The CACHALOT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHAMPTON MASTER MARINERS' CLUB

No 117 **December 2026**

Captain's Log

Fellow Cachalots,

I recently gave the address to the Immortal Memory at our Trafalgar Night Dinner. I think there were about 27 who listened to my speech about just one small facet of the battle, the consequences of which we can still see today. It would have been nice to have had a bigger turn-out - but fear not! My speech is copied elsewhere in this magazine.

I've been trying to raise the profile of Cachalots, and perhaps entice more people to join, by posting my activities on the Cachalots LinkedIn page. Not that I'm particularly web-savvy, but I really believe that if the Cachalots is to continue to survive and thrive then we must engage better with the wider maritime community, and that includes on social media. I'm pleased to report that there was a distinct spike of interest in my post about Trafalgar Night with, at the time of writing, some 1,782 impressions. (Probably all Noel Beckett's friends. Thanks for re-posting Noel). If only all those who clicked on the web page could become members. Could Cachalots with a social media presence also post (or repost) on their own pages information about Club events?

I did get one very gentle criticism about my LinkedIn post. So, apologies to all those who sailed or are sailing under the white ensign. I now know that we remember the Immortal Memory not, as I said, his Immortal Memory. Royal Navy members -forgive me. My excuse is that I very much sailed under the senior ensign and wasn't aware of that particular RN nuance! I could also add that when I sat my Portsmouth pilot exam, QHM, (it was QHM at the time), asked me what the term 'winding ship' meant. Hadn't got a clue – though I do now!

This is written just before Remembrance Sunday. I will be representing the Cachalots at the Cenotaph in Southampton and laying a wreath on behalf of all of us. It will be a time for reflection, a time to remember the contribution of both military and civilian personal in both world wars and subsequent conflicts. (I'm reminded of the WWII poster: "The lifeline is firm, thanks to the Merchant Navy"). For the seafarer, Remembrance Sunday is a time to think about all those that have gone to sea and never returned. I will especially be thinking of all of today's seafarers who've been killed or injured in wars not of their choosing.



Assembling in Southampton's Guildhall prior to the ceremony with Ashley Jenkins, Tom Karsenbarg and Philip Williams AFNI from the SSOA. Cachalots all.

I will also be remembering all those who did come home but were mentally or physically damaged by conflict.

November is also the month when there is a sudden flourishing of whiskers on men's upper lips. "Movember" is a charity to promote men's health, both physical and mental. I've signed up and I've also pledged to walk 60 kilometres and, to paraphrase the Proclaimers, 60 kilometres more. If you'd like to sponsor my efforts, search for William Hargreaves on the Movember webpage. uk.movember.com

As this is the last edition before Christmas, (and it seems that every store already have their Christmas decorations on show), I will take this opportunity to wish you all a happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year.



May you have smooth seas and following winds!

Bill

Boatsteerer's Locker

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

Cachalots Bar – all drinks can be purchased from the main bar downstairs.

Please note, our last opening will be Friday 18th December and the Club room will reopen Friday 8th January 2027.

Subscriptions – having provided plenty of advance notice and updates about the new web portal for the Cachalots, we hope by now you will have registered your name in the members area and set up your payment using the GoCardless payment system. If you have, then excellent news and please **remember to cancel your Standing Order accordingly in good time ahead of the renewal date of 1st January 2027.** If you have not, or have been having difficulty in doing so, please make contact with Noel Becket, Terry Clark or me and we will help to get you registered.

Functions – Terry Clark and I are co-ordinating events for the time being while Julia Whorwood has offered to make the bookings and liaise with Everest Cuisine for the curry lunch events on Saturdays. Thank you to Julia for looking after the curry bookings etc through the past year.

Payments for Functions – at present we are handling five methods of payment which is presenting occasional difficulties in collating the information needed for each function. Ideally, we ask all members who have access, to make payment for a function through the online portal and the **GoCardless** payment system. We know there are some members who are not registered and who will pay by cheque or cash and we will continue to respect that method.

Please drop an email to boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk and to office@cachalots.org.uk if you wish to attend.

A programme of events is posted on the noticeboard in the Club room and is available on the Cachalots website for 2026-2027. A new programme will be issued in the new year. The curry lunch gatherings for 2026 are now completed and a number of dates will be identified between March and November 2027 at Everest Cuisine which has a chairlift fitted to the stairway. The dates will be published on the new web portal where you are encouraged to register and make payment for your curry lunch through the GoCardless payment system.

Christmas Lunch – RBL - Wednesday 9th December

We have been liaising with Chef Sam to provide our Christmas Lunch once again. There is a maximum number of 42 due to restrictions on space. Please note this event, including the menu is listed on the Cachalots web portal, and we encourage all members who wish to attend to use GoCardless payment scheme for registering and payment. Final registration and payment will be Friday 4th December.

Southampton Docks Carol Service – Thursday 17th December – Ocean Cruise Terminal. Doors open at 1830 and payment is through the QR Code on the poster indicated on the event page.

Docklands New Year Service – Monday 5th January 0930 - St Michael's Church

Sea Pie Supper – Friday 5th February 2027

Tickets went on sale Friday 6th November and I am pleased to say, we have secured Monica Kohli OBE as our Guest Speaker. Monica is a solicitor specializing in Maritime law. She is dual qualified in India and England & Wales and has been practising shipping and trade law for the past two decades; as an Advocate in India, and as a Solicitor in UK. Monica is also President of WISTA, Women's International Shipping & Trading Association, UK.

Ticket prices are £82 for Cachalot members and £95 for non-Cachalot guests.

Shipping Festival Service – Thursday 10th June 2027

I have been in contact with the Churchwarden of St. Michael's Church to confirm a date which is indicated above but subject to confirmation.

Forthcoming Meetings

Management Committee – will be held in the Club room of the RBL on Thursday 3rd December. In accordance with Rule 7, among items for discussion and action will be the appointment of a Boatsteerer. We have a willing volunteer to take on the role in our Post Captain, Noel Becket. As indicated in the previous Cachalot, I shall be taking the role of Office Administrator from 18th December.

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

Meeting of Past Captain's – the annual meeting of the past Captain's has been arranged in the Club room of the RBL on Saturday 9th January 2027 at 1200.

Annual General Meeting – the AGM in accordance with Rule 11, will be held in the upstairs Club room of the RBL on Friday 15th January at 1900. This will take the form of an in-person meeting, with a link by Zoom for those unable to attend. Please advise if you would prefer to attend by this method.

Items for consideration at the AGM

For note – Harpooners – Captain John Noble is due to retire from the committee but is eligible to stand again. We have two willing new Harpooners for consideration and election.

- All other Harpooners are due for re-election in January 2028.
- Three Trustee's remain in post.

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

Please note that any decisions requiring a vote will only be available to those who have completed their subscription payment for 2027.

And in closing!!!!

My brother sent me a photo of a marine craft during a recent visit which may be suitable for our use in the Azores!!!

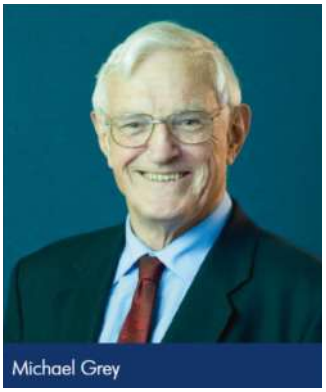


Captain Robin Plumley MBE, Boatsteerer

Crew safety last

The Maritime *Advocate* online Issue 920, November 6th 2026

By Michael Grey MBE


Michael Grey

It is curious that in an age where Health and Safety have been granted almost a religious status, there remain huge gaps where seafarers, quite routinely, are expected to put their lives in peril. There may be all sorts of rules and regulations designed to mitigate these risks, but the reality of work on a ship may demonstrate their impracticality. Sometimes, as with the casualties involving lifeboat drills, or many of the "enclosed space" fatalities, or injuries with falls from container stacks, a combination of evolving technology has been a contributor. Routine work has somehow incorporated perils which were inadequately foreseen.

