

# ALL HANDS



## Journal of The Warsash Association

Featuring Union Steamship Company Ltd. of New Zealand



Waitaki (1964-1970) laid up at Wellington



Kaitangata (1948-1968) at Greymouth



Waikare (1958-1975)



Wahine (1966-1968 wrecked)



Seaway Melbourne (1976-1992)



Tofua in Auckland (1951-1974)



Edition: AH2018-2 (UK Summer)



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- Click on the email links & website links e.g. [www.warsashassociation.net](http://www.warsashassociation.net) (log in first) which are interactive.

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**Editorial change:** The Editor endeavours always to properly exercise the right of revision e.g. spelling, grammar, compliance with in-house standards. The author's approval may be sought in some instances e.g. questionable text, space restrictions, inaccuracy.

## 1 From the Executive Committee

### 1.1 Chairman's Message – Roger Holt ([HoltR64](#))

Dear Members - In my message earlier in the year I opened by commenting on the vagaries of the weather around the world where our members are to be found. Well this time it seems entirely appropriate to say that for those of us living on this side of the 'pond' and in the Northern Hemisphere, we have rarely experienced anything quite like this heat since perhaps we were steaming across the Indian Ocean at 16 knots with a following breeze. I recall quite clearly trying to iron my white tropical uniform with the perspiration running down my arm onto the clean white linen! Oh for air conditioning which came much later as the fleet was modernised. In short, I hope that you are all surviving the drought in the UK which no doubt will have turned to torrential rain by the time you read this.

The Association has a busy few months ahead of it with the annual Golf Day at Petersfield on 9th August, the WMA/Solent University Alumni Reunion on 8th September and then the AGM and Social Event at Chatham 4th/5th October. I very much hope that you will be able to join me for at least one of these events, details of which have been circulated in recent website Notices.

Captain Tony Catesby joined me for the Passing-Out Ceremony at the end of June which was once again an impressive display of academic achievement by the graduating Officer Cadets. The Association was given excellent exposure and I was able to present the Cup for Individual Achievement plus framed certificate to the winner, Matthew Gigg. Unfortunately, I predict that quite a few of the graduating Officer Cadets – both deck and engine - will struggle to find suitable OOW employment. I would like to think that this is an area where the Association can assist in providing industry contacts for those with certificates of competency and seeking employment.

Our excellent Editor has produced yet another enthralling masterpiece with many interesting articles to keep us amused and clear of any household chores. Please may I remind you that we need a replacement Editor after December's edition. Without a replacement I fear that All Hands will cease to be produced, which after so many years would be a great shame to say the least. Chris has developed a very simple model with the help of our printers such that production is as straightforward and manageable as it could possibly be. Yes, he has set a very high standard but the content is provided by the membership.

I hope that you will be in a position to enjoy the rest of the year and I look forward to catching up with you very soon.

With best wishes, Roger Holt, Chairman

With best wishes,  Roger Holt, Chairman [HoltR64\(wachair@warsashassociation.net\)](mailto:HoltR64(wachair@warsashassociation.net))

### 1.2 Editor's Message – Chris Clarke ([ClarkeC59](#))

**All Hands Journal:** Email [waahed@warsashassociation.net](mailto:waahed@warsashassociation.net) articles or suggestions about future editions. Members who opt for a printed copy of All Hands may also like to download a printed copy here >>[Journals](#), to take advantage of internet links, email addresses and colour pictures throughout.

Coming up-to-date with today's maritime industry I am considering Maersk or P&O Cruises to feature in All Hands AH2018-3. If you would like to send in an article or have alternative suggestions please let me know.



This edition brings me one step closer to editing my final All Hands journal. Everything should build on what's gone before and this is a golden opportunity to enhance All Hands which in 2014 members voted was our most interesting feature. Nothing is 'written in stone' and a new editor will be free to put their personal stamp on presentation and content. One of the truly rewarding aspects as editor is emailing with WA members world-wide who, by submitting varied and interesting articles, have made it the popular journal it is today.

Preparing each edition is shared by several in the AH team. Our UK printers have taken over the formatting and artwork from me which I have done since AH2011-1. The majority of AH articles are written and sent in by WA members and a small team of assistants also submit content and review the final draft. The whole procedure can be followed from written guidelines. The use of an AH template means it's mostly a matter of inserting content into pre-defined sections. If requested I shall be able to help initially, as will the rest of our team.

Editors today can of course operate from anywhere in the world as all communication with members, printers and others involved is done electronically. Personally I think it would be excellent if we had a volunteer from one of our Branches. We would also welcome any interest from a wife/ partner of a WA member. Notwithstanding the aforementioned it surely is time for a younger generation to take over.

Please contact me and Roger Holt if you would like to become the next All Hands Editor. As always, also make contact if you would like to submit an article about the maritime industry or Warsash past and present.

### 1.3 Webmaster's Message – Chris Clarke (ClarkeC59)

**WA Website:** <https://www.warsashassociation.net> **Webmaster's email:** [wawebmast@warsashassociation.net](mailto:wawebmast@warsashassociation.net)

WA Membership worldwide is 526 (including 56 Officer Cadets), of which 30 (94%) are online.

**Recruitment:** Membership of the WA Facebook Group has reached 192, seven of whom have joined WA. Personal recommendation is of course the best recruiting method. If you know anyone eligible to join WA who does not yet belong, please let us know who they are and encourage them to join.

**Annual subscriptions reminder:** Next year's annual subscriptions will fall due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. If you have not yet set up a recurring payment order download the relevant bank account details for the UK or relevant WA Branch from the website here >> [Application form](#) (bank details on bottom half of the form).

**Online members:** Please be reminded a) you should keep your own personal details up to date e.g. change of address, and b) to keep your login details in a safe place. Doing that minimises the time volunteers spend maintaining the database. This, if anything, has become even more important due to the introduction of the EU's new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force on 25 May. If all else fails and you cannot login, as a last resort, email me and I will help you out.

## 2 WA Notices, News And Events

### 2.1 WA UK 2018 Social Event 4 - 5 Oct. – Capt. A Ewart-James (EwartJamesA60)

**Please put the dates in your diary and to help the organisers book as early as possible.** Our hotel this year will be the [Bridgewood Manor](#) located just off the M2 junction for Chatham. B&B rate is £98.10 for a double room (normal price £120) - Single £87.30 for single occupancy. The evening dinner will be about £32 per person. UK members without email should receive the forms below in the post with this journal.

Information about the two-day Social Event activities at Chatham on 4 - 5 October and booking forms are available via the following links or website notices already sent out (use either forms 1 & 2 or 1 & 3).

1. 2018 [Social Event Activities](#) (pdf doc - information about the event activities)
2. 2018 [Social Event Booking Form](#) (Word doc - fill in electronically and return by email) OR
3. 2018 [Social Event Booking Form](#) (pdf doc - fill in by hand and return by post)



UK members, members' guests and any members visiting the UK from overseas are cordially invited to attend this year's two-day UK Social Event at Chatham on Thursday and Friday, 4 – 5 October. This includes the 2018 AGM, dinner and visits to the [Royal Engineers Museum](#) and [Chatham Historic Dockyard](#).

If reading this journal electronically you will find all the information you need about the museum and displays via this link [Chatham Historic Dockyard](#), otherwise enter <http://thedockyard.co.uk> into your browser. Included in the programme are the following:

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October:** [Royal Engineers Museum](#)

**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October (or 6<sup>th</sup> October also if staying a second night):** [Chatham Historic Dockyard](#)

- a) The Ropery (<http://thedockyard.co.uk/explore/the-victorian-ropery/>)
- b) HM Submarine tour [HMS Ocelot](#) (<http://thedockyard.co.uk/explore/three-historic-warships/hm-submarine-ocelot/>); HMS Cavalier (1944 destroyer); HMS Gannet, (1978 sloop).
- c) A guided [Call The Midwife Tour](#) (<http://thedockyard.co.uk/whats-on/call-the-midwife-location-tours/>) of the set of the TV series.

## 2.2 [WA UK 2018 Christmas Lunch – \(Editor\)](#)

Our 2018 Christmas Lunch will be held at The Royal Naval and Royal Albert Yacht Club, Portsmouth again on Saturday 8 December. These lunches are always good value and I urge you to put the date in your diary/mobile phone. Invitations and a booking form will be sent out in due course.

## 2.3 [WA 2018 UK Golf Tournament Chris Dowty \(DowtyC69\)](#)

The Petersfield Golf Club again welcomed the WA on 8<sup>th</sup> August. After nine weeks with little rain and with the fairways brown and hard, we were greeted by two hours of light rain and a 'low' 17C temperatures unheard of for months. It was obvious everyone enjoyed the day and I think the weather conditions were just right.

The Wakeford Trophy was won by Roger Holt with 34 points and Martin Sutton with 33 points won the Stubbington Trophy. 'Nearest the Pin' on the par 3 13<sup>th</sup> hole was Chris Dowty, whilst 'Nearest the Pin in 2' on the par 4 18<sup>th</sup> hole went to Chris Clarke.

I propose that next year's tournament be held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019 at Petersfield. For those interested please put the date in your diary.



L to R: Peter Goldberg, Roger Holt, Roger Squirrel, Martin Sutton, Chris Dowty, Chris Clarke, Mike Thurman.

## 2.4 [WMA Passing Out Ceremony, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 – Roger Holt \(HoltR64\)](#)

*See also item 3 – Ed.*

As in previous years, two members of the Warsash Association were invited to attend the Passing Out Ceremony for the Officer Cadets who were graduating from the Warsash Maritime Academy upon the satisfactory completion of their training. Capt Tony Catesby joined me as the representatives of the Association.



It was my pleasure to present Officer Cadet Matthew Gigg (right) with the Warsash Association Cup for Individual Achievement with a framed Certificate for him to keep including five years free membership of the Association. In introducing the prize winner, the Director of the School of Maritime Science and Engineering, Professor Syamantak Bhattacharya explained the history of the Warsash Association and encouraged the graduates to get involved as alumni.

The Ceremony followed the identical pattern for this event and so it is therefore quite difficult to write anything new or original that you have not read from previous years. The venue is always the rather tired O2 Guildhall and on a very hot June evening it was not the most comfortable place to be.

However, it is always a joyous occasion and the feeling of excitement and expectation from the Officer Cadets is wonderful to experience. Out of the 110 graduates there were 94 present from the four September 2015 cohorts – Deck Foundation Degree, Deck HND, Engine Foundation Degree and Engine HND.

The Chancellor, Admiral, The Lord West of Spithead and the Vice-Chancellor Professor Graham Baldwin were both present for the awarding of two Honorary Doctorates. Lord West then went on to give a very amusing speech with a powerful message concerning the need for well-educated young people to take up on a seagoing career in the Merchant Navy and the importance of the maritime industry to the United Kingdom. He emphasised that the training at the Warsash Maritime Academy was, in his opinion, the best in the world and that Warsash trained officers were held in high regard.

