate memorial. There were always more civilians involved in the logistics that supported naval victories than sailors who fought in them. Those who provided the timber for shipbuilding, those in the dockyards and armouries, the victuallers and those in hospitals, let alone the families who supported their loved ones – they are not forgotten but most of them would not expect a memorial (or a medal) for their vital contribution.

In today’s circumstances, it is surprising that there are calls for donations for new memorials but there are indeed people busying themselves with such matters. I was prompted to look at maritime memorials in the capital after a naval aviator sent me a copy of a begging letter.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, chairman of The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, is seeking support for yet another memorial at Capel-le-Ferne, this time to ‘The Many’. The Blade of Honour project intends to honour the many others who worked in support of The Few – three blades will have a total of 810 tiles and, each for each tile, the project seeks £495. Where does one draw the line with memorials? How private individuals spend their money is their business, but I would have hoped that RAF people could find better things to do with the £400,000 hoped for in this instance. The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) has some £124m in its funds (annual report, 31 December 2023)!

It is no surprise that the letter and website refer to ‘... the Few, the airmen who flew against the Luftwaffe in 1940 to prevent an invasion of this country ...’ and, indeed, in the opening sentence of his letter, ACM Dalton writes of ‘... the men of the Royal Air Force who kept this country free of invasion in the summer and early autumn of 1940 ...’ This brazen re-writing of history is not uncommon from the RAF’s ‘aviators’ and their supporters, their failing to acknowledge the 56 naval aviators involved or the rather simple truth that the Royal Navy never lost control of the narrow sea and, indeed, with up to one thousand ships and submarines in home waters, was never even close to so doing.

## **London**

There are some 6,000 war memorials in London, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission caring for 72 of them. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no memorial to the

Royal Navy in central London and there are few naval sculptures. Indeed, few people know that St Martin-in-the-Fields is the Admiralty Church.

The Admiralty did consider a large memorial in Trafalgar Square after the Great War but opted for three similar memorials, in the naval depots of Chatham, Devonport and Portsmouth. The memorial at Plymouth was unveiled on 29 July 1924 and those at Chatham and Portsmouth on 15 October 1924.

The opening on 16 May 2001 of the National Memorial Arboretum, at Alrewas in Staffordshire, likely means that fewer new memorials will be erected in the capital. That is perhaps a good thing, insofar as there are, arguably, already sufficient memorials related to war and the fighting services in central London.

### **Nelson's column, London**

No need for my writing much on this; the famous 169¼ feet high landmark column to Vice Admiral Lord Nelson was opened in 1843. (It is interesting to note that Hampstead Underground Station, opened in 1907, is the deepest on the network – 192 feet below the surface!). The four bronze reliefs (depicting the Battle of Cape St Vincent, the Battle of the Nile, the Battle of Copenhagen and the death of Nelson) were finally added between 1849 and 1854.

To the right of the steps leading to the National Gallery, home to the nation's favourite painting, of course – *The Fighting Temeraire* [short title] by J M W Turner (1839) – are busts of three famous admirals. They are Cunningham (unveiled 1967), Jellicoe and Beatty (both unveiled 21 October 1948). The two earlier busts were originally associated with a fountain in Trafalgar Square but a redesign had them moved to the current location on the north wall.

### **Royal Naval Division memorial, London**

The comparatively modest Royal Naval Division memorial (RND memorial) is near the former Admiralty Citadel, in the north-western corner of Horse Guards Parade. This Lutyens memorial, now Grade II\*, was unveiled on 25 April 1925, the tenth anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings.

It has been moved twice, firstly for operational reasons. The Admiralty Citadel was constructed behind Old Admiralty Building in 1939 and remains in use as a maritime communication centre. Its construction necessitated the removal of the RND memorial and it was placed in storage. In 1951 it was re-erected in the grounds of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich (rather obscurely placed near the East Gate, behind what is now called Queen Anne Court [then the home of the RN Staff College]). After the closure of the RN College in the late 1990s, a campaign led to the memorial being re-located on Horse Guards, where it was unveiled in 2003. I wager that few are aware of the memorial.

It is surely appropriate to salute the officers and ratings of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division – theirs was a horrible business on the Western Front. Sub-Lieutenant A P Herbert RNR was among them and wrote this amusing poem (the RND rather detested their army major-general):

The General inspecting the trenches  
exclaimed with a horrified shout  
'I refuse to command a division  
which leaves its excreta about.'

But nobody took any notice  
no one was prepared to refute,  
that the presence of shit was congenial  
compared to the presence of Shute.