One wonders who, somewhere along the line, thought it would be a great idea to fumigate grain cargoes on passage, to eradicate all the pests which might otherwise be along for the ocean voyage. Maybe it was a committee, entirely fixated on the end result of clean grain cargoes, possibly with a chemist on the strength, who was able to report on the lethal qualities of the suggested fumigant. What was there not to like, employing the sea passage to the ultimate benefit of the landed cargo?

Where did the health and safety of the crew figure in this ground-breaking development, in which very lethal and hard to detect gas was to be employed by the fumigators? It was well known, in the tried and tested campaigns against rodent infestations that during the operation, which also could have used dangerous materials, the ship would be fully evacuated and nobody permitted to return until the professionals judged it to be safe and fully ventilated. What dramatic change made on-passage eradication using lethal fumigants like phosphine gas safe and acceptable, other than the fact that it saved a lot of time and money? Or did it just happen, a development that was defined as progress, soon becoming routine and demanded by charterers?

Somebody probably knows the answer to such questions, which were prompted by a report a month ago in the Mariners' Alerting and Reporting Scheme, which features in the Nautical Institute Seaways journal. Edited from a China MSA report, it was a truly horrific incident in which 13 of a crew of 21 were killed in horrible circumstances by phosphine gas poisoning, with the ship on passage with a cargo of cassava chips. Initially suspecting food poisoning or Covid 19, the crew failed to realise that the fumigant was wafting all over the ship, despite the hatches being sealed with tape. It was like something out of a horror story, only it was non-fiction.

Clearly prompted by this awful incident, the latest Seaways features an enlightening but equally disturbing article by Master Fumigator Derek Legge, who points out in great detail why in-transit fumigation is not an operation that can be taken lightly and what those on board a ship need to know. He also cites an IMO document which notes that "at least 46 seafarers and shore workers have lost their lives after being exposed to hazards associated with the fumigation of cargo holds since 2008", and more than 200 toxic exposures recorded over the same period. It is pointed out that actual figures are widely understood to be significantly higher, because of chronic under-reporting.

What makes Derek Legge's feature so disturbing is his analysis of a situation which arises from poor information about complex and time-consuming monitoring tasks that are necessary to keep the crew safe and the inadequacy and insufficiency of the equipment often provided them. He points out that the gas can find its way into compartments adjacent to the fumigated holds, which the crew routinely need to access, such as forecastle spaces, lockers and elsewhere, and even a tiny pinhole can admit a lethal dose.

He points out, in a telling remark that – "In modern shipping, there is no comparable operational area where such dangerous practices and regulatory non-compliance are tolerated".

Reading this worrying document – a second instalment is promised – I was reminded of an article a few years ago discussing the precautions which would be necessary when designing a ship fuelled by ammonia. Special venting arrangements up the top of the masts, gas-tight closure of all doors, windows, ventilators etc were some that I recalled. Dry cargo ships are designed to keep the water out, not gases, and we have sufficient reminders from accidents involving depleted oxygen in spaces to know that staying safe with lethal gas at large on a ship is a very big deal indeed. It is clearly set out by Mr Legge.

Why then, is this practice acceptable in our safety conscious era? Is it not possible to fumigate the cargo ashore, prior to loading or after discharge? And is it not high time that some brilliant chemist came up with a fumigant that does not cause a list of symptoms that make you feel ill to read them, and most of which are fatal. Or is this just another case of dead seafarers not making enough waves to provoke progress?

Printed here with the kind permission of The MaritimeAdvocate online www.avoarchive.com

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

Cachalots Trafalgar Dinner 2026



This year, we were concerned we would not be able to attract sufficient numbers due to the likely cost of tickets at our previous venue. Hence we decided to return to the RBL to hold an 'in house' celebration of Trafalgar.

Twenty-nine Cachalots and partners arrived at the RBL from 1830 for service of the meal at 1900, although we started at 1930 with a welcome from our Captain, Bill Hargreaves and the Nelson Grace by our Past Captain, Noel Becket. Sam, our handy Chef, with his sister Danielle, provided the hearty meal for the evening.



Following the Victuals, including coffee, Past Captain Martin Phipps MBE provided the Second Grace and Captain Bill Hargreaves led the toast to The King.

After an interval, Captain Bill Hargreaves presented the Immortal Memory with a toast in silence to close the proceedings.



All that was needed was for the wife of the Captain, Flis Hargreaves, to draw the ticket for the prize draw, a bottle of Pussers Rum adorned, white and blue ribbons. This was won by Past Captain John Mileusnic.

A successful evening in great company.

Robin Plumley Boatsteerer

The Immortal Memory

Here is the text of the Captain's speech:

We are all here this evening to remember and honour *the Immortal Memory of Horatio Nelson and those who fell with him at Trafalgar on the 21st October 1805. We all know, or should know, of Nelson's radical battle plan,* splitting his fleet into two columns, and attacking the Franco-Spanish fleet at right angles, thus breaking their line and isolating sections of the enemy.

The Franco-Spanish fleet had 33 ships of the line, including some of the largest in the world at the time. One of the Spanish fleet, the Santisima Trinidad boasted 130 guns, the Victory had 100. Nelson's 27 ships of the line possessed a total of 2,148 cannons against the enemy's 2,632 cannons. However, during the period when Britannia did indeed rule the waves, it wasn't about the size and number of your cannons, but how you used them. Britain's gunners were better trained, more accurate and could fire more frequently. Despite being outnumbered and out gunned Nelson achieved a decisive victory.

Nelson, of course, in the latter stages of the battle, was fatally wounded by a French sniper. He'd been advised by the captain of the Victory, Captain Thomas Hardy, to remove the medals and decorations from his coat to make himself less conspicuous but he had refused. It was too late "to be shifting a coat" he'd replied. But despite all the tales of daring-do at Trafalgar, I want to talk about just one small aspect of the battle, the history behind it, and how its consequences are still visible today.

The last great battle between sailing ships is considered to be the Battle of Navarino on the 20th October 1827. However, by 1852, the Royal Navy had launched its first steam powered ship of the line, HMS Windsor Castle, and the days of battles between sailing vessels were over. HMS Windsor Castle

was launched nine years after the world's first ocean-going iron vessel fitted with a screw propeller, the S.S. Great Britain.



I don't want to be too disrespectful to all the navy admirals on Trafalgar Day, but it has to be mentioned that the Royal Navy has had a reputation to be slow to adopt to new technologies. As a very junior Royal Navy Reserve officer I was proudly shown a new piece of kit that was soon to be introduced into the fleet. It was a Marconi Lodestar Mark 3 direction finder. I'd already been sailing with it for a number of years, the only difference being my sets weren't painted grey!

A number of years ago my wife and I visited the s.s. Great Britain in Bristol Docks. Launched in 1843, she was at the time the largest passenger ship in the world and, as I've said the first ocean-going iron vessel fitted with a screw propeller. A truly fascinating vessel and well worth a visit. However, I was a little surprised and disappointed that the vessel was flying the white ensign.

As a merchant seaman, and as Captain of the Southampton Master Mariners, I am truly grateful for the contribution and sacrifice made by our colleagues serving under the white ensign, but I am also proud to have served under the red ensign, and the history and sacrifice it too represents. I asked one of the staff why the ensign wasn't red. The Great Britain was after all a merchant vessel. She must have been asked the same question many times before, because she explained in some detail how Isambard Kingdom Brunel preferred the white ensign and in 1843 you could fly on a merchant vessel whatever ensign took your fancy. He could have flown a red, white or blue ensign, but he chose white.