Lord West is standing down as Chancellor of Solent University and he will be sorely missed. He has been a great supporter of the Warsash Maritime Academy and it is to be hoped that the new Chancellor, when announced, will have the same understanding and enthusiasm for maritime affairs and the Warsash Maritime Academy in particular.

Both Tony and I made our apologies upon completion of dinner and headed for Southampton Central Station in time for the 2200 hour train to Winchester and Woking respectively. It had been a most enjoyable evening and a delight to witness the graduation of the new batch of officers, both Deck and Engine. We wish them well for the future – particularly those who may be seeking contracts as watch keeping officers once they have obtained their Certificates of Competency.

## 2.5 Australian Branch News – David Montgomery ([MontgomeryD63](#))

**2018 Branch Annual General Meeting and Reunion:** Plans for the event are now well advanced and our meeting in Newcastle, New South Wales is shaping up to be one of our largest gatherings of members for some time. The programme commences on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November with an informal gathering at a local watering hole (yet to be found) followed on Wednesday with a full day of activities with the AGM in the morning, a harbour lunch cruise and our Reunion Dinner in the evening. On Thursday we plan a number of tours to places of interest in the region (the famous Hunter Valley wineries are close by) and we are hoping to organise a visit to Port Ash, Australia's own equivalent of the Warsash Pilot training establishment.

We have recently been approached by the Conway, Worcester and Pangbourne Group in Sydney with a proposal to form a Training Ship Luncheon Group to meet on a quarterly basis in the Sydney area. We encourage our NSW Members to attend such functions and have similar agreements with groups in Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

**Blue Star Line Reunion in Australia – Alan Knott ([KnottA59](#))** - In March next year ex-employees from Blue Star Line (sea-going, deck and engineering, and shore-side) are gathering in Melbourne, Australia, in





order to renew acquaintances, chew the fat and no doubt share a glass or two of beverage. So far, whilst still seven months out from the date, we have 85 firm indications from attendees including six from the UK and eight from NZ. We are also hoping that Robin Vestey of the Vestey Group (past association with Blue Star Line) will be able to be with us as well.

The reunion is to be held at the Crowne Plaza (not the Crown Casino) on 1 – 3 March 2019.

If interested in attending please contact Alan Knott at [knott@melbpc.org.au](mailto:knott@melbpc.org.au) for further details. All are welcome.

## 2.6 New Zealand Branch News – Tony Peacock (PeacockA60)

NZ Branch Reunion and AGM:

**Wednesday 31 October:** pm - Check into Prince's Gate Hotel, 1057 Arawa Street, Rotorua 3010. Room rate \$190/night.

6pm - Meet in hotel bar for pre-dinner drinks. 7.30pm - Dinner at The Amazing Thai Restaurant, 1246 Fenton Street.

**Thursday 1 November:** am - Own arrangements.

12.30pm - Meet at Lakeland Queen Office, Lake front, Memorial Drive to obtain tickets. (\$55 less 10% discount = \$49.50pp);

1pm to 2pm - Lunch aboard Lakeland Queen. Price includes: one hour scenic lake cruise on board Lakeland Queen, full buffet lunch including dessert selection and fresh fruit, unlimited access to tea and coffee station. A full bar service is open for us to enjoy a selection of New Zealand wine and beer as we take in the views.

Pm - Free time until - 5.30pm - Assemble in Nellie Budd Room for WANZ AGM

6.30pm - Pre-dinner drinks; 7pm - Dinner BBQ buffet (\$45 pp) (Wine complements of WANZ) followed by guest speaker.

**Friday 2 November:** Check out by 10am

## 2.7 North America Branch News – Captain Stan Bowles (BowlesS69)

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August I am hosting an industry BBQ – there will be Conway, Worchester, Dufferin, Botha members attending, so will do some selective photo shooting for the December edition of All Hands. The old guard are getting older and these events inevitably bring the few survivors together for a good chin wag!

## 2.8 1948 Cadet Entry Year – David Barnett (BarnettD49)

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 48'ers, but sadly the years have finally caught up with us and no reunion dinner and get together will take place to mark the occasion.

In 1998 Ian Cameron (CCC) organised the 50th anniversary celebration, attended by fourteen ex-cadets, including several from overseas, and also John Rose, the Divisional Officer of Starboard Watch. In 2002 and 2005 I organized mini-reunion weekends at a small guest house hotel in Somerset. Numbers were limited to five couples and with the delightful owners it was more like a weekend house party and very much enjoyed. The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion took place at the Hilton Hotel in Southampton when sixteen 48'ers answered the call and this was reported together with some photographs in All Hands Summer 2008. Sadly at least six of those who attended the 60<sup>th</sup> are no longer with us.

Of late I have only been in contact with Dick Parkin and John Metcalf, who suffered a stroke in January this year but is making a slow but steady recovery.

Many changes have taken place in the maritime world, even since those 48'ers who stayed at sea until retirement in the early 1990s. What comes across in letters and conversations is a sense of the loss of what I suppose could be called the craft skills of seafaring. Navigation using a sextant, ship handling, loading and discharging cargoes, all reliant on that big red book by Capt. R E Thomas. Messages to and from ship and



shore in Morse code with an Aldis lamp and freedom from Head Office surveillance, because the only way shore-side really knew where you were was if you told them.

During a bridge visit on a 24,000 ton cruise ship some ten years ago, it became clear that the Officer of the Watch had really very little idea of how to obey the Rule of the Road without a computer radar facility. He found it difficult to believe that we did it all by eye with just compass bearings and that generally, radar was only used when approaching port or when visibility was low. What happens when a foreign power decides to do some computer mischief - I shudder to think.

The other aspect of seafaring today which appears to we ancient mariners as unsatisfactory, is the very short periods of time spent in port. When would we have time to play cricket, football and rugby or enjoy the company of lovely girls with anything less than two weeks in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane. Our seafaring days did have their downsides but the compensations were many and varied. The satisfaction of being able to take four star sights, fill a foolscap (not A4) sheet of paper with figures with the help of Norrie's Nautical Tables (I can see my copy as I write) and fix a position in a little over ten minutes must be more satisfying than pressing a couple of buttons on a computer keyboard.

The School of Navigation at Warsash was a special place, thanks to Captain Wakeford (Skype), when Bosun Khulman taught us to splice wire and Billy Blyth said "hold the rifle straight, laddie". It gave us an education, not just in seamanship but also how to conduct ourselves in life.

So for those of us who remain, happy 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### 3 Warsash Maritime Academy News – [WMA Website](#)

**Engineer & METO Cadets Graduation:** Congratulations to the 110 newly qualified marine engineer and navigation officers who recently marked the completion of their three-year training and education programme.

The newly-qualified officers - from the September 2015 Deck Foundation Degree, September 2015 Deck HND, September 2015 Engine HND and January 2016 Engine Foundation Degree cohorts – celebrated their achievement at their official Passing Out ceremony on 30 June.



Family and friends, sponsors, representatives from shipping organisations and staff joined the cadets for the celebrations at the O2 Guildhall, in Southampton.



Speaking at the ceremony Solent University Chancellor, Admiral, The Right Honourable Lord West of Spithead, congratulated the officers and said: “Global wealth depends on the maritime and a stable world. Good training and professionalism of the world’s seafarers is absolutely critical and Warsash plays a key part in that.” He went on to say: “The world recognises the value of a Warsash trained officer; as I’ve said, I’ve been travelling the seas of the world for decades and I can tell you that Warsash trained officers are recognised as being the best in the world.”

Maritime organisations attending the ceremony included: Anglo Eastern (UK) Ltd, BP Shipping, Carisbrooke Shipping Plc, Carnival UK, Chiltern Maritime Ltd, Clyde Marine Training Ltd, Maersk Crewing Ltd, Merchant Navy Training Board, Princess Cruises, RCL Cruises Ltd, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Institute of Navigation, Saga, Ship Safe Training Group Ltd, Technip FMC, The Corporation of Trinity House, Viking Recruitment, V.Ships and the Warsash Association.

A total of 167 Warsash Maritime Academy officer cadets have passed out and completed their merchant navy training in the 2017/2018 academic year, ready to embark on their professional careers in worldwide shipping.



Robert Beaver (Evergreen Marine (UK) Ltd)



Hollie Trebill

Annual awards were also presented to officer cadets for their outstanding performance and contribution to their training:

The Deck and Engineer Officer Cadet of the Year Awards were presented to those individuals who were judged to have performed to the highest standard throughout their cadetship and whose overall attainment in theoretical and practical elements is assessed as being outstanding among their peers:

- 2018 winner Deck: Felix Amoreth (BP Angola) (guest cadet at the WA UK 2017 Christmas Lunch)
- 2018 winner Engineer: Robert Beaver (Ship Safe Training Group for Evergreen Marine (UK) Ltd)
- The Matthew Flinders Navigation Cup - awarded to the deck cadet who has best promoted excellence in navigation was 2018 winner: Douglas Bedford (Chiltern Maritime for Condor Ferries)
- Royal Institute of Navigation's John Milner Prize for Navigation - an annual navigation award for foundation degree deck cadets sponsored by The Royal Institute of Navigation - 2018 winner: Adam James, Jan 15 FD Deck, SSTG, Evergreen Marine (UK) Ltd
- The Isambard Brunel Engineering Cup - awarded to the marine engineer cadet who has best contributed to promoting excellence in engineering practice: 2018 winner: Hanna Osgood (Ship Safe Training Group for TUI)
- Commendation for individual achievement – The Sword of Honour is awarded to an officer cadet who has demonstrated exceptional motivation, effort and determination to bring their cadetship to a



successful conclusion. The winner also receives the Warsash Association Cup - 2018 winner: Matthew Gigg - V-Ships/ Maritime Education Foundation (pictured in 2.4 above).

Congratulating the newly qualified officers, Captain Syamantak Bhattacharya, Director of the Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering, said: “It takes hard work and determination to get to where they are today. We wish these newly qualified officers every success as they embark upon their professional careers.”



Felix Amoreth (BP Angola)



Hanna Osgood (Ship Safe Training Group for TUI)

4 New Joiners Since AH2018-1 – (Editor)

We offer a very warm welcome to the following new members who have joined since the last All Hands journal.