And certain responsible critics  
made haste to reply to his words  
observing that his staff advisors  
consisted entirely of turds.

For shit may be shot at odd corners  
and paper supplied there to suit,  
but a shit would be shot without mourners  
if somebody shot that shit Shute.

I recall the phrase 's\*\*t Shute' from my early years in uniform but had no idea of its origin and, were I to have written down those words, I probably would have thought 's\*\*t shoot' was correct!

The centenary of the memorial's unveiling has passed. The date of the unveiling is, of course, ANZAC Day. The dawn service takes place early that morning each year at the Australian War Memorial (2003) or the adjacent New Zealand War Memorial (2006), on the traffic island at Hyde Park Corner in London, and is followed by a smaller event, late forenoon, at the Cenotaph. The RND memorial is the responsibility of the Government Property Agency and a renovation would not go amiss (Admiral Lord West tabled questions in the House of Lords about this in October 2024).

Every other year, the massed bands of HM Royal Marines beat retreat on Horse Guards Parade, the next occasion being the early summer of 2026. Perhaps PDMRM might consider giving the RND memorial a short musical salute at future events?

Certainly, the profile of the Royal Naval Division memorial needs to be raised one way or another.

### **Royal Marines memorial, London**

Also known as the Graspan Royal Marines memorial, this bronze structure on a plinth was unveiled in 1903 on the north side of The Mall, close to Admiralty Arch. It was dedicated to the memory of the Royal Marines who died in the Boxer Rebellion and the Second Boer War, both just a few years earlier. It was rededicated in October 2000 to honour all Royal Marines who have served their country. The memorial is the focus of an annual parade and service, the Graspan Parade being held usually on the second Sunday of May.

### **Fleet Air Arm memorial, London**

This modern memorial is in Victoria Embankment Gardens, between the river and the

Ministry of Defence (MoD) main building. It was unveiled on 1 June 2000.

Fleet Air Arm aviators are also commemorated on the Battle of Britain monument, on the Victoria Embankment, a little to the south-west of the aforementioned gardens. Unveiled on 18 September 2005, badges of 804 Naval Air Squadron and 808 Naval Air Squadron serve to record the 56 naval and Royal Marines aviators among The Few (some flew with RAF squadrons).

### **National Submarine war memorial, London**

The Submariner memorial is also located on the Victoria Embankment, on a wall adjacent to Temple Pier, opposite Middle Temple and close to *HMS Wellington* (until recently *HQS Wellington*). It was unveiled on 15 December 1922.

The Submariners Association organise an annual Service of Remembrance and parade usually held on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday. Before the construction of cycle lanes adjacent to the memorial, the service was held at the memorial. But cyclists rule London these days and the event is now held at Middle Temple Gardens.

### **Merchant Navy memorials, London**

Sometimes known as the Tower Hill memorial(s), these are located in Trinity Square Gardens, opposite Trinity House and the imposing old Port of London Authority headquarters.

The Mercantile Marine war memorial was unveiled on 12 December 1928 and the adjacent Merchant Seamen's memorial on 5 November 1955. These are memorials to merchant seafarers of the Great War and the Second World War, those with no known grave but the sea.

The smaller memorial to the seventeen Merchant Navy and RFA seafarers lost in the Falklands War was unveiled on 4 September 2005.

The Merchant Navy Day commemorative service, organised by the Merchant Navy Association, is held annually on the Sunday before or after Merchant Navy Day, which is marked on 3 September.

### **Far East Prisoners of War memorial, London**

Also known as the Burma Railway memorial, this modest but cleverly designed memorial is at one end of Camden High Street, Camden Town, London NW1, close to Mornington Crescent underground station. It was unveiled on 21 September 2012. The unusual location is because the campaign for a memorial was led by the late Eric Gordon, then editor of the *Camden New Journal*. Each year, on a Sunday nearest to VJ Day, a short service is held, while the traffic continues to pass by noisily.

## **Korean War memorial, London**

At first sight this memorial appears to be only to army soldiers but, of course, the Royal Navy, Fleet Air Arm and Royal Fleet Auxiliary were involved from July 1950 to July 1953 – some with battle honours awarded for operations during all three years. The memorial is also in Victoria Embankment Gardens, between the river and the MoD main building. It was unveiled on 3 December 2014.

## **Iraq and Afghanistan memorial 1990-2015, London**

Unveiled by HM Queen Elizabeth II on 9 March 2017, this memorial is also located in Victoria Embankment Gardens.