Nelson's rank at Trafalgar was Vice Admiral of the White and his second in command, the leader of the second column of ships, was Vice Admiral of the Blue Cuthbert Collingwood, 1st Baron Collingwood. As such, they were entitled to fly the white ensign or the blue ensign on ships under their respective commands. Not a red ensign in sight! The senior vice-admiral, the vice-admiral of the red must have been otherwise engaged.

Dividing the fleet into squadrons of different colours was first introduced in 1558, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1st. Primarily introduced for better coordination of the fleet, the Lord Admiral of England's squadron, flew a plain red flag as its ensign. The Vice-Admiral of the fleet, or Vice-Admiral of England, flew a plain blue flag for his squadron, and the Rear-Admiral of the fleet flew a plain white flag on his ships. The order of precedence was thus red; blue; and white, and this order of seniority lasted until May 1596 when the Royal Navy was divided into four squadrons.

However, in 1620, the organisation of the Royal Navy again reverted to three squadrons and flag ranks for each coloured squadron were introduced. Thus, there would have been an Admiral of the Red, an Admiral of the Blue, and an Admiral of the White, Vice Admirals of the Red, Vice Admiral of Blue…well you get the idea. The order of seniority was, as before, red, blue and white. In 1653 the order of seniority was changed to red, white and blue. But the most senior flag officers in each rank still flew a red ensign.

Nelson was, as I have already stated, at the Battle of Trafalgar a Vice-Admiral of the White and of course senior to Vice-Admiral of the Blue Collingwood. Nelson ordered that all vessels under his command, including, unusually, Collingwood's vessels should fly the white ensign. Apparently, he

considered the white ensign to be distinctive enough not to be confused, in the heat of the battle, with the enemies' colours.

It wasn't until 1864, twenty-one years after the launch of the Great Britain, that the colour squadron system was abolished. At the same time, it was formalised as to which type of vessels could fly which colour of ensign. In honour of Nelson, the Royal Navy adopted the White Ensign which, of course, was flown at Trafalgar. The senior ensign, the Red Ensign, was allocated to the Merchant Navy, and auxiliary vessels were instructed to use the blue ensign.

I might add that although the term Merchant Navy had been used informally throughout the 19th Century, it wasn't until the 14th February 1928, that it was announced that King George V honoured the contribution made by merchant seamen in peace and war and formally conferred the title "Merchant Navy". 14th February 1928, Valentine's Day. Perhaps that's why everybody loves a sailor!

The title Royal Navy is much, much older. Henry VIII established the Navy Royal in 1546, the year after the Mary Rose sank. The Navy Royal was formed as a direct consequence of the Battle of the Solent and the perceived need for a standing navy. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, one of Charles II first acts was to officially change the name to Royal Navy and he also introduced the prefix HMS for RN vessels. (How the Royal Navy became the catalyst for the Industrial Revolution is the subject of a much longer lecture and for another day).

To conclude, we're her tonight to remember, and dare I say celebrate, the immortal memory of Vice Admiral of the White The First Viscount Nelson, Knight Companion of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath, and all those who fell with him or served with him at Trafalgar.

Thank you.



Cachalot Neil Purdon's grandfather, William Park Purdon, served as master with Elder Dempster and earned a DSC in WWI. Neil has come across some poems written by him, including this one on the Battle.

The Battle of Trafalgar

The blinding smoke all pall-like hangs
Above the troubled sea's expanse,
Where heavy guns in fearful tones
Tell loud of Death's unseen advance,
Above the canopy tall spars
Fling proudly o'er each lofty line,
The blood-red cross, the tri-couleur,
And Spain's oft vaunted battle-sign,
And as the thunderous guns speak out
To fill the air with smoke and flame,
The forest thins and standards fall
To mark the gunner's deadly aim.
Below the strife-born mantling cloud
Full fifty phantom forms appear,
Each adding to the conflict's din
The vanquished's sigh or victor's cheer.
The decks like shambles quickly fill
With dead and wounded stricken low,
The sea around them crimsons fast
With streams that from the scuppers flow.
But heeding not, the guns still speak
While men are left their throats to fill;
Each ball pursues its fatal path
And leaves fresh victims mangled, still.
Here in a wide and eerie gap
Some battered wreckage on the wave, -
Close hung with smoke-grimed, wounded men, -
Bespeaks a proud ship's sudden grave.
At length as daylight fades away
The sounds of battle slowly yield,
A crippled remnant sullen fly
And leave the victors on the field.
Proud Britain! well ye know the price
For victory thou hadst to give;
A nation's joy, a nation's grief
Could not again bid Nelson live.
Why should we mourn? 'Twas e'er his wish,
If God should will his death at sea,
To give his life for Britain's sake
Within the hour of victory.

WPP

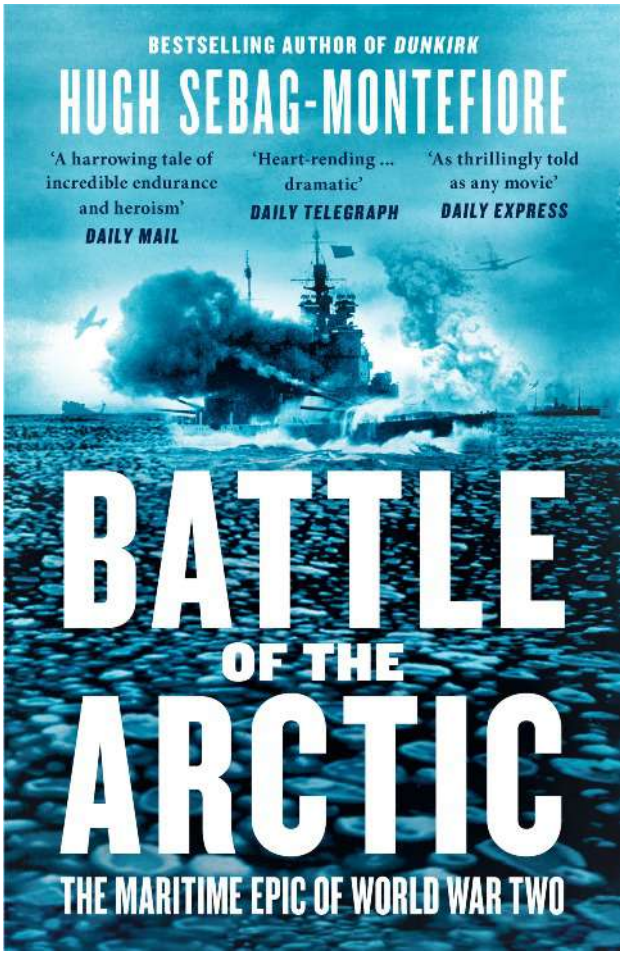
18.11.1906

Battle of the Arctic

We move on 136 years to another naval battle, this one during World War Two.
The paperback edition of Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's 'Battle of the Arctic' is due to be published on the 5th November and he has kindly written this introduction exclusively for 'The Cachalot'.
One for your Christmas wish list!