OC = Officer Cadet		Total Since	2017 AGM	20	
Title	Name	Username	WA Year	Country	Enrolled
Mr	John Clarke	<a href="#">ClarkeJ44</a>	1944	UK&Ireland	26/06/2018
Mr	Stephen Moore	<a href="#">MooreSXX</a>	*Associate	UK&Ireland	18/07/2018
Mr	Samuel Morrow	<a href="#">MorrowS18</a>	2018	UK&Ireland	31/07/2018

\*Associate Member is a new classification introduced for joiners who did not attend a Warsash course, the first of whom is Stephen Moore who is the father of Harry Moore ([MooreH16](#)) obtained his CoC in 2016.

5 Perfect Safety - Go Ahead – (Editor)

*How many of us referenced this little ditty to avoid collision at sea or when sitting our orals?*

When all three lights I see ahead,  
 I turn to starboard and show my red:  
 Green to green, red to red,  
 Perfect safety -- go ahead.  
 But if to starboard red appear,  
 It is my duty to keep clear --  
 To act as judgment says is proper:  
 To port or starboard, back or stop her.

And if upon my port is seen  
 A steamer's starboard light of green,  
 I hold my course and watch to see  
 That green to port keeps clear of me.  
 Both in safety and in doubt  
 Always keep a good look out.  
 In danger, with no room to turn,  
 Ease her, stop her, go astern.



## 6 Graduation Photo Summer Term 1969

*The names below have been kindly supplied by David Williams (Hopson) to best of his recollection. If you can name any of those missing or think any are incorrect please let us know. (D = Deck; E = Engineer)*



Back row: Rich Hardy E | Deck | Tim Barrett D | Deck | Deck | S Glossop D | Kevin Alcock E | Deck | Paul Boyce D | Deck | Fred Venner E |

Second row: Tim Hobday E | George Ewen E | Deck | Deck | Deck | D Ducas D | Engineer | Pete DeBoos E | Rod Nimmo E | Deck | Neil Borthwick E | David Williams (Hopson) E |

Third row: Larry Robbins D | Ian Webster E | Dave Gare E | Richard Linacre E | Deck | Deck | John Guy D | J Smith D | Graham Conlon D | Chris Hiscock D | Deck | Deck | Rob Ellett E |

Fourth Row: Ed Houareau D | Deck | Pete Lincoln E | Deck | Deck | Dave Ducas E | Deck | Pete Cookson D | Deck | Eddie Tan D | Deck | James 'Jim' Fleay E | Tim Claridge E |

Front row: Roger Marshall E | Dick Young E | Simon Coble D | Alan Boukley E | Deck | Will Ransom E | Bonzo Clements D | Nigel 'Noddy' Robinson D | James 'Jimmy' Nelson E | Deck | Deck | Brian Kirtley D | Pip Watson D | Dick Tame E | Rav Balasingham D |

## 7 Union Steamship Company of New Zealand (USSCo)

### 7.1 USSCo. History– Captain Alex Lang ([LangA58](#))

For 100 years the Union Company established at Dunedin in 1875 was the predominant shipping company in New Zealand and for much of that time Australasia as well. The decade of the 1870s was notable for rapid development in NZ, but there were no arterial roads between the provinces and travel and transport of goods was almost wholly by sea. The Union Co. was the conception of far sighted New Zealander James Mills, who was managing director for 38 years and chairman from 1906 until 1936 more than 60 years after its formation. In that time it became one of the leading shipping lines of the world with direct trading interests in many countries.

The Company commenced business on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1875 with two new steamers mainly financed by Wm. Denny & Bros of Dumbarton as well as three ships acquired from Otago Harbour Steam Co. that had services to Oamaru, Timaru and Lyttelton as well as southern ports to Bluff. The expansion of the fleet and routes was fairly rapid with the introduction of mail and passenger steamers between New Zealand and Australia, then the Pacific Islands and later to Tahiti.



The 1879 Denny's built Rotomahana (right). She was the first merchant steamer in the world built of mild steel, the first to be fitted with bilge keels, and the first to appear in the Pacific with steam operated steering gear. Her raked funnel and masts (originally schooner rigged), shapely clipper bow, handsome figurehead and decorative scrollwork gave her the appearance of a graceful steam yacht. She completed 42 years of service for the company until laid up in 1921 and although mooted for preservation was finally sold for scrap in 1925.



The Manapouri built by Denny's in 1882 was the first merchant ship in the world to be equipped with incandescent electric lighting throughout and was the first merchant ship to accommodate her saloon passengers amidships. After a refit in 1898 with new boilers and a quadruple expansion engine she was put into the South Pacific Islands service which later extended to Tahiti.

By 1906 the fleet list showed 57 ships. The first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw many innovations with passenger/mail ships introduced as well as cruising to Milford Sound and Fiordland. Then Hauraki Gulf cruises, as well as Intercolonial, South Sea Islands and Transpacific to San Francisco and Vancouver.

During the First World War five Union Company vessels were sunk by U-Boats after being requisitioned by the British M.O.T and at one time nearly half the Union Fleet was on war service. In 1916 Union Company decided in a controversial decision to sell the ordinary shares to P & O under the dynamic chairmanship of Lord Inchcape. P & O were to control the company for nearly 60 years until Union Steam came back to local ownership in 1971.

When P & O bought control of USSCo, public resentment reached such a high level that successive New Zealand Governments were reluctant to consider any form of assistance that would ultimately be of benefit to P & O interests. The company's fortunes never again reached the level of success that had characterised its first 40 years. At the end of the war the company's fleet numbered 67 vessels but the years ahead proved more difficult than anticipated.

After the war Lord Inchcape was appointed by the British Government to dispose of ships and he pressed Union Company to accept some of them. Some of these gave useful service but one underpowered vessel was particularly notorious. The Wingatui left Wellington for Westport, a normal voyage of 24 hours, but hit a southerly gale on the West Coast and was blown north almost to Cape Reinga on the northern tip of New Zealand at which point it was decided to go to Auckland for bunkers. After bunkering again in Napier and Wellington then finally making Westport and back to Wellington the round trip had taken 37 days instead of the normal five days.

In 1919 USSCo became agents for New Zealand Shipping Co and their staffs were merged with that of USSCo. This arrangement lasted for 25 years until NZSCo re-established its own representation in New Zealand. The inter-war years saw many changes not only in management but importantly with the ships. Quite a few became famous for various reasons, either their style or through mishaps coming to public attention.

The Tahiti, purchased in 1911 for the passenger/mail service to San Francisco was a gracious ship from a gracious era. After war service as a troop ship she resumed her passenger duties but in August 1930, when 460 miles off Rarotonga, her starboard propeller shaft snapped ahead of the stern tube and battered a hole in her hull. Two days later after her passengers and crew had been rescued, the Tahiti sank.

The Tekapo made the first voyage of a Union Co. ship to India in 1887 when she carried horses for the Indian Army. The handsome Mararoa 1885-1931 carried 270 passengers and had a pipe organ in her saloon, considered a luxury ship at the time, but was later scuttled South of Wellington.



The Wellington-Lyttelton service rapidly increased its popularity in the 1920s and daylight trips during holiday periods were such that demand exceeded the capacity of the two ferries so extra ships were employed. The Tamahine (1925-1963) (right) was introduced in 1925 for the Wellington-Picton service and her speed was such that it brought the two ports within four hours of each other. She maintained the service single-handed until 1962 when the first RoRo passenger, road and rail ferries were introduced.



The Aorangi was the largest and fastest motor ship afloat when launched in 1924. Together with the Niagara and 14 other passenger ships the Union Co. became the leader in the Pacific area. The Niagara was lost in 1940 when she hit a mine and sank in the Hauraki Gulf north of Auckland, taking with her nearly eight tons of gold and half of New Zealand's stock of small arms ammunition which was being sent to England to make good the shortage after Dunkirk. In 1941 the Aorangi was requisitioned as a troop ship, then after the war and a costly refit she resumed service in 1948.

Undoubtedly the most outstanding and noteworthy ship owned by Union Co. was the Awatea, designed for the NZ-Sydney passenger mail service which entered service in September 1936 with a speed of 23 knots. Following the outbreak of war she continued her normal run until July 1940 when she proceeded to Manila to embark refugees. Several voyages followed to Vancouver and Colombo then in September 1941 she was requisitioned for war service and after being stripped of her luxurious fittings, was converted into a troop transport and later to an infantry landing ship. She was bombed and sunk in November 1942 off Algeria.

The Grand old Lady of the Tasman, as the Monowai (1926-1960) (right) was called, also saw war service as an armed merchant cruiser and then as an infantry landing ship. She took part in the D-Day landings and subsequently in a shuttle service with 30,000 troops to the British and USA beaches followed by 25 trips to Le Havre with 43,000 troops. Then she was used to repatriate prisoners of war and refugees and as a mercy ship for Singapore. She was finally released back to Union Co. in August 1946.



The passenger ship Maunganui was a veteran of WW1 when she served as a troopship.

In 1941 she was requisitioned as a hospital ship and served throughout the war as HMNZSHS Maunganui before returning to Union Co. service.

Another war time ship of note was the Finnish barque Pamir, seized when she arrived in Wellington in 1941. She was managed by Union Co. and made trips to Australia, North America and London. Many New Zealand seamen gained 'square rig' sea-time in her and one even sat for square rigged endorsement to his newly gained FG Mates certificate in 1968. The ship was returned to the Finnish Government in 1948. Sadly she was lost in an Atlantic gale in 1957 when only six of her 86 crew survived.

During WW2 Union Co. lost ten ships and so a period of reconstruction was needed with older ships purchased and a considerable new building program implemented. Two ships purchased from the US War Shipping Administration were the C1 design, wartime-built and renamed Wairata and Wairimu. These two served for another 20 years on the India-Singapore run. Four ships of the war time Victory class were also



purchased from Canada and these were put on the West Coast States run to Australia and New Zealand. Between 1945 and 1960 54 new or purchased vessels were put into service, a lot of the new builds being purpose-built for the coastal and Trans-Tasman trade. Being generally low powered they soon got the nickname 'slow greens'.



Union Dunedin (1983-1986) at Wellington 1985



Union Rotoma (1991-?) at Port Phillip 1998

The 1960s saw the gradual change from conventional to unitised ships then to RoRo. Two large 20,000 ton DW carriers the Union Rotorua and Union Rotoiti measuring 204metres with a beam of 26mtr and a speed of 20 knots carried the bulk of the trans-Tasman cargo.

The Inter-Island ferry service between Wellington and Lyttelton was a significant part of Union Co. and over the years some very well-known ships plied the route. The first dedicated ship for the run was the Penguin which started the service in April 1895 with a weekly run which was increased to three trips per week within seven months. The better known ships in later years being the Hinemoa, Maori and Wahine.

The Wahine (below left) when completed was the largest and, by a wide margin, the fastest vessel of her type and had the appearance of being much larger than her 8,948grt.