The memorial has two distinct sides, one saluting the naval and military contribution during those desert campaigns and the other the civilian and humanitarian rôle. It is pleasing that one of the three combatants depicted is a Royal Marines commando, the sculptor Paul Day clearly showing the bootneck's shoulder flash on the figure in the centre.

© Lester May, 12 August 2024 (amended 2 June 2025)

*This article is based on one written for The Naval Review and posted, with detailed references, on its website.*

# **A different time**

*by John Callcut*

During a clear-out of our loft I found an envelope containing letters that I had written to my grandparents in Waterlooville when I was a young lad. I thought this one – dated 7 July 1960, when I had just turned twelve – might be of interest to our readers. It describes a school trip to the London Docks when they were in their prime.

Dear Nannie and Grandpa

I thought that you would like to know some of the things I have been doing. I will tell you about when I went to the Tower Pier which is the starting place to our trip round the London Docks. The first place of interest was the Tower of London but we were too small for London Bridge to open. Something which I did not know was that when the Tower Bridge was made a law was passed that a tugboat should keep guard to make shore [sic] that any boats which were in trouble should be helped, and even to this day a tugboat still stands guard. You know the advert for A1 cigarettes, well there is a tugboat called *Sun X* [see page 28] in it, and we saw the actual boat.

We passed the old public house the Prospect of Whitby which for many years was smuggerlers [sic] favourite store place.

Jumping ahead a bit we passed the West Indies Docks round the bend at the Isle of Dogs, passed Greenwich Observary [sic] through a lock and into the Royal Albert Docks. There we



*Sun X*



*Kenya Castle*

saw hundreds of ships all neatly tucked away in the side. We saw one Cunard Line ship, one of the Castle Line ships called the *Kenya Castle* [above].

I was amazed to see so many ships with the same kind of name, there was the *Port Brisbane* which was quite a modern ship *Port Jackson*, *Port Halifax* and *Port Wellington*. Also there was the Blue Star liners *Catalina Star*, *Adelaide Star* and the *Imperial Star*. After that we went into the Royal Victoria Docks back down the river and out.

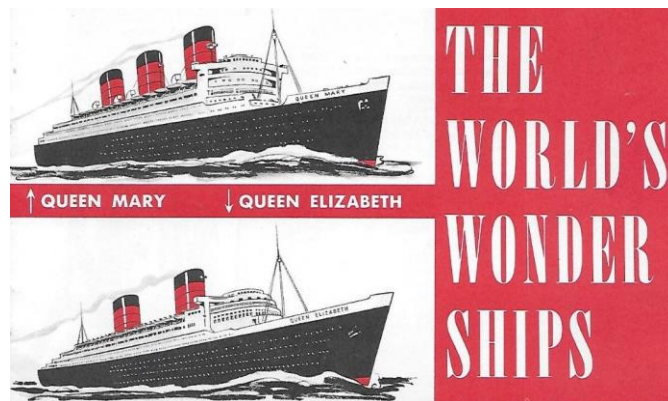


*Port Brisbane*



*Catalina Star*

Thinking back, all these vessels are now long gone but my interest in ships was inspired by my grandfather, who used to love taking me to the Mayflower Park in Southampton where we watched the Union Castle and Orient liners pass by. On one occasion he obtained visitor passes and we went on board the *Queen Mary*. I had never experienced such opulence.



Graham Capel's talk about the loss of the *Lakonia* in 1963 reminded me that my grandfather told me he saw her moored at what were called the New Docks in Southampton just before the fatal voyage. He said that he saw the starboard lifeboats being lowered in a training exercise.

Another favourite haunt was Lee-on-Solent. Grandfather had a pal who owned a wooden beach hut. There was a telescope on a tripod and the walls inside were festooned with funnel and flag charts. *Ships of Southampton Water* was a book that identified all the ships from ocean liners to small coasters.

Happy and innocent times!

## Captain Harvey W Broadbent RNR

by Glyn L Evans



Capt. H Broadbent RNR

The training school ship *HMS Conway* existed, from 1859, to answer the demand by British shipowners for young men trained for the challenges of a rigorous life at sea, a life that was hard and required the highest standards of training, performance, resolution and leadership.

Harvey W Broadbent joined *Conway* (then moored in the River Mersey) as a cadet in February 1880, leaving at the end of 1881 to serve an apprenticeship with Messrs Galbraith, Pembroke & Co, of London, before sailing in that company's steamships to the Far East as third, second and then first officer. In 1891, having obtained his master's certificate, he joined Bibby Line, making several voyages to Rangoon. Experience in those waters stood him in good stead as, between 1894 and 1895, he served in the China Squadron as acting-lieutenant RNR. Following this, he joined the Cunard Steamship Company, being appointed second officer in their ship *Etruria*.