My favourite bits in my book *Battle of the Arctic*
By Hugh Sebag-Montefiore

Readers and reviewers will draw their own conclusions about what I have written. But what has pleased me most is that my book is not a conventional narrative about a battle.
First and foremost I loved the fact that I have been able to demonstrate how the extreme environment impacted the action. We are talking about the likes of icebergs, the northern lights, Arctic mirages, not to mention whales and polar bears.
I also enjoyed being able to insert another unusual feature: as well as highlighting the fighting at sea that had to be done in order to transport the arms and other aid from Iceland and Scotland to northern Russia, in a bid to help Stalin's Red Army repulse the 1941 German invasion, the book focuses just as deeply on the equally dramatic aftermath of each fight.
Some of my favourite pages in the book describe the repercussions of the destroyer HMS *Onslow* being hit, as seen through the eyes of a young wireless operator (20 year old Alan Ross before he became a well known poet). He writes vividly, and poetically, about walking on the submerged corpses of his shipmates, as up to his waist in water, he strove to extinguish the fire in the compartment below decks where he was confined.
But it is the passages about the aftermath of the sinking of the convoys' merchant ships which gripped me most. The torment their crews endured when forced to sail hundreds of miles to the nearest land in their lifeboats is particularly harrowing: there is much talk of limbs blackened by frostbite, and men being thrown into the sea either before or after they were frozen to death.
Even more compelling, if that is possible, are the accounts of those merchant seamen who became castaways for many weeks or months after being dumped by their lifeboats on deserted areas on Arctic islands. They were stalked, and their corpses were eaten, by polar bears, and anarchy was held at bay by summary executions in scenes that can be compared with William Golding's *Lord of the Flies.*
But I was glad also to find space for the personal accounts which describe what followed on from these ordeals, in the strange atmosphere prevailing in the northern Russian ports where survivors eventually ended up. I was fascinated by the harsh treatment meted out to injured Allied seamen in the primitive Russian hospitals (amputations without anaesthetics), as well as by the way the Russian security service's suspicion of 'the foreigners' left the visitors feeling at best isolated and at worst despised, a bitter pill after all they had been through. While any locals who befriended the foreigners, including the young Russian women who slept with them, risked being packed off to the gulag.



The paperback edition of Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's *Battle of the Arctic: the Maritime Epic of World War Two* is published by William Collins price £14.99

Cachalots Golf Day – Wellow Golf Club, Romsey

Friday 11th September 2026

Following our first successful golf day in 2021, the autumn golf day was held in generally fine weather at Wellow Golf Club near Romsey. My thanks to former winner David Ardley for assisting in setting up the day with Wellow GC and to the club team for providing an excellent conditioned course and facilities with meal afterwards. Unfortunately, David was unable to play on the day.

This autumn golf day is held for the Charles Webb Golf Trophy which was played from 1981 to 1989 and now has six new names engraved on the trophy.
This year we linked up with the Warsash Association for their golf day although sadly only three members played.

Thus, on Friday 11th September, twenty-eight of us, including ten Cachalots, gathered at Wellow for a bacon buttie and coffee ahead of the sixth Cachalots Golf Day since 1989. For this event we were very pleased to receive sponsorship for the prizes from Williams Shipping.



Tony Ramsay,
COSCO Shipping, tees off



Left: Some of the players at the post golf meal.

Right: Prizes sponsored by Williams Shipping.



The twenty-eight players were from DP World, Williams Shipping, Southampton Pilots, SERCO, Solent Stevedores, Red Funnel, Maritime Volunteer Service, Warsash Association, University Southampton and National Oceanography Centre. and other guests to swell the numbers and form seven teams of four.

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

The first team tee' d off at 1130 led by Tony Ramsay as part of team Solent Stevedores!!.

Individual rounds were scored by Stableford points and two scores counted towards the team score.
Prizes were given for the best three individual rounds and best two team scores, and in addition;

Nearest the pin in 2 shots on Ryedown 5th hole

Nearest the pin on Ryedown 2nd hole, and

Longest drive on Blackwater 3rd hole.

In the clubhouse we enjoyed celebratory drinks and a pleasant meal. An element of the entry fee was put towards the Cachalot Captain's Charity, The Marine Society.

And then to the prizegiving!



The results:

Longest drive	Jon Williams (Solent Stevedores)
Nearest the pin	Andy Jeffries (formerly NERC)
Nearest the pin in 2	Mark Clouter (WP Group)
Team prize (First) 101 points	Andy Jeffries (NERC), Clyde Sorrell (Bramshaw), Aart Hils Riis Lambers (formerly DP World), Roger Holt (Warsash Association) *Right top*
Team prize (2nd) 99 points	Tony Ramsay (COSCO), Mark Hooper (Solent Stevedores), Mark Clouter (WP Group), Jon Williams (Solent Stevedores) *Right bottom*





Individual (First) 46 poin
Aart Hils Riis Lambers
(formerly DP World)



Individual (2nd) 40 points cb
Clyde Sorrell
(Bramshaw guest)



Individual (3rd) 40 points cb
Mark Hooper
(Solent Stevedores)

The individual winner received an engraved cut glass whisky glass and their name will be engraved on the Charles Webb Cup. All prize-winners received an item of golf clothing for which we thanks Williams Shipping for providing the fund.



Team Plumley

For the **Warsash Association**, the *Wakeford Trophy* was won by Roger Holt and the *Stubbington Trophy* for second by Robin Plumley.

An enjoyable and successful day in great company with about £120 being raised towards the Captain's Charity.

Many thanks to all who came along and supported us on the day. Special thanks to the Pro in the shop at Wellow for selecting the excellent prizes for the day.

The next spring golf day at Lee-on-the-Solent will be on Thursday 22nd April 2027.

Robin

2027 Subscriptions & 250 Club

Subs for next year are due on the 1st January

£50 or **£40** if retired.

£15 if serving as a Cadet

For those who have signed up to the GoCardless mandate we will be requesting your bank to make payment early in the New Year (see page 2)

And don't forget the 250 Club
You will be entered in each of 12 monthly draws for every £5 ticket purchased

SMMC bank a/c:
Sort code: 56-00-68
A/c no. 00037869
Ref: Membership

Sea Pie Supper 2027

St. Mary's Stadium

Friday 5h February

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

To members only
On our website
or through the office please.

Members £82 guests £95

office@cachalots.org.uk

Club Christmas Lunch

Wednesday December 9th

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

Chicken Liver Parfait, Pickled Sprouts,
Toasted Brioche, Red Onion Marmalade

Roast Bronzed Turkey served with Sage & Cranberry Bauble,
Pig in Blanket, Best of British Roast Potatoes, Roasted Root vegetables,
braised Red Cabbage finished with Rich Gravy

Festive warm Apple Tart tatin finished with
Christmas Pudding Cream and Brandy Sauce

£42 per person including Tea/Cffee & Mince Pies

Catering by Chef Sam

max 42 on firstcome' basis

You can now book, and pay for this event on the website or through the office.

Any donations to the raffle will be appreciated. Proceeds to the Captain's charity



The cut-off date for the next edition

The Cachalot No. 118

will be on Friday 12th February '27

Every year there is a New Year Port Service on the first working day of the year. However, this year, we have decided to hold it on the second working day of the year so it will take place on Tuesday 5th January at 9:30am in St Michael's Church, Southampton, SO14 2AD. All are welcome and we hope to see you there!



250 Club

Aug	Margaret Grant	R. James
Sept	Margaret Grant	L. Morris
Oct	T.E. Clark	R. Plumley

Curry Lunches

EVEREST CUISINE

Now our preferred Curry House, it suits our palates and our pockets as well as our numbers. The stairs may be daunting for some but they are in three flights so you can always rest at Base Camp or Camp I during your ascent.

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

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

The fist Curry Lunch in 2027 is booked there for

Saturday 13th March

1230 for 1300

The price will be £26 per person, exclusive of gratuity.

Provisional bookings for next year are: 13th March, 24th April, 19th June, 24th July, 5th Sep, 13th Nov They are based on the Saints not playing at home on those dates but are liable to change due to Cup matches or their position in the leagues.

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

Curry Lunches are now bookable, and payable, on the website or through the office.