This was a consequence of providing the area of high headroom space required for stowage of 200 cargo trailers and motor vehicles on the main and mezzanine decks as well as cabin accommodation for 928 passengers and 123 Officers and crew together with public rooms all in her superstructure above the garages. Less than two years after commencing service on the Inter-Island run she sank in the entrance to Wellington harbour with the loss of 51 lives, following Hurricane force winds, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1968. (See later article).



Wahine (1966-1968)



Rangatira (1872-1986) at Port Lyttelton

The replacement for Wahine was the Rangatira which entered service in March 1972, but the growth of air travel and competition from the RoRo rail ferries on the Wellington–Picton run saw a gradual decline in passengers and with continued increases in costs the service was terminated in September 1976. The Rangatira subsequently was twice used as an accommodation ship then saw service in the Falklands war before ending her days in the Mediterranean.

In late 1969 and early 1970, the Union Company was in the midst of a very difficult and prolonged industrial dispute and various organisations saw an opportunity for a take-over bid.

Among them was Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT) of Australia who had large freight forwarding connections in New Zealand and saw an opportunity to participate in the sea haul operations linking their



land services in New Zealand and Australia. The other main contender was the Owens Group of NZ. After 17 months of negotiations between the parties, the NZ Government and P&O, the TNT proposal was approved and all shares were taken up by New Zealand companies with the New Zealand Government providing bridging finance only. The takeover date was finally set for 31<sup>st</sup> December 1971.

Due to costly delays in negotiations development had come to a standstill and after the takeover there was a gradual selling of assets both in property and ships. By 1990 Union Steam Ship operated seven ships, and was involved in ship management, tourism, real estate and other ventures. In 2000 its associated company Union Shipping Bulk terminated its contract to barge coal from Westport and their coal barge made its final voyage. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Brierley Investments bought all the shares, broke Union Steam Ship into components and sold what it could.

The Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand had owned more than 350 ships and has been the subject of a number of books such as 'Union Fleet' by Ian Farquhar; 'The Line that Dared' - A History of the Union Steam Ship Company' by Gordon McLauchlan; 'Glamour Ships of the Union Steam Ship Company NZ Ltd' by Jack Churchouse.

## 7.2 At Sea with USSCo – Captain Alex Lang ([LangA58](#))

The nickname was USS 'U Sail Saturday' as they rarely let a ship stay in port over the weekend if it could possibly be avoided, often short-shipping or over-carrying cargo. This was because there was no work on the waterfront on Saturday afternoons or Sundays in New Zealand at that time.

I joined in April 1964 after an interview at the P & O Offices at Tower Hill, and was quickly accepted and offered an immediate job as 3rd Officer. USS Co. At the time they were desperately short of Deck Officers and were avidly recruiting British officers to man their ships. The USSCo had just arranged purchase of the Whakatane and Whangaroa from New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd. These ships were renamed Waitaki and Wainui to be delivered to NZ for the Pacific-Vancouver run and the Eastern run to Indian ports.

I was offered a delivery run job on one of the ships but also given the option to fly out to NZ to help the immediate shortage. I chose to fly and be 'on the coast' a couple of months before the delivery run officers arrived, and therefore be ahead in seniority.

In 1964 the air routes were sparse by today's standards. At Heathrow visitors to the airport could still go out on the balcony and wave to family and friends as they boarded their aircraft via an open gangway type bridge from the terminal direct onto the aircraft. I duly boarded a BOAC 707 for the long haul to Sydney stopping at Zurich, Beirut, Karachi, Calcutta, Singapore and Darwin before arriving in Sydney somewhat tired and jetlagged, then immediately transferred to a Qantas Electra for the flight to Wellington. At that time no airport in NZ was big enough for the 707s to land.

Reporting to the Marine Superintendent immediately on arrival in Wellington at 1600 on a Friday afternoon after 36 hours travel, I was grudgingly given a week's leave (in advance) to organise my affairs and to move my wife from Nelson to Auckland to make that my 'home port'. Then straight back out to the airport for a flight in a DC3 to Nelson.

New Zealand in 1964 was still very much behind the times in every aspect of transport, with old ships, old cars and old planes. I remember having a smile to myself sitting in the DC3 as it revved up on the end of the runway and the whole plane shook and rattled as the brakes were released and we lurched towards take-off. – somewhat different from the smooth 707 experience from Heathrow.

Compared to the British company (Port Line) I had just left, the USSCo style of personnel management was somewhat lacking. You weren't exactly made to feel welcome, just a number to do the job. I heard one story where the new recruit had just arrived from the UK, as I had. He reported to the Marine Supt, as ordered, the Marine Super looked up and said "get your haircut". The guy just walked out of the office and never went back! Prior to leaving the UK you were required to sign a two year contract, but I guess that didn't mean much with treatment like that, and there were quite a few other NZ coastal shipping companies, so plenty of jobs e.g. Holm and Co, Canterbury Steam, Richardson's, Anchor Shipping Co, Portland Cement Co, Golden Bay Cement Co, to name a few.



I joined my first ship in Dunedin so made another flight from Auckland. The Navua was on the East Coast run but a short time later we did two trips to Melbourne for full loads of boxes of Riverland oranges. The ship was fitted with hold vent blowers but not refrigerated, which was sufficient for the relatively short voyage across the Tasman. After a couple of months as 3rd Officer I was promoted to 2nd Officer, but as no new 3rd Officer joined we sailed as a two-mate ship and did four hours on and four hours off.

New Zealand Officers at that time were paid wages and overtime for any hours in excess of eight hours worked in a day, so you kept an 'Overtime Book' which the Master had to verify and sign. Some Masters were so stingy that they'd check any overtime against the ships Official Log to see if they could reduce overtime claimed. The 2nd Officer was also the medical guy and as such was required to open the medical locker after the pm 12-4 watch and attend to any crew requirements or ailments. I would claim ½ hour overtime for this duty, but one Master used to check the medical log and if no crew member required attention on any particular day he would gleefully strike out the claim even though I had opened the medical locker and waited the prescribed half hour!

The Seamen's Union was very strong at that time and would hold up a ship at the slightest pretext, and management seemed to give-in all the time rather than have a ship held up. The majority of ships' crews had Auckland as their home port as the vast majority of USSCo ships called there, it being the biggest port with the most population and consequently most trade. When there was a troublesome crew they most often tried to hold a ship up in Auckland over a weekend, thus getting more time at home as leave was pretty minimal. One such example happened on a Saturday morning when the crew decided each one should have a personal bucket for their dhobi (laundry). Shops closed at midday but management arranged for a hardware store to open up and the required buckets were delivered to the ship and it was able to sail in the afternoon. Another example was when a Mate was accused of being too hard on the crew and management transferred him to pacify the crew and have it sail on time.

In British ships it was the normal practice for Officers to walk round the ship after their night watch i.e. security rounds to check everything secure and no fire. When I did this in USSCo the Seamen's Union delegates went to see the Captain and complained that I was invading their privacy for walking through the mess room at 4 o'clock in the morning! If the practice continued they would stick the ship up - the words were "we'll make this ship a F—ing monument"

USSCo management did not seem to have a good rapport with the Seamen's Union but in all fairness a lot of things needed to change in the maritime scene. A lot of past bad practices had endured and I think the company needed to modernise its attitude. When a ship needed an AB, the request went to the Shipping Office and any one there who wanted the job would 'stand' and the mate would walk down the line and choose who he liked the look of. A practice I'm sure was a hangover from sailing ship days! Fortunately that process was changed, but then the Seamen's Union had control and would foist a known trouble-maker on a ship and the problems continued.

One glaring thing that struck me when I joined was how antiquated many practices were. The navigational equipment in most cases was really minimal. For instance the first few ships I sailed on relied on a magnetic steering compass and a standard compass on the monkey island to take bearings to get your position when coasting and there was no radar. The company practice was to set courses five miles off any headland when sailing between ports because the ships were so under powered that any breakdown could result in the ship being on a lee shore( just like sailing ships). Obviously the further from land you were the more time and chance you had of recovery.

The oldest British ships at least were updated when new technology came along, for instance they all had gyro compasses and radars, not the case with Union Co. ships. One I sailed on didn't even have an echo sounder; the out-of-date regulations only required a deep-sea lead-line so that's all it had. Direction Finders (DF sets) were a requirement, but there were very few DF beacons so that was mostly a waste of time. I think the only time we ever used DF was trying to get a bearing of Cape Reinga at the northern tip of NZ when making a landfall after crossing the Tasman from Australia. On one ship I was on the DF was so old it was only a single loop which you had to physically swing to try and get a bearing. It looked like a periscope



from a submarine mounted in the chartroom and of course in bad weather we'd fool around at change of watch in the chartroom and swing round on this thing shouting "Dive, dive!"

Being so far off land when coasting, you couldn't really be sure of the coastal feature you were trying to get a bearing of, and so we resorted to mountain top navigation to try and get a fix. All the mountains were marked on the chart but this was pretty inaccurate as well because the standard compass above the wheelhouse would be swinging like crazy in any sort of sea above flat calm, plus you had deviation and variation to contend with as well. Is it any wonder ports that making your next port was like making a landfall from a long ocean crossing?

Besides working four-on four-off at sea, some coastal ships didn't have a Radio Officer who would normally double as purser and do all the crew wages and office work, so this duty then fell to the 2nd Officer. It seemed that at most ports someone would want to pay off which meant getting a replacement, so one of the mates would have to attend the shipping office as well as the Union Co. Office, then the bank, etc, etc, while the other mate looked after the ship and cargo work. So the coastal runs were pretty hard work with not a lot of sleep, so that extended time in port often due to a shortage of labour was sometimes quite a blessing. At least you could get a whole night in bed. When at sea the two mates also had to do the half hour radio watch every four hours. Fortunately this was only voice radio on the coast and consisted of taking the weather reports and any navigation warnings. The radio watch was mostly done in conjunction with your navigation watch unless there was too much happening in which case you stayed on the bridge for the extra time of the radio watch.

Just prior to my joining USSCo they had been so short of officers that they had what was called a 'Flying squad'. A ship would arrive in port and one of the officers and sometimes even the captain would receive orders to fly somewhere else to take a ship that was short-staffed and sail it to the next port. I only had one such bad experience. That was arriving in Auckland (my home port) late on a Friday evening, having been away for quite a few weeks and fully expecting to finally have a weekend at home. Then on the Saturday morning I was transferred to another ship which then sailed that afternoon. It was no wonder there was not much company loyalty, particularly amongst junior officers, which in turn led to more shortages.