In December 1897 during stormy weather two hundred and fifty miles south-west of Fastnet, Broadbent went in one of *Etruria's* lifeboats to take the crew off the sinking steamer *Millfield* of Whitby. In the first trip the boat saved fifteen and, in the second, the remaining eight hands of the *Millfield*. In the very dangerous seas running, the operation took thirteen hours and, for his part in the rescue, Broadbent received the Board of Trade, the MMSA and the Liverpool Humane Society's silver medals, the Lloyd's bronze medal and a pair of binoculars from the Liverpool Humane Society.

The following year, 1898, Broadbent returned to his old cadet training ship *Conway*, this time as chief officer, a position he held for four years until June 1903 when he was appointed captain superintendent, somehow earning himself the nickname 'Lobster Chops'. He was, at first sight, 'a terrifying man whose look froze you to the

deck. When inspecting divisions his set glare made one shudder, but one got to accept his mannerisms and, although held in great respect, he endeared himself to all.' Captain Broadbent retired on 23 March 1927 after 29 years' service in *Conway* during which he transformed the ship, with better facilities and a completely re-vamped syllabus and daily routine. Thanks to his energy and foresight, extensive shore-side sports grounds were also secured.

In 1926, the year before Captain Broadbent's retirement, the following article, under the heading *Master Mariners*, appeared in *The Times* newspaper for 29 June:

We are able to publish this morning an announcement of great interest to all who have at heart the maintenance of the seafaring traditions of this island kingdom. A hundred men of the British merchant service have banded themselves together in an association founded and registered as the Company of Master Mariners. The title chosen for their fellowship is a proud and dignified reminder of the age and work of the Service.

In an article in Lloyd's List & Shipping Gazette reporting the same announcement, it was said 'The list of names of the general council for the foundation of the company inspires confidence in its future.' Within that list of names and in particular those elected as members of the first Court of the Company of Master Mariners, one can see the name of H W Broadbent, Captain Superintendent, HMS *Conway*.



Despite the demands upon his time and energy as *HMS Conway's* captain superintendent and his contribution between 1923 and 1926 to the foundation of the Company of Master Mariners, Captain Broadbent made the time to found two other associations that have stood the test of time. In 1910 he formed the Old Boys' Association, later named the Conway Club, which thrives to this day with branches across the UK and around the world. In 1922 he formed The Seven Seas Club, to promote and foster the comradeship of the sea. Membership was open to past and present officers of the British sea service and persons who had been cadets of recognized nautical training schools. Today, membership is also open to yachtsmen or to those engaged or interested in maritime affairs. Dinners, with guest speakers on maritime related topics, continue to be held monthly at various premises, latterly those of The National Liberal Club, *HMS Wellington* and the Army & Navy Club [The RAG] Pall Mall.

The maritime artist Kenneth D Shoesmith never forgot his time as a cadet in *Conway* and produced many drawings of the ship that were used for, among other things, the



front covers for *Old Boys* magazine and the ship's prospectus. No doubt with a little encouragement from his former captain superintendent, H W Broadbent, Shoemith became a member of The Seven Seas Club and again put his artistic skills to good use for that Club's publications. They still feature today on the front of the Club magazine and on Club dinner menus.

## The other *Laristan*

by David Watson

*British merchant ships sunk by U-boats in the 1914-1918 War*  
published by A J Tennent of Chipstead Kent in 1990, dedicated to the men of the  
merchant service who gave their lives during the 1914-1918 War

In the introduction to this book, the author A J Tennent states: 'During the First World War over 2,500 British merchant ships and auxiliaries on Admiralty service were sunk by enemy action, a total in excess of 8,000,000 gross tons of shipping. Of these, over 2,000 ships were destroyed by U-boats.'

For each of these ships (and I have calculated this to be 2,039) the book gives brief details of each incident including the number of lives lost and, where applicable, a note that the master was among that number. From the details given, 273 masters were lost with their ship, ie just over 13% of the total.

The German attempt to starve Britain into submission by cutting off vital supplies by sea almost succeeded. On top of ships sunk and men and ship's masters lost was the additional strain on available qualified master mariners brought about by the practice of taking ship's masters captive, to be held in prisoner-of-war camps in Germany. One example involved the cargo steamer *Laristan*. While the name will be well known to members of the Seven Seas Club, this is not the ship whose loss is remembered through the Club's charitable fund of that name. The Club's *Laristan* was built in 1916 and originally named *Wilton*, being purchased and renamed in 1918 by Common Brothers to replace the earlier one featured here and pictured on page 32.