Dates for your diary

4th December - End of Year & Christmas Drinks - White Star Tavern
9th December - Christmas Lunch - RBL
17th December - ABP Christmas Carol Concert - Ocean Cruise Terminal
5th January - Mission to Seafarers New Year Port Service - St. Michael's Church
15th January - AGM - Club Room
5th February - Sea Pie Supper - St. Mary's Stadium
13th March - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
22nd April - Cachalots Spring Golf Day - Lee-on-the-Solent Golf Club
24th April - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
12th May - Club Supper - RBL Main Room
10th June - Shipping Festival Service - St. Michael's Church
19th June - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
24th July - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
5th September - Merchant Navy Day Service - Holyrood Church
5th September - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
2nd week September TBC - Cachalots Autumn Golf Day - venue TBC
20th October - Trafalgar Dinner - RBL Main Room
5th November - Tickets for Sea Pie Supper 2028 on sale - Cachalots Office
13th November - Curry Lunch - Everest Cuisine
8th December - Christmas Lunch - RBL Main Room
13th January '28 - AGM - Club Room
4th February '28 - Sea Pie Supper - St. Mary's Stadium

A meeting with the Staff Commander, without coffee!!!



From October to December 1975, I served as 4th Officer (uncertificated) on the Union-Castle passenger mailboat, *RMS Pendennis Castle*.

We were in East London discharging cargo, and I was down the bottom of No.5 hatch. Mid-morning, I received a call on the radio to say there was a newspaper team on the bridge and could they have a guided tour of the wheelhouse. The weather was hot, sunny and humid, and I made my way all the way up to the wheelhouse with my boilersuit over my uniform and rather hot! I removed the boilersuit in the chartroom and met the press team in the wheelhouse, but without my cap! Little did I know but that was to be my undoing a couple of days later.

I provided the usual tour of the wheelhouse, they took some photos and I returned to my cargo watch. See the extracts later.

The day after arrival in Durban, I had been for a walk ashore and on my return, was told many times and with some level of urgency that I was required to report to the Staff Commander, Arthur Wigham. He was seated behind his desk, in uniform, with a copy of the Daily News of 11th November spread in front of him. Looking at me, he pointed to the newspaper and said, *"That is the scruffiest mailboat officer I have ever seen. You should be aware that the company, in South Africa and the UK, look for articles in the press linked to the vessels."* He asked me why I was not wearing my cap and I explained the circumstances which had led to the situation. Whilst not indicating there would be any sanction for my 'misdemeanour' of not wearing a cap, he did smile and reminded me about the requirement to wear my cap at all times when 'on duty' and I was allowed to go.

This story has always stayed with me, yet I had never seen or been able to retain a copy of the newspaper article, apart from a brief glimpse of it on the desk of the Staff Commander. That was until a zoom chat with Neil Purdon, friend, Cachalot and former cadet colleague on *RMS Good Hope Castle*. Neil is South African and lives in Durban, but we have kept in touch since our days with B&c.

Neil offered to have a look for any archive of the article after tying down a few dates. The archive in Durban was unable to help but the Legal Deposit Library in Pietermaritzburg did have back copies of the actual newspaper. Although quite a jaunt for Neil, about an hour's drive, he eventually made the trip and sent me a copy with the line *"Eureka, I'm surprised you weren't fired"*!!!

Neil followed up with how his trip to the library went. "*That turned out to be remarkably simple exercise, and I was really both surprised and impressed. As one of the country's legal deposit libraries, they told me they have a copy of every newspaper and journal in the country. All thanks to some of our far-sighted colonial ancestors who started it in the earliest days of the colony to house not only newspapers but all government notices and gazettes, plus any other book or publication by a colonist".*

"I asked for the November 1975 issues of The Daily News and in no time a very large bound volume arrived and there it was. Thank heavens it wasn't a microfilm and the photos could be copied at reasonable quality".

"Had I not found it, the kind lady would then have hauled out copies of the two Joburg daily papers and the East London Daily Dispatch".

"What also impressed me was that she gave me her and a colleague's email addresses. She said they get requests from all over the world, and they scan and email back the requested articles all at no charge".

"I've now had a good read of the article and the captions of the photos - just love it"!

So, here we go, these are extracts from the article. My thanks to Neil for his time and perseverance in finding the article after so many years to add to my collection of superb memories from those days on the Mailships.

Robin Plumley

"ANY more questions?", Fourth Officer Robin Plumley asks. He is just rounding off a passenger tour of the Union-Castle mailship Pendennis Castle's bridge.

He has spent the past half hour describing in detail the function of every button, lever and bell on the bridge and passengers are starting to fidget and shuffle.

An enquiring mind asks: "What's that for?" The passenger points to a knob on the after console with a label "Parachute release" on a blue tab above it.

This is the cue Robin Plumley has been waiting for and, poker-faced, he launches forth.

"Well, as we all know, ladies and gentlemen, this ship of 28 000 tons travels at a speed of 21 knots and it does take rather a long time to stop her. In fact, it takes a good seven miles to bring her to a standstill."

He continues: "So, to enable us to slow down, we have a large parachute underneath the hull at the stern which, when ejected, reduces the forward motion of the vessel."

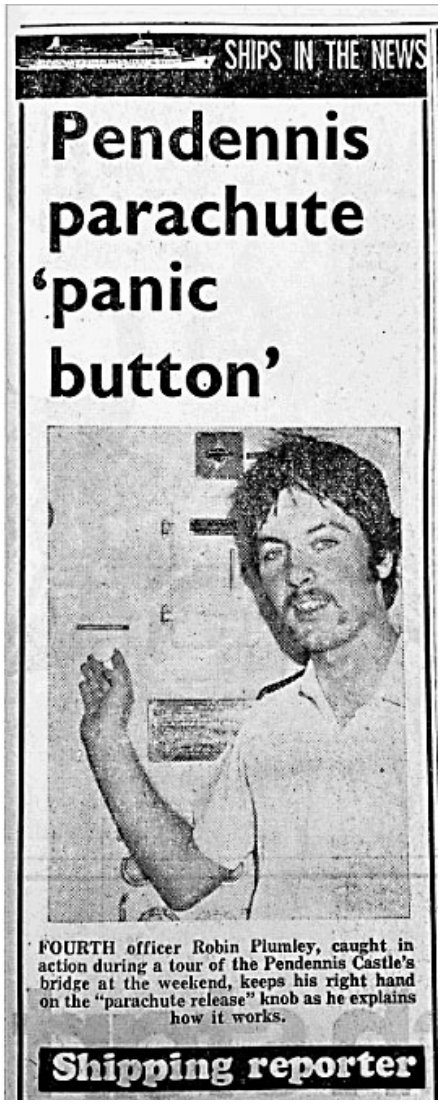
The British officer then tells how, for testing purposes, a drone parachute is carried at the stern of the ship. This chute can be released without slowing down the vessel and, if it works properly, it indicates that the main chute is ship shape.

"We have to test it this morning anyway so the person who asked this question will have the privilege of pulling the knob to release the chute," Robin Plumley says.

The passenger, proud to have asked the "parachute release" knob question, strides forward. Others move forward, or on to the wing of the bridge where they can see aft.

The knob is yanked and the passenger, somewhat sheepishly, is left standing with a rather limp red-ragged cloth tied to the knob by parachute-fashion strings.

● ROBIN Plumley commented afterwards: "The most difficult thing about the whole exercise is to keep a straight face."



SHIPS IN THE NEWS

Pendennis parachute 'panic button'

FOURTH officer Robin Plumley, caught in action during a tour of the Pendennis Castle's bridge at the weekend, keeps his right hand on the "parachute release" knob as he explains how it works.

Shipping reporter



MAILSHIP passenger Marilyn Courland is caught red-handed as she pulls the knob marked "parachute release". She commented: "You learn something new every day".

Recent Services



On September 3rd the annual Flag Raising ceremony took place at the Civic Centre, officiated by Councillor Jacqui Rayment, past Lord Mayor and Admiral of the port, recently appointed as the city's Veterans' Representative.

Those present included Cachalots, Southampton Ship-owners Association, ABP, the MNWB, The Warsash Association and Southampton Solent University.



On September 6th we gathered at Holyrood for this year's Merchant Navy Service which was organised by Martin Phipps and the MNWB on behalf of the Warsash Association, with the Service being led by Revd Kate Powell.