When I was a cadet at the School of Navigation, Warsash, Southampton I applied to join the RNR and after a somewhat intense interview at the Admiralty and grilling by three Naval Officers (they looked like Admirals to me with thick stripes half way up their arms and medal ribbons all over their chests) I was accepted as a Midshipman, RNR. On obtaining my 2nd Mates Certificate I received promotion to acting Sub-Lieutenant on provision of doing five months training with the Royal Navy within three years. After enquiries I found I could undertake this training with the NZ Navy in Auckland. After a year of service with USSCo, I applied to take leave of absence for five months. This was refused even though I offered to extend my contract by a year. The answer was still "NO" so bang went my ambitions in that direction.

In the early sixties, unlike in the UK, in New Zealand there was no such thing as paid study leave so you had to save up your leave if you wanted any money to see you through the study and sitting exams. I managed to save enough to sit for my 1st Mates Certificate and the company was obliged to release you for 'ticket leave' so there was some common-sense in management after all. How else could they expect to have officers with superior certificates available for further promotion?

However after two years and seven ships I'd had enough of being shunted around, with transfers on three occasions' with no leave between, so I left for greener pastures with no regrets whatsoever.

Several years later after working for Shell Oil on a coastal tanker our ship was replaced with a larger one and after conversion in Singapore it was delivered to New Zealand and joined the NZ coastal tanker fleet which was under Union Company Management. As a matter of principle I'd vowed never to work for Union Company again and so it was that I left for better prospects elsewhere.

Union Company did survive into the 1980s, but in my opinion its poor 'man-management' practices coupled with the globalisation of shipping inevitably led to its demise. Unfortunately there are now very few New Zealand crewed ships, a sad indictment for a country dependent on sea trade.



### 7.3 TEV Wahine Disaster 1968 - [NZ National Maritime Museum](#)

The following harrowing account of the grounding and sinking of the Turbo Electric Vessel (TEV) Wahine is mostly taken from the [New Zealand Maritime Museum](#) website page dedicated to the ferry.



TEV Wahine



Salvaging the Wahine

The twin screw turbo-electric steamer Wahine was completed at Govan, Scotland in 1966 for the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd by Fairfields Ltd of Glasgow. The shipyard encountered financial difficulties and the Wahine was not launched by the wife of the Union Steam Ship Company's managing director, Mr. Fergus McFarlane, until the 14th of July, 1965. The vessel arrived at Wellington on the 24th of July 1966, some nine months late and entered service on the first day of August, making the first of 67 voyages to Lyttelton that year.

Wahine could accommodate 927 passengers in cabins on six decks and in greater comfort than in any of her predecessors. Stabilisers halved both the frequency and amount of roll. Two transverse thrust units simplified berthing. She had twice the garage space of the Maori and auxiliary space forward for a further 50 cars.

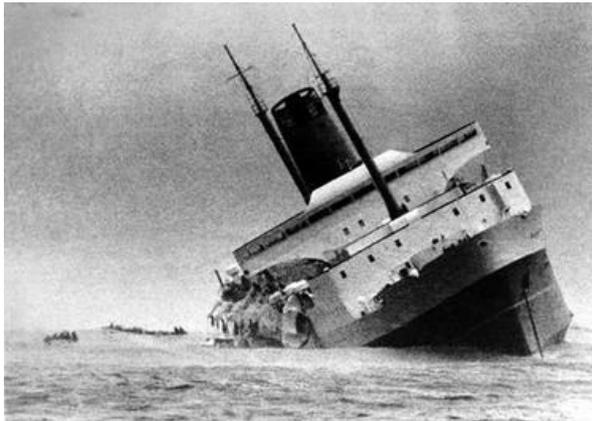
In the early morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1968 under the command of Captain Hector Robinson, as she approached the Wellington Harbour heads, a tremendous storm blowing from the South was at its height, with 100 kph (63 mph) winds gusting to 155 kph (97 mph). At around 6 a.m. the Wahine was entering the heads when she abruptly lurched to port. The helm would not respond. The sea was so turbulent that the propellers were as often out of the water as in. The ship's radar had failed as she entered the narrow rocky channel and visibility had deteriorated quickly to zero. The Captain and crew could not determine which way the vessel was oriented and inadvertently backed over a reef, severely damaging the ship's bottom.

The Wahine struck Barrett's Reef just after 6.40 a.m. Few passengers felt the grounding and most were oblivious to what was going on. Alarm bells were rung and the following announcement made: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are aground on Barrett's Reef. There is no immediate danger. Please proceed to your cabins, collect your life jackets and report to your muster stations."

The grounding took place on the western side of the entrance to Wellington Harbour on the approaches to the city of Wellington at 41°21'9"S 174°50'6". The reef is named after Richard (Dicky) Barrett (1807–1847), a whaler and trader. Its Maori name is Tangihanga-a-Kupe. It is popular with recreational divers.

In the raging seas it took 20 minutes just to reach the fore deck to drop the anchors. For a further two hours she dragged anchors and was driven northward into the harbour. Had the cables parted during that time few would have survived. Fortunately they didn't and at about 11 a.m. the anchors finally held near Seatoun beach on the Western side of the harbour.

Efforts to secure the ship with tugs then began in the still dangerous conditions. One tug was turned around completely by the storm before it reached the stricken vessel. At 11.00 a.m. the tug Tapuhi (232 tons, 1945) was able to get a tow line to the ship but this broke after ten minutes and it proved impossible to attach another line. The deputy Harbour Master Captain Galloway risked his life jumping from a pitching launch to clamber up a ladder hanging over the starboard side of the ship. He just missed being crushed when the launch came back and hit the Wahine.



Rescue scene and listing Wahine



Wahine aground and lying on her side

By 1.00 p.m. the wind had dropped a little although the seas remained very rough. The tide swung the Wahine beam on to the wind providing some shelter on the starboard side. At the same time her list to starboard increased noticeably. At 1.15 p.m. the passengers and crew were instructed to abandon the ship on the starboard side.

During the day the captain and crew had intentionally misled the passengers into believing there was no danger. It was felt that this was preferable to telling of the possible dangers and risking widespread panic. As a result, when the order was given to abandon ship many of the passengers were stunned. They felt that it was safer onboard and some had even removed their life jackets, using them as pillows. Others didn't know which side was starboard and instead made their way to the high side of the ship from which it was impossible to launch the lifeboats.



Partially submerged Barrett Reef



+ Location of the grounding

The Wahine then began to develop a severe list and the order to abandon ship was given to the 734 men women and children aboard. Many of those who perished were in the first lifeboat away which was swamped soon after launching. The others landed safely on the beach at Seatoun. The Wahine was within sight of the shore and a large number of other vessels, including a smaller ferry, the Aramoana, stood by to pick up those in rafts. Some passengers were left with no choice but to jump from the listing vessel into the cold sea. They were blown across the harbour towards Eastbourne Beach, an area with difficult access. Debris on the road caused by the storm had meant rescue vehicles couldn't gain access to the beach itself.



The Wahine was designed with an enormous two-tiered vehicle deck capable of holding over 200 cars. This single compartment spanned nearly the entire length of the ship and clear across her beam from the port to the starboard side. When the reef damaged the ship's hull the stability of the vessel was maintained until the vehicle deck began to take on water. Once this happened inevitably 'free-surface effect' caused the ship to lose stability and water sloshed from one side of the ship to the other.

As the ship continued to roll back and forth, the momentum of the flooded water slowly increased her starboard list. As she suddenly approached the point of no return the Captain gave the command to abandon ship and all on board rushed to the lower, starboard side lifeboats. This sudden shift in weight, although slight, caused the ship to lose its little remaining stability and at 2.30 in the afternoon, the now abandoned Wahine capsized in thirty-eight feet of water and crashed heavily to the bed of the sea.

As the canopied rubber rafts approached the shore waves as high as six metres capsized them and many lives were lost at this time. Only eight police officers were initially able to get down to Eastbourne who coordinated most of the early rescue activity. They were followed by 100 other officers and 150 civilians. Bodies washed up along this stretch of beach and some people who made it on to the shore alive were unable to receive medical attention soon enough to prevent death from exposure. Others drowned or were dashed against the rocks by the pounding surf.

As tradition demands, Captain Hector Robinson was the last to leave by diving over the side, now nearly level with the sea. Despite all rescue attempts 51 people lost their lives, being 44 passengers, six crew members and one stowaway.



Wreck of the Wahine: Watercolour by T. L. Cutten,  
1968



Raising the Wahine

A Court of Inquiry was convened ten weeks later. In December of that year it was to return with a list of errors and omissions made both on shore and aboard the ferry. At the same time it was noted that these occurred under very difficult and dangerous conditions. The inquiry found that the primary reason for the Wahirae's loss was the presence of water on the vehicle deck. Fault was found with Captain Robertson for failing to report this to those on shore and also not reporting that the ship's draught had increased to 22 feet after striking the reef.

Over the next year preparations were made to re-float her. However, during a second storm on May 8 1969 the hull broke into three pieces and she was eventually demolished on site by the salvors. The work took more than five years and was completed in September, 1973.

A memorial made from ventilation pipes, an anchor and chain from the ship was erected on the foreshore at Seatoun to mark the last resting place of the ship. Her foremast now stands in the Frank Kitts Park at Wellington as a memorial for those who died.

**2001 March 14:** (From an unknown newspaper report) The restored whistle on the Wahine is set to break its 35-year silence and grace the Wellington waterfront. The whistle had been in storage in the Wellington Museum City and Sea for years until it was rediscovered by a staff member who suggested that it be resurrected. It was one of several items of Wahine wreckage bought by Sir Len Southward. He donated both



whistles and the two masts to the museum. Following the one erected in Frank Kitts Park, the other is awaiting restoration and the second whistle might also be restored.

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Peter Armstrong, Scott Bennett, Colin Munro, Matthew Smith, Steven McLachlan (specialist in Maritime Covers) for many of the images and Marcus Castel for bringing it all together. This page is part of the Historic New Zealand Vessels section of the New Zealand National Maritime Museum website.

**Memorials** ([Wikipedia](#)): Wahine Memorial Park marks the disaster with a bow thruster, near where the survivors reached the shore at Seatoun. J G Churchill Park in Seatoun has a memorial plaque, the ship's anchor and chain (one link per victim), and replica ventilators. A plaque and the foremast are at the parking area next to Burdans Gate on the eastern side of the harbour, on the coast where many of the survivors and dead washed up. The mainmast is part of another memorial in Frank Kitts Park in central Wellington. The Museum of Wellington City & Sea has a permanent commemorative exhibition on its maritime floor that includes artefacts and a film about the storm and the sinking.