*Laristan: owners Common Brothers, Newcastle upon Tyne; managers Hindustan Steam Shipping Company; built 1910; British Flag GRT 3675 4 September 1916; captured and torpedoed in the Mediterranean 30 miles W from Gozo Island in position 36.00 N 13.00 E by the German submarine U-38, while on a voyage from Karachi to Hull with a cargo of wheat and barley; the master was taken prisoner*

Tennent's book does not record the names of masters but these, in most cases, can be found by reference to a most helpful work of research (<http://www.wrecksite.eu>). We can thus discover that *Laristan's* master was 33-year-old Richard James Longridge (certificate number 004376), born in Sunderland. He was interned first at Graz and then in the PoW camp at Salzerbad bei Hainfeld, Lower Austria. Here, we understand, prisoners were deployed on military and public construction projects and in agriculture. The officers were strictly separated from the men and housed in separate camp complexes. While the Armistice was declared in November 1918, many men would not be repatriated until the spring of the next year. Ship's Master Longridge would have been a prisoner of war for nearly two and a half years. He was one of 119 masters to be taken prisoner.

I was somewhat confused when I first consulted the wreck-site website, due to the fact that the photo shown therein is not that of the *Laristan* in question here but of the later ship which the Seven Seas Club remembers. To be fair, the picture is annotated 'assumed to be correct vessel' – an incorrect assumption as it turns out.

## **The story of the Southport**

*by David Parry*

At the start of the First World War the greatest threat, to the British mercantile marine, was not the U-boats but Germany's commercial raiders. Initially, there were two armoured cruisers, six light cruisers and four gunboats that had been typically based at ports across Germany's colonial empire. One of the gunboats was the *SMS Geier*, an obsolescent, unprotected cruiser of 1893 vintage. The *Geier* had seen many parts of the world and following a sojourn in Germany's West Africa she was in

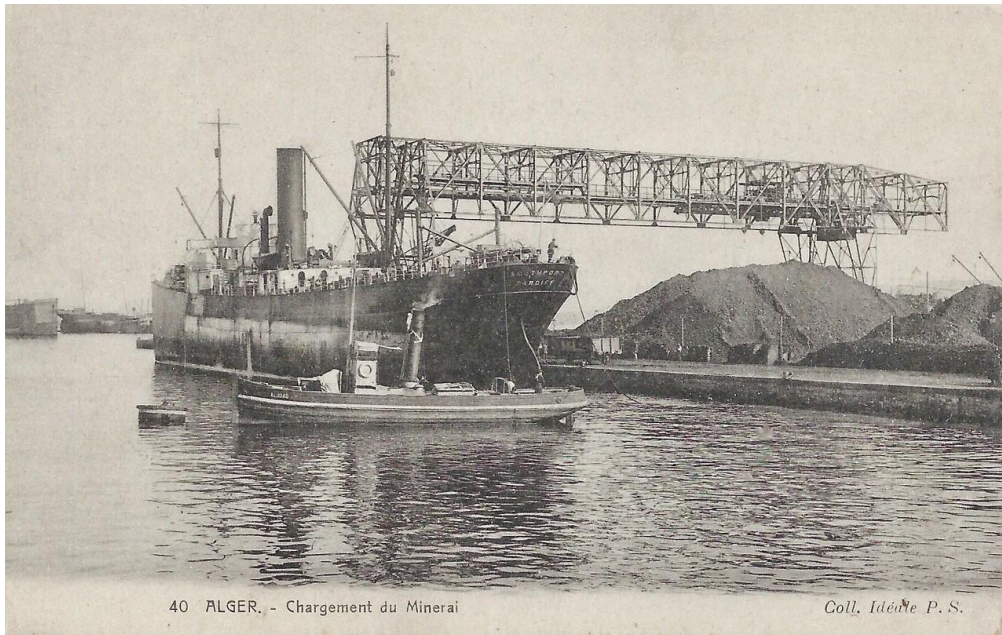
Singapore, on her way back to her previous Tsingtau base in China, just before the start of hostilities. Under the command of Kapitän zur See Karl Grasshof, she left Singapore in late July and headed across the Pacific to link up with Maximilian von Spee's East Asia Squadron at Yap. En route she called in at the German-owned Caroline Island of Kusaie (now Kosrae in Micronesia).