A very good turn out, including many Cachalots, The Warsash Association, the MNWB, Southampton Sea Cadets and their families, and Cadets from Southampton Solent University.

As the Service started a number of passers by also joined the congregation.

We had the usual problems of the noise of passing traffic and a temperamental sound system but the weather was perfect and Kate Powell and others who spoke delivered a very good Service.

Nick Jeffery, Post Captain









A Postcard from the Southern Seas

Cachalot Colin Crimp and Jill Fitxpatrick are inveterate travellers and their experiences have appeared in these pages before. In January this year they embarked on a 76 night Grand Voyage on Fred Olsen's 'Borealis'.
Here is the second episode of their account of their experiences in the (mainly) Southern Seas.

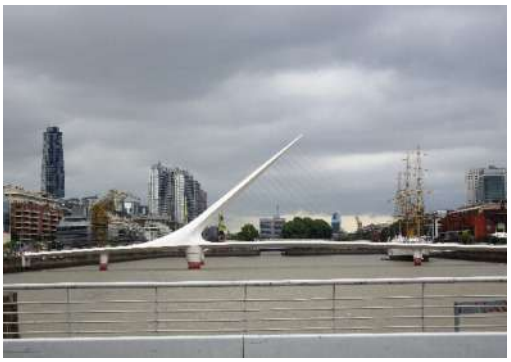


As we said farewell to Brazil and headed for Argentina, it was time for the first concert to be given by the ship's choir, whose number had now swelled to about 90. The program included a number of rock classics and ended with an ABBA medley, always a safe bet, and the main theatre was packed. The applause was, of course, rapturous and one passenger was heard to say "that has to be one of the best ship choirs ever!" All the real credit was due to the Borealis Performers for making it so.

Some way off **Buenos Aires** a rumour began to circulate that there was to be a general strike called throughout Argentina the next day, with shore tours being cancelled. 'Borealis' berthed during the early hours and we awoke to confirmation of the strike. The 'destinations' crew must have worked tirelessly as most of the cancelled tours were eventually re-booked for the following day. We were berthed in the middle of a container port – a place usually so full of constant noise, interest and urgency but now strangely quiet. You could actually hear birdsong.



Catholic Church, Sao Paolo, Ilhabella



Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires

There is an extensive old dockland area in Buenos Aires called Puerto Madero, which has been reclaimed and regenerated as a 'destination' with cafes, bars and restaurants and some historic ships.

From a brief examination of a map of Buenos Aires, it appeared to be a straightforward walk, in the absence of any buses (they were on strike, too) just through the terminal, turn left and keep walking. So far so good. I had memorised the map (so I thought) and it seemed simple enough, but when the siren went off and a blue light on the dockyard wall began to flash, we stopped. There were two well-armed naval guards striding in our direction and so we did an abrupt about-turn and sought the safety of a nearby street where there seemed to be normal traffic. We had innocently wandered into an Argentine Naval Base and home to memorials to the fallen of the Malvinas conflict and, in particular, those lost on the General Belgrano. Oops. We strode on and, after another mile or two, found Puerto Madero and a café, where we hid behind some large mugs of very strong coffee.

Some 20 miles north of Buenos Aires is the large town of **Tigre**, on the River Parana. The Tigre Delta itself is a huge swamp and island area through which the Parana drains into the River Plate and is home to about 3,000 people. There are no roads, only water. If you were to build a new house there (probably on piles due to periodical flooding episodes) you wouldn't build a driveway to it, you'd dig a channel to the nearest water and build a jetty for your boat. It is not known how many miles of waterway there actually are in the Delta, it is simply described as 'a maze'. From our boat we could see some beautiful colonial houses, some of the larger ones now being used as hotels, and many cosy looking cabins. There is also a lot there that is now abandoned and derelict – countless old cabins and jetties as well as Victorian slipways complete with rotting hulks. Our return to 'Borealis' through Buenos Aires took us past a surprising number of parks and green spaces and rich palaces, many now used as embassies.



The posh end of Tigre Delta, Argentina



. . . . and the abandoned end

Across the estuary of the River Plate from Argentina lies **Montevideo**, Uruguay, scene of the ignominious scuttling of the Admiral Graf Spee in 1939. While other surrounding South American countries suffer poverty and political turbulence, largely the consequences of corruption, Uruguay seems to have been able to operate a fairly stable government for a very long time. This stability has resulted in a lot of organisations (and, indeed, countries) banking in Uruguay, further enhancing their political and economic stability. We were taking photos of the Parliament buildings when there appeared the ultimate street performer on a unicycle. The traffic lights turned to red and he wobbled out in front of the halted traffic and proceeded to balance a football on one foot, keeping the unicycle going with the other, and juggled with 4 clubs. His sidekick collected from car to car until the lights changed to amber when he wobbled back to the pavement complete with his football and his 4 clubs. I hope they were generous.

But the real reason for coming here was to visit a cattle ranch. Since 1943, 5 generations of the Santayana family have owned the 3,600 acres of La Rabida ranch, keeping beef cattle, raising horses and growing crops. Our bus was greeted by nearly the entire family on horseback (including the youngest who was 2, on a full-size horse, unable to properly walk yet and still wearing a nappy) and some of the hired hands – the gauchos. The gauchos wear cowboy hats, the family wear berets, a nod to Basque origins. What followed was a tour of the farm in a trailer behind a tractor, and a walk along the beach (River Plate estuary) with all the horses having a wonderful time in the water.



La Rabida ranch, Uruguay



And the horses loved the water

Then it was time to eat the best open-air barbecue you could possibly imagine, complete with a free bar, and the day wound up with a game of being pulled along behind a horse, sitting on a cowhide. And Jill milked a cow. Family and gauchos - all of them were so welcoming. It was the best day ever.

I had never appreciated the origin of the name Montevideo, now thought to be “the sixth hill (along the River Plate) from east to west” (Monte VI d’Este-Oeste). Maybe everybody knows that, but I think it’s cool. We had a good feeling about Uruguay, but it was time to turn South from there towards the Falkland Islands.

The next day brought a humpback whale at breakfast and two pods of dolphins at lunch. There were seals and turtles, shearwaters and petrels, almost too much to see all at once. We were now heading into a Polar Region, in which all lifeboats must carry Thermal Protective Aids (TPA) and all passengers need instruction in putting one on. Thankfully this was to be a talk and demonstration and not an actual trial, as I’m not sure all of the passengers would have managed it. A young female cadet gave an excellent demonstration of getting into what amounts to a very large orange crinkly zip-up freezer bag, and she did this not without difficulty despite her slender frame. She then began a rustling catwalk modelling strut across the stage, to the tumultuous acclaim of both passengers and officers. On arrival in Port Stanley, we would be tendering ashore in lifeboats each of which can theoretically carry up to a maximum of 150 people. The thought of them all struggling into their crinkly bags at once didn’t bear thinking about.



A pilot’s life is not a happy one, Montevideo, Uruguay



Borealis’ twin red dustbins in The South Atlantic sun

The weather in the partially sheltered waters of **Port Stanley** Sound was not kind and it was becoming quite cold. The wind was unforgiving and sea very choppy. It became clear that there was debate on the bridge about whether tender operations were feasible under the conditions. A ship at anchor normally needs to be free to swing but the operation of the tenders required the ship to provide a lee to protect them and to do this for the entire day. One could almost detect a mutinous muttering on the wind among some of the passengers about having come all this way to see the penguins . . . . At last, it was decided that although conditions were right on the limit for tender operations, the wind was not forecast to increase and so the ship would be held on station with propellers and thrusters to provide a lee, and tender operations would proceed. So, let’s hear it for the crew, for spending all day on the bridge



King penguins in a huddle at Volunteer Point, Falkland Islands



Meeting the locals at Volunteer Point

providing a sort of human Dynamic Positioning System and on deck for getting hundreds of people into and out of tenders all day long without mishap!