## 8 Polar Mariner – Captain Tom Woodfield OBE ([WoodfieldT50](#))

*Captain Thomas Woodford was a Warsash cadet in 1949-50. He served his time with Port Line before taking up an appointment on the RRS Shackleton which supported Antarctic expeditions. Having been promoted and after several years serving as Master on other survey ships, he came ashore in 1974. Captain Woodford then joined Trinity House until his final retirement, upon which he became an Elder Brother. The following extract is from his book 'Polar Mariner' published in 2016 by [Whittles Publishing](#) who kindly gave permission for us to use extracts.*



Captain Tom Woodfield OBE & RSS Shackleton

*Polar Mariner which is illustrated with many photographs, is a very interesting and well written book (ISBN 978-1-84995-166-1). Further extracts will follow in later editions of All Hands.*

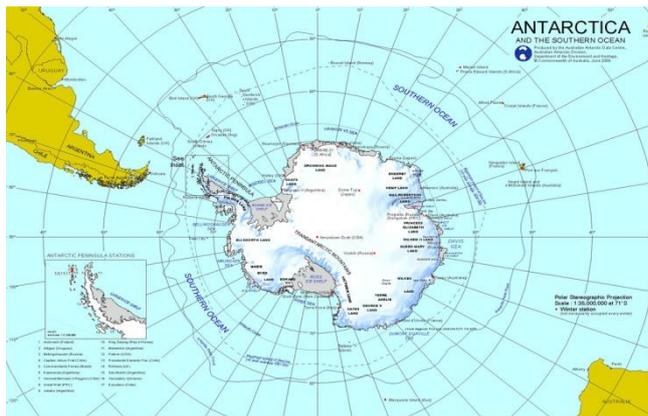
**An Opportunity Grasped:** One Sunday shortly after gaining my initial Certificate the good fortune from which my life has benefited began to kick in. My older brother, who by this time was in the Army and returning to his Unit, my younger sister, off to school in Switzerland and I to join a ship in the London docks, all on the following day spent what was likely to be a last Sunday lunch together at home for some considerable time. During that afternoon my father read out an advertisement from the paper adding “This will interest you, son”. It read “Full crew required for an Antarctic Expedition Ship - no polar experience necessary. Apply Crown Agents” etc. The opportunity to combine those inherited interests of the sea, mountains, ice and polar exploration was a chance not to be missed. I telephoned my employer on the Monday morning and explained that I wished to attend an interview for a Junior Officer’s position aboard the Royal Research Ship (R.R.S.) Shackleton rather than join my next Port Line vessel.

We were to be employed by the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey (F.I.D.S.) and one of the interview panel was Captain Bill Johnston who was to transfer from R.R.S. John Biscoe, the sole vessel then run by F.I.D.S. (the Survey) to command their newly acquired second vessel to be named the R.R.S. Shackleton.

**Becoming Involved - That Which Lay Ahead:** All voyages were expeditions to relieve the bases bringing them new personnel and supplies. The bases were stations for scientific research but their establishment had also in my first years an underlying political purpose.



We supported not only their existence but their scientific research, survey and exploration and indeed carried out such ventures ourselves offshore whilst all the time displaying Britain's claim to sovereignty by our presence. They were always a contrasting mixture of great endeavour and blissful scenic passage making. Ever present though was the enthusiasm and camaraderie of a volunteer crew and expeditioners. The combination of sea ice and ferocious weather which protects Antarctica's shores and made it at times such a fearsome place to approach, provided continual challenges which I came to relish.



There were many times of anxiety; being driven onto the rocks or becoming beset and crushed for long periods, but also many of pure joy; gazing at the beauty of the land or seascapes, marveling at the wildlife so tangible without fear of humans, or just from the satisfaction of achievement against the odds, whether on a day to day basis or the completion of an entire voyage. I delighted in the company of my fellow travellers, be they humble mess boys, ship's officers, young scientists or eminent and knowledgeable professors when we shared the wonders and excitement of the polar world that were continually on offer. I completed 19 years of voyaging to Antarctica on three ships sailing from Southampton via South America and the Falkland Islands and in my early years soon became passionate about my trade, polar seafaring. I became fascinated by the Southern Continent, its magnificence, natural inhabitants and weather, and developed a keen interest in the formation, geology and glaciology of that ice and land mass. I became enthralled by the history of those who had first ventured to this often desolate and demanding part of the planet and incredulous at their achievements in appalling conditions both at sea under sail and ashore with such poor equipment, clothing and food. Laterally in my career at sea and even more so afterwards I became actively involved in the politics, protection and economics of the region.

### **Royal Research Ship Shackleton - First Voyage – Lasting Impressions**

The loading of the cargo and stores was completed quickly once the inclining test proved our stability satisfactory, although we still had a condition placed upon us to ballast any double bottom fuel tanks when they became empty. Expeditioners were embarked and at last we sailed South. For our second departure it was again into poor weather. Down the Channel towards Ushant a full southwester came in and Captain Johnston decided a quiet anchorage made more sense than little uncomfortable progress in mid-channel.

We anchored less than a cable under the lee of Berry Head, weaving our way through and passed many other ships taking shelter. To we big ship mariners aboard, which is what the majority of us were, the philosophy of nursing the ship and crew and working with the weather, and not fighting it was a revelation and my first lesson in seamanship from observing Bill Johnston. He was however to prove a hard taskmaster. He was a tall, gaunt Ulsterman brought up in the coastal trade before a tough war in rescue tugs based on Gibraltar assisting Malta convoys, then joining the Falkland Islands Company's ships as Master. He was recruited to FIDS by Sir Miles Clifford, a Governor of the Islands who had admired his expertise. The Colonial Office, represented by the Governor, was the body responsible for us. Johnston was a cold, rather aloof figure, who chain smoked Players Perfectos Finos and drank lots of pink gin.



Not once, though, in my nine years associated with him did I see him the worse for wear, not even in Stanley where the inhabitants' hospitality made it difficult to stay sober. He occasionally showed a dry sense of humour though usually at the expense of others. He did not suffer fools or incompetence and was severe if you were not carrying out his instructions to the letter. He always wore uniform, usually with cap, even in the severest weather.



RSS Shackleton

He frowned upon any dressing down and even showed a dislike, but tolerated, my wearing a black silk scarf instead of a tie when passage making at night.

Where the saying originated I know not but he favoured the phrase "You don't have to be scruffy to be tough". His authority was absolute, so it should be as Master, may say my professional readers, but his style of command which extended beyond the ship to the bases and areas in which we were working or lay was extreme. He never discussed his plans or tactics. He never aired his concerns nor shared confidences. He was phlegmatic with apparently no nerves. We used to joke that if you stuck a pin in him he might later consider saying "ouch". His well-kept secret, however, was that he was seasick, although some sharp eyed lads noticed that he was not around much during the first day of a passage if it was rough and we had not been to sea for a while, unless it was absolutely necessary as for instance when we sheltered under Berry Head. Above all though, and most important, was that he was a fine, safe, but adventurous seaman with an uncanny eye for a safe passage in uncharted waters from whom I was to learn a great deal.

An uneventful passage was made to Montevideo with a short visit to the Cape Verde Islands to top up with both fuel and water entirely for the purpose of maintaining good stability. During the passage we familiarised ourselves with the ship and settled into routines. We had none of a new vessel's teething problems for she had already been in service for a year in the Baltic. However we did swing ship to calibrate the Magnetic compass on the Magnetic Equator at about Latitude five degrees South. Taking compass bearings of the sun whilst on different headings and comparing them with the true bearings extracted from the Nautical Almanac establishes the deviation of the compass on various headings. This can then also be refined by adjusting the soft iron correctors adjacent to the compass, the Flinders Bar and Kelvin Balls, which we did. The change to these errors would have resulted from a change to the ship's magnetism consequent upon the large amount of structural work that had taken place in the shipyard. This was a first for me as the task was usually carried out by a professional compass adjuster prior to sailing, but it was not to be my last "swing" by a long way. We discovered later that when working heavy ice the effect on the ship was the same as that of taking a hammer to a piece of steel. It changed its magnetism and consequently its effect on the compass deviation. Later we had to devise methods of evaluating the deviation in high latitudes when the other compass error, variation, from the earth's magnetic field, was high, not nil as at the Magnetic Equator. We created many transits at places frequently visited of which we had established the true bearing on a sunny day to enable us to make compass checks when required. Picking them up in poor weather, then confidently applying a correction whilst entering a hazardous area, where only our own limited sketch survey had established a limited route, and haste was essential, proved testing. We had, of course, a gyro



compass but during this initial season, and on many other subsequent ones, it repeatedly failed, once for an entire nine month voyage. I therefore developed an obsession with the errors and corrections of the magnetic compass.

Montevideo, at 36 degrees South, in the mouth of the River Plate was an exciting and friendly place to visit. It was hot in mid-summer, the air filled with the aromas of frangipane, bougainvillea, barbecued meat and red wine. Scruffy in a Latin unkempt way with buildings in disrepair and broken pavements it had lovely beaches and an outdoor way of life. Our day and a half there was spent taking water, fuel and it was our last chance to store up on fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. None of these were available in the Falklands except mutton of which there was an abundance.

The thousand mile voyage from there to the Falklands saw a distinct drop in air temperature. There are two parallel but opposing currents off the east coast of the Argentine, the south going warm, the north going Falkland current cold. The latter had carried an iceberg north onto the English Bank in the mouth of the River Plate in 1936. A careful lookout for ice was always kept on this passage, but in truth I never met ice until some few hundred miles south of the Falklands. The two currents with their individual air masses above them often differing by up to ten degrees produced fog. Associated with the possibility of meeting ice one could never not be alert.

**Stanley and Introduction to the Southern Ocean:** We were well behind the schedule of a southern season when we arrived at Stanley late in January. FIDS, the acronym by which the organization was known had its rear base here. At the back of Government House were a handful of offices where a small team led by the Secretary (SECFIDS), co-ordinated activities south, liaised with the Governor and London H.Q., through a wireless office nearby which provided a communications centre for the ships, bases and shore staff. Near the jetty we also had a stores depot. The Fids by which the expeditioners were known were kitted out with their 'Southern' clothing and gear, whilst stores, cargo and mail were transferred between ship and shore so as to stow our load in accordance with the order of bases we were to visit on this single voyage south of our shortened season. The role of the vessels was normally primarily to re-supply the several bases with their annual stores and change over the personnel, after which we were to assist, support and facilitate their operations. We were to build refuge huts as outposts for extended survey runs from the bases, and land men, dogs and stores at remote locations to establish camps from which further survey work could be undertaken.

On this voyage however, in conjunction with our sister ship we carried two complete new stations, the building materials for the erection of the huts, generators, food, fuel and equipment sufficient for a year's occupation. Another first for me as we sailed out of Stanley harbour was not just to have the decks piled high with drums of petrol, diesel oil, gas cylinders and sledges but also to have fresh carcasses of mutton strapped to the rigging. After a couple of days at sea they were both 'salt cured and frozen', perfect for delivery.