On 12 July 1914, the British tramp steamer *Southport*, owned by The Lewis Trading Company, Cardiff, and under the command of Captain Aristide Bernard Clopet as master, had left Auckland, New Zealand to load phosphates at the German-owned island of Nauru. However, when she arrived there were other ships also waiting to load



causing long delays, so the *Southport* headed for Kusaie, about 700 miles away to conserve coal while waiting to return to Nauru. Without a wireless on board the *Southport* would have to wait for the inter-island mail ship to arrive to receive notification that she could return to Nauru. The lack of a wireless also had the disadvantage that the *Southport* was unaware that, from the day she arrived at Kusaie on 4 August, she was in an enemy port.

The *Geier* arrived at Kusaie on 4 September to be warmly welcomed by the crew of the *Southport* waving and, following the traditions of the sea, dipping her ensign to a warship. There must have been an element of surprise on both parts: a pleasant surprise for the *Geier*, for here was a prize for the taking, while a less pleasant surprise for the *Southport* who suddenly found herself a victim of war and her crew prisoners of war. But Kapitän Grasshof did not wish to be lumbered with an insignificant British tramp steamer in the middle of the Pacific, so the *Geier* took 150 tons of coal from the *Southport*. What stores she could take, from both ship and island, was easier said than done for the *Southport* had few supplies and the island had recently been hit by a typhoon leaving the population in difficult circumstances. The *Geier* had also disabled the *Southport*, or thought she had disabled her, but failed to ensure that the crew of the *Southport* took the then customary oath of honour not to escape or bear arms – called parole. He merely told Captain Clopet that the *Southport* was now the property of the German Government, that Captain Clopet was answerable for the vessel and the conduct of the crew, and that they were not to leave the island. The *Geier* then sailed away heading for the German port of Tsingtau in China but, when he realised he was being chased by Japanese warships, Kapitän Grasshof preferred the neutral American port of Honolulu where the *Geier* was interned until she was requisitioned by the United States Navy as the *USS Schurz*. *Southport* was, of course, unaware of this.



A reason for the lack of parole, if it was not a simple oversight, may be found in the crew list. The *Southport* had what was, for a British tramp ship of the time, probably a fairly typical cosmopolitan crew. It was mostly British-drawn from all parts of the British Isles including then, of course, Ireland but notably for a Cardiff ship there was only one man from South Wales. The stewards were from Hong Kong, with American, Australian, Canadian, Singaporean, Spanish and Swedish seamen and fireman. There were also, however, eight Germans and one Austrian crew member, one a senior petty officer in the ship. It would seem sensible to presume, in those nationalistic days, that these nine members of the crew would have either volunteered, or been coerced, into joining the crew of the *Geier*. It is certainly difficult to believe that they would have condoned and participated in what happened next.

The interest in the crew does not, however, stop at the German members. The master, Aristide Clopet, had been born in France and was naturalised British. This was to cause him some problems later. The steward, who would have looked after the officers' mess, the mess room steward, who looked after the crew, and the cook all came from Hong Kong, the first two having been on the ship for many years. But there is also a stewardess listed, one woman in a crew of 52 – and tramp ships did not normally have women crew members, that was the provenance of Atlantic liners. Her name is shown as L Copet, aged 30. The master was aged 36 and, as taking wives to sea occurred regularly at that time, it would seem reasonable to assume that Captain Clopet found a way of overcoming company objections, if there were any, by entering his wife on the ship's books (and being paid for?) as she accompanied him around the world. Lastly, it is notable that both the deck and engine room officers had all been together in the *Southport* for many years, this being the second trip for her, and tramp ship voyages were often for about two years at least.

It may well be that the inevitable bond between the ship's officers was responsible

for what happened next. Without parole, the crew of the *Southport* were legally entitled to continue or, in their case, start the war. So, immediately the *Geier* had left, Captain Clopet conferred with Chief Engineer Coe as to whether the engines could be fixed. It was identified that the engines could be fixed, albeit marginally: the ship was able to steam ahead, but had no astern power, and was speed limited, which would have meant, at a time when ships like the *Southport* would be hard pressed to do 5 to 10 knots, meant very slow! She probably would not need to go astern but, if she encountered the *Geier* at sea, she would not be able to run away and, perhaps worse, if she got into bad weather she had little power. Nonetheless Clopet explained the situation to the crew, who expressed their willingness to try and to accept the consequences. They made it to Brisbane on 29 September, a trip of 2,000 miles at an average speed of about 4 knots, where they were welcomed as heroes and the ship was properly repaired.

When the *Southport* eventually returned to Britain, there were more accolades and Captain Clopet was presented with a silver salver by Mr John Cory, Chairman of the Trade Office in Cardiff on behalf of the British government. The salver was inscribed:

In recognition of the courage, resolution, and skill shown by Captain Clopet in effecting the escape of the *SS Southport* from the Island of Kusaie, Caroline group, Pacific Ocean, in September 1914, after the vessel had been seized by the German corvette *Geier* and disabled by the removal of parts of her engines.