Getting into the tender was, indeed, somewhere between exciting and extreme sport, but the penguins were beckoning. Talking of extreme sport, we knew our transport was to be a 4x4 and that the road would be rough. We had not appreciated that, for much of the way to Volunteer Point, there is no road. A dirt road is now being constructed to get to **Volunteer Point**, but don't hold your breath. East Falkland is basically just a huge peat bog with a lot of rocks strewn about. The last hour or so of our journey was fairly white-knuckle off-roading in said peat bog, and it was very exciting. But not as exciting as walking up to a huddle of a thousand King Penguins once we got there. The noise was impressive, not least of all from the fluffy juveniles. They all ignored us completely. There were also gangs of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins who walked about, going across the beach and down to the sea for a paddle and coming back again, muttering "too damn cold". They ignored us as well, although, as requested, we always gave them a few metres space. There were also loads of Ruddy-Headed Geese and Upland Sheep grazing around the groups of penguins. They all seemed to get on OK, although there were a few baby penguin skeletons dotted around on the grass, probably due to sealions or seabirds. The whole place was magical and we stayed for over an hour, but all too soon it was time to leave the freezing and relentless wind and return to the truck where we were presented with a very welcome sandwich and, you guessed it, a chocolate biscuit. Penguin of course.

Back in Port Stanley 2 hours later, we quickly bought a few postcards in the souvenir shop and hurried to catch the last tender back to 'Borealis', who was still out there keeping station with all her thrusters going. We would have loved another day in Port Stanley as we didn't have time to see very much of the town itself or its museums and memorials. But maybe next time.



Port Stanley, Falkland Islands



Christ Church Cathedral, Port Stanley, Falkland Islands

Two days later, we awoke to thick fog which fortunately began to clear as we approached Elephant Island in the South Shetland Islands, at the end of the Antarctic Archipelago. Rafts of penguins were spotted swimming and a humpback whale leapt out of the water, at which point the Captain announced that we had an iceberg dead ahead. We approached the iceberg, a great big slab of a thing, the size of a block of flats, and slowly crept right round it doing a pirouette on the way so that everyone got a chance to photograph it. As the ship and the sun moved the light changed and it became a darker blue, quite spectacular. Then we repeated the manoeuvre round another more jagged iceberg by which time it was getting very cold outside and anyway it was time for dinner.

For the next 3 days in Antarctica we were woken by an announcement at 0700 saying where we were and what could be seen. Initially, this resulted in several people rushing out on to their balconies in their pyjamas to look, then having second thoughts about the temperature and rushing back in again. We entered Admiralty Bay on King George Island to see glaciers all around.



Antarctic glaciers all around . . . .



. . . . and so many icebergs to miss

'Borealis' spun around and headed out of Admiralty Bay to the south towards Maxwell Bay. The route took us past several Antarctic Research Stations, belonging to Brazil, Poland and probably Russia. All of a sudden, my old phone, silent since the Falkland Islands, burst into life and said "Welcome to Russia".

The signal lasted for about 30 minutes and then silence. Later that evening I was puzzled to find that my phone had been reset to Moscow time. Thick fog came down again and removed the view, so we bypassed Maxwell Bay and headed on south through icebergs and humpback whales, but on the outside decks it was so cold. Deception Island is one of the relatively few active volcanic areas in Antarctica, where the sand is black and we saw more penguins. That evening, as if there was not enough ice about, the catering department gave a demonstration of ice-carving. A 100 cm block of ice was transformed into a penguin in about 25 minutes. What an artist.



A humpback welcome to Antarctica – come this way

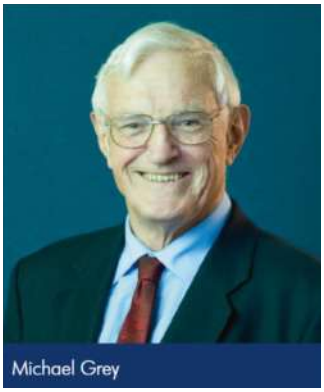


The extraordinary colours of Antarctic ice

Prompted by the wake-up call, it was cold and clear (and early) when we saw pods of dolphins from our balcony and then a humpback whale and then another and another. In Wilhemina Bay, it was almost continuous whales, penguins and seals all morning – and icebergs, of course. Breakfast was put on hold as passengers and crew alike lined the windows to see the next breaching or fluking whale. Then an iceberg came by, very close to the ship, and on it were a group of penguins at one end and a seal at the other end, eying up the penguins. We were just thinking what a wonderful picture that would make when a whale leapt out of the water just behind the iceberg. Of course, we were far too busy being amazed to take any photos. Somone on board did manage to get that picture, though. We spent much of that day in the cold, balcony or forward deck, immersed in the wildlife, icebergs and glaciers (including Leonardo Glacier), and the fantastic colour – the changing blue of the ice itself. There were more colonies of little Gentoo Penguins to be seen in Errera Channel and Neko Harbour. It was all happening so fast and furious. There was so much to take in and almost too much to describe. After this incredible day, what we really needed was a cream tea in the warm. No problem.

To be continued

Casualty reporting in a fog of war



The Maritime *Advocate* online Issue 919 October 23rd 2026

By Michael Grey MBE

We can scarcely be surprised that increasingly confused noise emerges from the hostilities in the Gulf and Straits of Hormuz, with markedly diverse reports coming from the warring parties. Both the United States and Iranians claim to be completely in control of the waterway, with the former's blockade holding firm and the latter's attacks on passing shipping continuing unabated. The US suggests that oil tankers are moving through the contested waters in considerable numbers under their energetic protection, while the communiques from the Iranians emphasise their ability to attack any ship that fails to do their bidding.

There is, however, no argument that ships are being hit by mines, drones and missiles, with deaths and injuries reported, although it has been suggested that a majority of ships have now become reluctant to report attacks to the co-ordinating UKMTO.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations organisation, which had been regarded as a reliable source of information about the hostilities in the region, now finds itself less able to do this job, and has noted that something of a fog of war has descended. The once simple tool of AIS as a tracking aid has become particularly unreliable, with ships, depending on the advice they are given at any moment in time, switching it off and on.

Why would a ship under attack not report the fact? One can imagine that in such a confused situation there are more important things to do, such as looking after the lives of the crew and tackling fires or flooding. There may be very reasonable apprehension of another attack, which might justify radio silence. Or might it be that the reports from attacked ships are often relayed via naval forces, which are, for security reasons, not passing them on?

It has been suggested that the US forces are anxious (or politically pressurised) to demonstrate that transits through the straits are perfectly safe and substantial numbers are making the passage under their protection. It might be an unworthy suggestion, but might the preoccupations of the US Commander in Chief have switched from the regional hostilities, to the flow of oil, insofar as this assists in his Mid-Term election chances. Some critical commentators have alleged that President Trump has lost interest in the whole Iranian adventure and is only concerned with extricating himself from this unrewarding task, whatever this might mean to the strategic waterway.

The statistics issued by the UKMTO present a rather less rosy picture of the numbers of ships moving, to those provided from the US commanders, who are clearly anxious to stress their ongoing protective efforts. An objective observer might ask whether accurate numbers of successful transits and casualties are in fact possible in the prevailing circumstances.

From the point of view of those aboard merchant ships, their loved ones and those operating these ships, it would be advantageous if a more trustworthy picture could be made available, if only to get a better assessment of the realities of risk. What are the chances of being hit? Most merchant mariners do not go to sea to find themselves in a war zone, and such hazards have been multiplying both in the middle east and elsewhere. Do they really have choice (as provided in law) in the event their ship is directed to a place where there is a chance they will end up as targets? It might be that they will be given bonuses for braving such hazards, but how many, from countries where decently paying jobs are exceedingly rare, are forced to take risks that others, in happier situations, would not. It is worth noting that the Black Sea is increasingly not a location for the faint-hearted.