Right: The John Biscoe (later voyage)

The Drake Passage, that part of the Southern Ocean lying to the southward of the Falklands and South America is a turbulent place. The passage of depressions being almost relentless and the swell they create rarely subsiding. It's average height being between four and five metres. Twenty years later this stretch of water was to throw at me the most tremendous family of ocean storms of my career, but on this occasion sailing between depressions it was relatively quiet. At 58 degrees South a faint speck of white appeared on the horizon. 'Iceberg, iceberg', the cry rang around the ship. One's first is always an amazing sight and wonderful experience, whether a giant flat top tabular broken away from an ice shelf or a sculptured deep blue fragment from a glacier. As that first drew nearer one became aware not just of its enormity but also of the chaos of surging, breaking, swirling sea that it's static bulk created. This maelstrom in turn trapping fish,



squid and krill providing a feeding ground for a multitude of birds. About this latitude the Antarctic Polar Front or Convergence would have been crossed. This is where the cold north going surface waters of the Antarctic meet and sink beneath the southward flowing temperate waters of the Atlantic. Also in this area is an upwelling of water from the circumpolar current itself created by the almost constant westerly winds. The sea thermograph falls abruptly by about five degrees showing that there is very little mixing at this level between the two adjacent water masses. The relevance of these oceanographic phenomena, the instant change to cold water and the upwelling, is to the mariner twofold. Firstly, the colder water allows ice to survive longer than in the warm, thus increasing greatly the possibility of ice being met in the open ocean; secondly, the bird life increases dramatically. The cold water, about 2 degrees centigrade supports krill which the warm water does not to the same degree. These in turn are fed by the nutrients and diatom carried to the surface by the upwelling in the circumpolar current. Around the ship immediately in entering the colder, richer water giant wandering albatross which had occasionally been sighted singly since about the latitude of Rio de Janeiro at 23 degrees South now arrived abundantly and frequently. Rarely was the ship now without these graceful creatures. They are joined at the other end of the spectrum by the tiny Wilson's storm petrels both riding the air up draughts from the plunging bow, or feeding on whatever is churned up in the wake astern.

**Admiralty Bay:** As we approached the sub-Antarctic islands of the South Shetlands a wonderful variety of further land nesting seabirds joined the ship, Terns, Skuas, Shearwaters, Shags and Gulls. Turning into our first southern harbour, Admiralty Bay on King George Island we also entered our first pack ice, blown into the twelve mile deep enclosure from the Bransfield Strait. What a glorious sight, a natural wonderland.

To be dwarfed later by panoramic extravaganza but then for my first time Antarctica in all its glory. Working multi-year pack ice some three feet out of the water with at most times considerably more beneath; seals upon it basking in the sun and penguins now joining the array of wildlife hopping onto and off the floes. The ice pristine white with snow cover or bare and deep blue, and light blue to green with algae, and dirty brown with decay or the detriment of seals and penguins. The rugged island 1800 feet high close to hand, almost encircled us, heavily glaciated, crevasses galore in the tumbling ice fields ending at the water's edge in fractured ice cliffs, interspersed by craggy rock buttresses.



Deck Officer taking bearings from the John Biscoe in Neumeyer Channel

Mountain peaks and nunataks (Ed. - hills or mountains completely surrounded by glacial ice) rising inland from snow fields. Every ray of light whether of direct sun or a shaft filtered through cloud, bursting into a spectrum of colours as the ice crystals of snow, pack ice or glaciers acted as prisms. The low sun casting long dark shadows that contrasted with the pinks, blues and greens created by the algae within the floes or ice cliffs, and the rose tints of the glacier and shelf faces when struck directly by the sun as it skimmed along the horizon at the beginning and end of our twenty-four hour day, it being mid-summer. And a realization that Antarctica was not all black and white.

On arrival we anchored within the pack ice but it was too dense for us to lower the boats and work cargo, yet too hummocked to carry it by sledge, and there was always the possibility that the wind would change and it would loosen or move out, stranding us with our loads or worse. Satisfactory though for us to take our first polar walk to get some photographs. Twenty-four hours later the pack did loosen and we put our boats down and got ashore. The shingle beach adjacent to the base hut upon which we landed the stores was littered with a variety of whale bones but mostly enormous vertebrae and long ribs. These and the occasional iron trypot



in which whale or seal blubber had been rendered down bore testament to the whaling and ruthless slaughter of seals in the early nineteenth century. Firstly, fur seals were taken for their coats and then any seal for their blubber.

Our method of cargo delivery at such bases that afforded an anchorage was to fill the scow, a thirty-two foot open wooden barge which we carried on deck, having put it over the side into the water. This was then strapped alongside the sturdy motorboat which we kept stowed within the scow on deck. Fairly straightforward in good weather with no swell and no ice but that was not usually the case. The anchorage had good holding with blue mud, one of the best, but we were harassed by pack ice moving in and out on the wind from the Bransfield Strait. Its weight would drag us around and made working the boat and the scow alongside a nightmare, or impossible if too dense. When the pack was out of the anchorage a swell would come in which made getting the craft over the side safely difficult. All hands tending retaining painters to stop them swinging. Frequently the landings were clogged with floating brash ice or bergy bits, or the same were stranded on the beach in our way left by a falling tide. The weather was changeable, gusting winds producing breaking waves which along with swell made work difficult amongst the ice on the shore line. All these circumstances we began to master and they became for us the norm. Large items such as tractors and generators were usually taken ashore by forming a platform across both motorboat and scow upon which they were placed. They were then driven off or hauled down a ramp of wooden deals which we carried at all times. Fid power was the ultimate resource, indeed the main resource for working cargo. We had never heard of health and safety.

Before leaving Admiralty Bay we shifted anchorage and tied up stern to a glacier snout where the base Fids had created a dam on the rocks immediately at its foot. We ran out a hose and pumped aboard good fresh water. The glacial scouring provided a danger free approach and the moraine good holding for the anchor but the latter in line with the sides of the glacier continued out into the sea as shoal water and had to be avoided. With our complement we were always short of water and tapping these glacial runoffs was a favoured and frequent method of filling up our tanks at a variety of sites.

**The Banana Belt;** We progressed south to the U.K. stations of Deception Island, Port Lockroy, Arthur Harbour and Argentine Islands, searched for a new site on the Antarctic Peninsula, and called at several unexplored locations both on the mainland peninsula and the offshore islands to land surveyors and scientists to form independent field parties. The scenery became grander and more beautiful. After all Admiralty Bay was only officially sub-Antarctic. The mainland mountains now rose to 12,000 feet. The glaciers descending from them forming at greater altitude and further inland were very much longer, wider and with higher fissured and fractured cliff faces where they terminated and entered the sea, frequently calving (Ed. - ice chunks breaking from the edge of a glacier). The coastline was mainly of ice cliffs interspersed by higher solid rock buttresses. Yet later after voyaging further south this region of the northern Peninsula with its more moderate temperatures became known to us as the Banana Belt!

The sea ice we continually met varied from one year old to multi-year ice. The younger, more recently formed, would have broken out from an adjacent bay or fjord, of which there were many on this coast, where it had established and remained over the previous winter. Not very thick, perhaps a foot, very even and often in very large pieces, anything up to half a mile across. The older ice had formed in more open water, become fragmented by swell and subject to collision in heavy weather and sometimes rafting under pressure till it became static once again in a further winter's freeze, then broken apart once more in the following spring. This cycle may happen many times producing multi-year ice with floes up to forty feet thick, having varying degrees of hardness within. A further feature of this ice being that it may have embedded in it glacial fragments, vicious rock like cores. The ice of this latter type in our vicinity would undoubtedly have been formed in and then borne out of the Weddell Sea by the circulatory current there to flow past the tip of the Peninsula, then driven by the wind into the Bransfield Strait and beyond. Entering this ice for the first time the rules of engagement were drilled into us, and as years later I likewise drilled them into my young officers. Reduce speed. Do not get amongst ice until there is no alternative. Go round every small piece, large piece, vast floe or ice field until you can no longer steer a sensible course to your destination. This was not only good safe practice but training and confidence building for we rookies in the handling of the ship. Do not collide with it unless there is no option then adjust your speed and hit it with the



stem. Avoid a glancing blow on the shoulder or entrance where the arrow form of the bow ends and the full body of the hull begins it being the most vulnerable of areas. If in doubt about one's ability to avoid a piece alter course to hit it head on, doing whatever one can with the engines to reduce impact, but remembering that water over the rudder from the propeller is what steers the ship best and having possibly thundered astern to reduce speed and impact it often pays to go ahead again momentarily to get that flow of water across the rudder before colliding for the final fine control. We soon realized that the Master kept himself in reserve for the most difficult conditions and we young deck officers were expected to handle the ship in a manner few deep sea shipmasters had the chance to, ever.

**Deception Island:** Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands, which we now headed towards contains the best known and most used harbour in the northern Peninsula and off-lying islands. With British, Argentinian and Chilean stations on its shores it is the ugly duckling amongst the scenic beauty of the other base sites, yet perhaps one of the most interesting places to be visited in the region. Volcanic, it is the second largest crater island in the world. It was discovered by Captain William Smith in January 1820 in the 250 ton brig Williams during his fourth voyage to the South Shetlands.

These voyages were of a commercial nature round Cape Horn between Buenos Aires and Valparaiso. He chose, however, each time to strike well south of the Horn in the ambitious hope of finding a southern continent. His courage, repeated determination and outstanding seamanship amongst ice and in virgin waters cannot be lauded sufficiently. On his first voyage there in February 1819 he made a landfall on what he named Williams Point, after his vessel, on the north coast of Livingstone Island. He then bore away to the northward. On another voyage during the southern winter of that year he saw no land being held off by pack ice, but on his third voyage in the following spring he ran from west to east and back again along the northern shores of the group, discovering all the major islands.



The John Biscoe approaching Argentine Islands Base through Meek Channel. Note two American icebreakers lying in Penola Strait.

As he departed north and west on this voyage he sighted the magnificent island that now bears his name. Only fifteen miles in length by four and lying some twenty miles to the westward from the other islands of the group it rises to a tricorn of peaks the highest of which is 6900 feet. It has precipitous bare rock faces which contrast dramatically with its steep snow slopes and is difficult to land on. It was, however, the twenty two year old American sealer, Captain Nathaniel Palmer, who in November 1820 in the sloop Hero who is thought to have first entered and seen the potential of the harbour at Deception Island. The horseshoe shaped narrow crater rim averaging 1500 feet in height encloses the circular bay four miles in diameter having a central depth of eighty-eight fathoms. The only entrance to the bay named Port Foster after the Commander of H.M.S. Chanticleer who explored it in 1829, and the adjoining very much smaller and shallower Whalers Bay, a secondary crater on which our base was located is through Neptunes Bellows.