At some time Captain Clopet left the *Southport* and became master of the *Rio Pirahy*. But British ships had to carry Admiralty secret instructions and Clopet had been born in France. Secret instructions could only be issued to British subjects whose parents were British subjects at the time of their birth. This meant that Clopet was relieved of his command while at Leghorn. It took a parliamentary question for the rules to be amended and for Clopet to continue his profession at sea.

## The Liberation memorial

*by Martin Earp*





My brother, Stephen (Wyatt) Earp was an 18-year-old stoker on board HMS Ardent during the 1982 Falklands conflict. Nowadays he works in the hospitality sector at major sports venues and racecourses in the South West of England. He visited the Falklands in 2016 for the first time since the war and returned again the following year for the 35 anniversary of the end of the Falklands conflict.

His experiences on board *HMS Ardent* in the Falkland Sound on 21 May 1982 have shaped his life. He felt so guilty for returning from the conflict, after 22 colleagues including two best friends did not come home. For many years he bottled it up and during his first visit his memories came flooding back; it was an extremely emotional time, but it helped him to come to terms with the experience.

He decided to make a second visit to the islands in 2017. It is a lovely place and has a very similar landscape to Dartmoor, where he lives with his fiancée. He enjoyed the pace of life and, of course, the people. On the Falklands, the 1982 conflict is often mentioned but already he feels the younger generation is not that interested – they have grown up in a different Falklands from their parents. After the war, a 150-mile fisheries zone was set up which now brings in approximately £20 million a year, providing the Falklands with a very successful fishing industry. The education system is also excellent with every child having the opportunity to go to university free of charge, either back in the UK, in New Zealand or Australia. Stanley, the main settlement on the islands, is expanding and the government assists first-time buyers in purchasing or building new homes. Before the conflict there were only 5 miles of roads but now there are over 300 miles, connecting all the communities and farms.



The biggest change to the island is the tourist industry, with cruise ships dropping off day-trippers to see the wildlife, who then flood into the cafes, pubs and shops in Stanley. They are currently building a new harbour for cruise ships.

However, there are still reminders of the conflict: the majority of the beaches were covered with Argentinian mines although, 43 years on, there has been a concentrated effort to remove them. Stephen visited a number of 1982 memorial sites while he was there, including Fitzroy and San Carlos cemeteries which have been kept immaculately by local residents and were very moving. The museum in Stanley is a fantastic facility and has a very poignant film providing an insight into the childhood memories of the Falkland residents during the invasion and the 74-days occupation. The small museum at San Carlos also has an excellent account of the conflict, including details of *HMS Ardent's* involvement. There is still strong support for visiting veterans and over 100 come to the island each year, with the assistance of the South Atlantic Medal Association 1982 offering concessionary flights and the people of the Falklands with free accommodation at Liberty Lodge.



It was great to revisit Goose Green and see that a number of the buildings have been updated, with new families moving into this once thriving community. However, it was very sad to hear that 35 of the 115 residents, who were held hostage in the community hall for four weeks during the Falklands conflict, have now passed away. It took some time for Stephen to climb Mount Harriet in the footsteps of 42 Commando Royal Marines and pay his respects. He was then lucky enough to spend time with other veterans from *HMS Sheffield*, *HMS Invincible* and the *QE2*, as well as two veterans from 3 Para who took him through their experiences during their tactical advance from Teal inlet onto Mount Longon, before the final assault into Stanley. He also had an interesting conversation with the then current governor of the island, Colin Roberts, about some issues caused by Argentinian sanctions.

On West Falkland, he visited a number of Argentinian mirage plane crash sites, finding it hard to believe the wreckage was still there after 38 years, looking as if it had only happened last week. He also visited the grave of Captain John Hamilton (SAS) who was shot just outside the settlement whilst on a reconnaissance mission behind enemy lines. He was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. Port Howard was occupied by over 1,000 Argentinian soldiers during the conflict and the museum is well worth a visit. Another internal flight took him to Saunders Island, owned by David and Sue Pole-Evans. The 15-mile by 8-mile island is an area of outstanding natural beauty with an abundance of penguins, sea lions and albatrosses. Sue kindly drove him for an hour's trip to a self-catered hut, with only 10,000 penguins as

neighbours, but what a view to die for! As the sun set, the Gentoo penguins sang on the beach and he was convinced he was in paradise.