Others unwittingly find themselves aboard ships which have been sanctioned and run other sorts of risks, with more nations prepared to intervene to stop or even seize these vessels. And pretty well anybody, in a growing number of regions where conflict is close, will find that their instruments are subject to electronic spoofing and hacking, thus providing another source of doubt. One might say that this is a more "physical" symptom of the fog of war, which may not lift in a hurry.

Printed here with the kind permission of The MaritimeAdvocate online www.avoarchive.com

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

Gone Aloft



Captain **Stuart Lawrence MBE RD RNR,** who died suddenly on the 5th October after a short illness, was a Conway Boy from the age of 13 and in 1960, at the age of 16, he joined the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company where he gained valuable experience in winter navigation in the Gulf and River of St. Lawrence. He was also granted a Great Lakes pilotage exemption Certificate. In 1969 he studied for Extra Master at Sir John Cass College and was about to join the Royal National Lifeboat Institution when its head, Admiral Egg Irving, urged him instead to sail to the Antarctic. He joined the British Antarctic Survey in 1970 and remained until 2003.

Stuart sailed first on two voyages on the RRS ***John Biscoe***, then, in 1972, joined the RRS ***Bransfeld*** as Second Officer, and found himself commanding the vessel when the captain fell ill and returned home and the chief officer broke his ankle. The trip home was not without incident when the scientists objected to the crew storing their beer in the freezers in the laboratory where they were keeping their specimens and without any consultation they just removed the beer. The crew retaliated by throwing the valuable specimens, collected under arduous conditions and at no little cost, over the side. Sackings were made, some Southampton policemen were flown to the Canary Islands to meet the ship, as was the now recovered permanent captain. Perhaps not the end of his first spell in command that Stuart anticipated but it did not affect his career.

He assumed permanent command of the Bransfield in 1974 and remained with her for most of his career. He took her every year to Halley, the organisation's most southerly station, through the Weddell Sea. In 1984, the UK Antarctic Place-Names Committee named Lawrence Channel, on the Antarctic Peninsula, after him.

Only days before the 1982 Argentine invasion, he hosted a reception aboard at Port Stanley, attended by Argentine LADE staff.(Argentina's state airline, which was run by the Argentine Air Force). He sailed on March 31, and learned of the invasion from Patrick Watts' broadcasts when midway between the Falklands and Tierra del Fuego. He was able to alert BAS headquarters back in Britain so they could inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

He faced the threat of a mutiny by some of his crew whose reaction to the invasion was to advocate sailing back to the Falklands and sinking the ***Bransfield*** in the approach to Stanley Harbour. He quelled the mutiny by plying them with alcohol until they were too drunk to carry out their plan.

He commanded the RRS ***Ernest Shackleton*** from 1999 until his retirement from the BAS in 2003, having completed 33 Antarctic voyages and 42 years at sea, with a farewell from the ***Ernest Shackleton*** in Stanley, incidently on the anniversary of the Falkland invasion. His wife, Sue, had died months earlier.

After his retirement from the BAS he worked as an ice pilot on several cruise ships, including the ***Saga Rose*** in 2004/5 and the ***Artemis*** in 2008, on cruises to the Antarctic. He also worked as an editor for the UK Hydrographic Office, updating the Antarctic Pilot, among others.

From 2017 he volunteered for the National Coastwatch Institution at their station in Gosport. "A watch with Stuart would be one of professionally recording every detail and aspect of incidents at sea, interspersed with tales of the Antarctic and any number of anecdotes," the institution wrote.

He was awarded the Polar Medal in 1983 and a 2nd Clasp in 1993 - for Services to Antarctic Science - and was appointed MBE in 1998 for his services to Antarctic expeditions.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigation, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a founder member of the Nautical Institute and a member of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

Stuart was a member of the SMMC from June 1976 to 1993 and rejoined in 2008

Compiled from various sources, including MercoPress, the South Atlantic News Agency - Icesheet, the BAS newsletter - and Boatsteerer Capt. Robin Plumley MBE, who had sailed with Stuart across six Antarctic seasons and they remained good friends. They had enjoyed an evening dinner with other BAS friends just a few weeks before his passing.

If you have the time and inclination you can enjoy an edited transcript of a video interview with Stuart Lawrence conducted by John Tolson (an ex BAS officer) at Fareham on 5th December 2009. Here

Captain **Greg Holmes**, who has Gone Aloft at the age of 82. was a retired Master Mariner who retired from the command of Cable ships. His leisure interest was photography and he was a Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society. *More details in the next edition.*

New Members

John Purves, on 3rd September, is a Master Mariner Unlimited and says, jocularly we hope:
I have worked at sea since 2005, when I started my career as a deck gadget for JO Tankers. Once I qualified in 2008, I went down to Fraggle Rock/The Falklands to harass honest, hardworking Fishermen on behalf of the Falklands Government. In 2010, I decided to harass Fishermen closer to home instead, and joined Marine Scotland Compliance. In 2012, I decided that harassing Fishermen, whilst entertaining, was not the job for me, so I shifted to Trinity House so I could harass buoys. I spent 10 years leaping onto buoys, but what natural athleticism I had started to wane, so I decided to become a hazard to recreational sailors instead, and joined Red Funnel in 2022. In August 2026, I joined the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and am now realising my full potential in Harassing Seafarers of every stripe.

Carl Robins, on 13th November, is also a Master Mariner who spent 36 years at sea. He served as Dual Officer for 10 years with P&O Containers 8 years with P&O Ferries Portsmouth (2 as Captain) and has been a Southampton Pilot since 2008. He also works as a marine consultant Lecturer at Southampton Uni Ship Handling centre. Would like to meet other seafarers etc.

PHP Vulnerability

You will almost certainly have heard of the major PHP vulnerability that has been making headlines around the world, and which potentially affects 70% of the world's websites.
Following advice from our web portal provider, we are able to explain how this impacts on the Cachalots web infrastructure.
The short answer is that this vulnerability does not impact on any of the online infrastructure that we (LIVE ICOM) provide for the Cachalots or any of our other clients.
The vulnerability is restricted to sites and applications which use PHP.
LIVE ICOM has never, and will never, use PHP in any of the online applications that we develop. We exclusively use Microsoft .NET on all our applications.
Finally, all our online applications are protected by Microsoft Defender. This service routinely scans all our hosting infrastructure and applications running on it and immediately notifies us or any vulnerabilities or attempted attacks.
Robin Plumley

The World Ship Society WORLDSHIPSOCIETYDORSETBRANCH

Zoom Meetings

12th December 2026

Winter Shipping in the Baltic ~ with Des Upcraft

~

Des' experience of icebreaking in the Northern Baltic during the early 2000s plus ship photography. maps and ice charts will all contribute to an intriguing afternoon.

Their Secretary, Steve Pink, says:

There is no need to request an invitation to our events … everyone on our circulation list will be sent a Zoom Invitation Link about a week beforehand.
To sign up, or for more information, visit their website shipsdorset.org

The CACHALOTS

The Southampton Master Mariners' Club
1st Floor, Southampton Royal British Legion Club, Eastgate Street
SOUTHAMPTON, SO14 3HB
Tel: 023 8022 6155

Web site: www.cachalots.org.uk
E-mail: office@cachalots.org.uk

boatsteerer@cachalots.org.uk
storekeeper@cachalots.org.uk
membership@cachalots.org.uk

The Club room is currently open on just one day of the week, Friday, 1130 - 1500. There is no catering on site but there are many sandwich outlets within easy walking distance.
Suggestions for events, for improvements, offers of help, articles and anecdotes for inclusion in this newsletter will all be received with pleasure. We are even prepared to receive complaints if they are constructive.