Back on East Falkland he travelled to the foot of Campito, followed by another hour of off-road driving with islander Dick Swale to reach the summit, where he laid a wreath at the type 21 memorial; from there you can see the final resting places of both *HMS Ardent* and *HMS Antelope* and it meant a lot to Stephen to be able to pay his respects. He also visited Ajax Bay, where the 1950s mutton-processing plant played a vital rôle as a field hospital and was the main logistics base during the 1982 conflict.

He ended his visit with a trip to the memorial wood on the outskirts of Stanley, which is a fantastic memorial to all the people who lost their lives fighting for the islands and has a tree dedicated to each of the ship's company who failed to come home.

Stephen would like to take this opportunity of thanking the people of the Falkland Islands for their hospitality during his visits – they are friendly, generous, hard-working, proud and genuine, but most of all British. He is hoping to visit the island again for the 50th anniversary.



He was also invited this year by The Falklands Association as a representative of the HMS Ardent Association to celebrate Liberation Day with them in London at the RAF Club.



It is very important to him to remember the 255 service personnel and three Falkland islanders who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom; also to keep the name of *Ardent* in people's minds.

# A letter to the Hon Secretary

**Patron** Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal Registered Charity No 292659

## ***The Annual National Service for Seafarers in St Paul's Cathedral***

8 Hatherley Street London SW1P 2QT Tel: 020 7932 0000

Email: ANSS@theseafarerscharity.org

David Watson Hon. Secretary Seven Seas Club  
7 February 2025

Dear David

We wanted to take this moment to Thank The Seven Seas Club for your generous contribution of £100 towards the Annual National Service for Seafarers in St Paul's Cathedral 2025.

Thanks to your regular donations to the ANSS we are able to defray the costs of the service and ensure we can honour all seafarers annually.

The first Service was held in St Paul's Cathedral in October 1905, 'to unite, for corporate worship, seafarers of all ranks and denominations, shipowners and those whose duty and pleasure brings them into contact with seamen and ships'. Further to the great success of that occasion, the Service has since taken place annually, with only occasional gaps since.

The acknowledgment and commemoration the Service allows is as relevant today as ever it was. Despite huge advances in technology and navigation, the unpredictability and dangers of the sea and the elements are unchanged. At the same time, whilst we rightly commemorate and acknowledge all seafarers past and present, it is our continuing obligation to remind the generations of today and tomorrow that 95% of this island nation's trade is carried by sea and that the protection of our shores is vital to our security and economic well-being.

On behalf of the Chair, Trustees, and the seafarers whom we represent, our heartfelt thanks for your support; it is entirely due to loyal donors that we are able to meet the administrative costs of the Service.

Your dedication as a regular donor is invaluable to us, and we truly appreciate your support.

We look forward to seeing you at the Service on 8 October 2025.

Sincerely  
Cheryl Gallop  
ANSS Organiser

# Slop chest

<i>Club tie:</i> multi-motif	£25
<i>Club tie, ten-year, silk:</i> multi-motif with Roman numeral X	£25
<i>Club tie, twenty-five year, silk:</i> single-motif with Roman numeral XXV	£25
<i>Member's brooch:</i> bearing Club crest	£12
<i>Cufflinks:</i> bearing Club crest, per pair	£17.50
<i>Shield:</i> Club crest in enamel, mounted on wooden shield	£20
<i>Club burgee:</i> 18 inches, 12 inches on truck	£35
<i>Centenary coaster:</i> specially commissioned for Centenary dinner	£5
<i>Centenary book 1922-2022:</i> specially commissioned, hard-back	£25
<i>Club Cumberbund:</i> for our formal dinners, with the Seven Seas Club crest on one side and HMS Victory (for Trafalgar Night) on the other [Please advise waist size.]	£36
<b><i>new:</i></b> <i>Cornish shipwrecks</i> – a CD of a talk by John Strike	£7.50
<i>Books available from stock:</i>	
<i>Cargoes – A Celebration of the Sea</i> (John Masefield and Kenneth D Shoesmith) by Glyn L Evans	£30
<i>Perisher</i> by David Parry	£24.95
<i>The Maritime Art of Kenneth D Shoesmith</i> by Glyn L Evans	£30
<i>Operation Pedestal</i> by Eric Tinney	£6

For any of these items, please contact:

Martyn Taylor, ☎ 07906 749831, email: [martyn.c.taylor@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:martyn.c.taylor@blueyonder.co.uk)

Items can be collected from Martyn at a dinner or can be posted (postage and packing will be charged at cost).

Please note that the prices quoted apply while stocks last and may rise to reflect any increases charged by manufacturers.







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