A cable wide entrance named by the early sealers because of the gusting winds so often experienced there. It is as dramatic as its name. Three-hundred foot high sheer cliffs to starboard as one enters with strata of



varying volcanic hues of sulphureous yellows, oranges and brick reds. Separated from these cliffs by only a few feet is the remarkable dark basalt Pete's Pillar, an Old Man of Hoy type rock stack of 150 feet. The apparently usable water of this entrance is halved, for to port lies a hidden central danger with only six feet over it, Raven Rock, and beyond it more foul ground.

Later in my career, my own rather unorthodox route of entry was to steer for Pete's Pillar until 400 feet from it. Then alter on to a course which bore towards a distinguishable rock point inside the harbour which kept me a constant 500 feet off the cliffs in the best water, and in turn safely past Raven Rock. Initially steering directly for the towering shore, before altering course, was itself slightly dramatic and unconventional but I felt this way I had more control in gusting winds and in better water, than on a long single course approach in un-nervingly shallow water, attempting ultimately to achieve, and maintain, that small distance off the cliffs correctly, especially as the leading mark was often obscured by mist or a lump of ice. It also gave me a better view, as I approached, of the inner entrance and harbour. The reason for wanting this was that by the time I had command, beyond Raven Rock and the foul ground on the more gently rising shoreline opposite the high cliffs was the wreck of a Salveson whaler, the Southern Hunter. She, having entered the harbour in poor weather to see if any compatriots were holed up there, found none, took a round turn in Whalers Bay and proceeded out to sea again. Vessels entering and leaving are obscured from each other on the dog leg course needed to enter and exit Whalers Bay until the last moment by the cliffs. She had met an inward Argentinian supply ship in centre channel, altered course to starboard to avoid her and hit Raven Rock. Since that occurrence most ships blow their sirens when entering or leaving. I also took the precaution of making my rather unconventional and exciting approach for a better and earlier view of the inner harbour.

On the edge of Whalers Bay the base hut stood amongst the derelict whaling station, from which it had been built from some of the remains. The shoreline was fascinating in that there were many hot springs and at low water much steam would rise from it. Inland upon the ash and snow slopes there were fissures in the outcrops of rock gushing more steam, and smoking fumaroles. The snow slopes, to a great degree, sullied by blown ash, were occasionally relieved by red volcanic outcrops, but the general appearance of the island, being mostly ash in summer, or snow slopes bespoiled by ash, was of a dull depressing nature.



Tien Peaks (2,300 ft.) of Cape Renard at entrance of Lemaire Channel  
(copyright George Larmour 1958)

The prolific and varied birdlife nesting among the rocks and cliff faces were a welcome counterbalance to the austere landscape. They appeared to relish a bathe in the warm springs and the Pintado Petrel in particular loved to gorge themselves on the parboiled krill along the tideline. In 1921 there were reports from catchers in Whalers Bay of the seabed subsiding and paint being seared off their hulls during volcanic activity. Years later we were to have our own volcanic dramas but on this first visit nothing worse than the ship frequently dragging in high winds and Adam and me falling down a crevasse occurred.

When the main discharge of cargo was completed the ship would invariably remain at a base for a while to provide support for the shore activities, and did so on this occasion. The ship's engineers would assist with the base generators, the wireless officer with the radios, the Fids aboard and crew would help generally in sorting and stowing stores and all of us when required, which was often, with building works. The presence of the ship providing food, hot showers, although the lack of water was always of concern, and the



occasional evening film show and the conviviality of some fresh faces with whom to share a beer was an important part of our base visits. We three deck officers only stood anchor watches in the severest of weather. The quartermasters and able seamen manned the bridge whilst at anchor both keeping an eye on the ship's position by bearings and from distance rings set against the shoreline on the radar. Watching out for the welfare of the boats and keeping in radio contact with them as they plied between ship and shore was a further duty for them. Tom Flack, the Chief Officer preferred to 'keep' ship which meant that Adam and myself, when off duty, had time to follow our own pursuits. Adam's developing passion was surveying whilst mine was to climb every piece of rising ground and see wildlife. We combined each other's efforts, surveying from the launch when appropriate and enjoying a hike or climb at other times.

Our main problem whilst there was dragging the anchor, the result of a combination of poor holding on a steeply shelving seabed of ash and the frequent and sudden onset of offshore gales, one lasting for three days. During such a period of much yawing prior to dragging despite having two anchors down we nearly lost both the motorboat and a scow full of cargo. Having to clear the ship's side in a hurry with the scow lashed alongside the motorboat, the scow began to be swamped. It was often the practice when extra labour was needed ashore to unload, to transport Fids from the ship sitting atop the cargo in the scow. They were squatted there on this occasion and scrambled across into the already packed motorboat as we cut the lashings of the sinking scow which was beginning to drag the motorboat gunwale under water. The scow as it freed and no longer weighed down by some thirty souls lurched, shed some of its cargo, became swamped and although then waterlogged we were then able to tow it to the beach, whilst the Fids were put ashore dry.

Another day ashore we experienced a self-inflicted problem, on this occasion only Adam and myself being involved. Having climbed the highest point on the island, the 1900 feet Mount Pond, on a quiet day, we had great difficulty in descending through the numerous crevasses. In our inexperience we had failed to take into account the warming effect of the sun, by afternoon on a fine day, on the snow bridges over them, which we had crossed safely during our morning ascent, and fell into one. Nevertheless despite our scare we managed with difficulty to get out and completed a rewarding climb. However, it was a timely early warning of a general principal not to venture out of ones sphere of competence without support and assistance from those who had the requisite specialized knowledge and experience in this dangerous environment. On the water we had our knives and known what to do in the case of the sinking scow, in the crevasse we were ill equipped and struggled. I never climbed again unless in the company of an experienced Fid and likewise made sure that Fids were always nursed in bad conditions when afloat.

## 9 The Laconia Incident (WW2) – Editor

*Inclusion of this article adapted from [Wikipedia](#) was inspired by a recent TV repeat of a documentary from 2011. This surprising story tells how the commander of U-Boat U-156, Korvettenkapitän Hartenstein, purposely gave away his position and stayed on the surface for two days to aid the rescue of Laconia's survivors. If reading this journal in electronic form you can of course jump to other related information using the hyperlinks, including the documentary itself on [YouTube](#)>>[Part 1](#); [Part 2](#).*

**Summary:** **Date** - 12–24 September 1942; **Location** - off the coast of [West Africa](#); **Type** - torpedo attack and subsequent rescue attempts, friendly fire by American forces; **Participants** - Royal Navy, Kriegsmarine, US Army Air Forces, Vichy France; **Outcome** - Laconia Order; **Casualties** - 1,619 dead, 1,113 rescued

The British [RMS Laconia](#) was built in 1921 as a civilian ocean liner. During the [Second World War](#) she was requisitioned for the war effort, and by 1942 had been converted into a [troopship](#). At the time of the incident she was transporting mostly Italian [prisoners of war](#) from [Cape Town](#) to [Freetown](#), under the command of Captain Rudolph Sharp. The ship was carrying 463 officers and crew, 87 civilians, 286 British soldiers, 1,793 Italian prisoners and 103 Polish soldiers acting as evacuation guards of the prisoners.



The RMS Laconia 1921



U-156 and U-506 with shipwrecked Laconia crew

Sharp had previously commanded [RMS Lancastria](#), which had been sunk by German bombs on 17 June 1940 off the French port of [St. Nazaire](#) while taking part in [Operation Ariel](#), the evacuation of British nationals and troops from France, two weeks after the [Dunkirk evacuation](#).

**German attack:** At 22:00 on 12 September 1942, U-156 was patrolling off the coast of West Africa midway between [Liberia](#) and [Ascension Island](#). The submarine's commanding officer, Korvettenkapitän Hartenstein (right), spotted the large British ship sailing alone and attacked it. Ships armed with guns (which most merchantmen and troop transports were) fell outside the 'do not attack without warning' convention at that time, therefore the Laconia was regarded as a legitimate target.

At 22:22 the Laconia transmitted the following message on the 600-metre band:

SSS SSS 0434 South / 1125 West Laconia torpedoed. "SSS" was the code signifying "under attack by submarine". Despite further messages being sent, there is no record any were received by any station or vessel.



Although there were sufficient lifeboats for the entire ship's complement, including the POWs, heavy listing prevented half from being launched until the vessel had settled. The Italian POWs were left locked in the cargo holds as the ship sank, but most escaped by breaking down hatches or climbing up the ventilation shafts. Several were shot when a group of POWs rushed a lifeboat station, and a large number were bayoneted to death in attempts to prevent them boarding the few lifeboats available. Although the Polish guards were armed with rifles with fixed bayonets, they were not loaded and the guards carried no ammunition. Witnesses indicate that few of the POWs were shot (presumably by British troops), instead most of the casualties were bayoneted. By the time the last lifeboats were launched most survivors had already entered the water, so some lifeboats had few passengers. Only one life raft left the ship with POWs on board; the rest jumped into the ocean. Survivors later recounted how Italians in the water were either shot or had their hands severed by axes if they tried to climb into a lifeboat. The blood soon attracted sharks. 'Sharks darted among us. Grabbing an arm, biting a leg. Other larger beasts swallowed entire bodies.' — Corporal Dino Monte POW<sup>a</sup>

As Laconia began to sink, U-156 surfaced in order to capture the ship's surviving senior officers. To their surprise, the Germans saw over two thousand people struggling in the water.

**Rescue operations:** Realising that the passengers were primarily POWs and civilians, Hartenstein immediately began rescue operations whilst flying the [Red Cross flag](#). Laconia sank at 23:23, over an hour after the attack. At 01:25, 13 September, Hartenstein sent a coded radio message to [Befehlshaber der U-Boote](#) (Commander-in-Chief for Submarines) alerting them to the situation. It read: 'Sunk by Hartenstein British "Laconia". Grid FF 7721 310 degrees. Unfortunately with 1,500 Italian prisoners of war. So far 90 fished. 157 cubic metres [of oil]. 19 eels [torpedoes], trade wind 3, request orders.'

The head of submarine operations, Admiral Dönitz, immediately ordered seven U-boats from the [Eisbär group](#), which had been gathering to take part in a planned surprise attack on Cape Town to divert to the



scene to pick up survivors. Dönitz then informed Berlin of the situation and actions he had taken. Hitler was furious and ordered that the rescue be abandoned. [Admiral Raeder](#) ordered Dönitz to disengage the Eisbär boats, which included Hartenstein's U-156, and send them to Cape Town as per the original plan. Raeder then ordered [U-506](#), commanded by Kapitänleutnant [Erich Würdemann](#), [U-507](#), under Korvettenkapitän [Harro Schacht](#), and the Italian submarine [Comandante Cappellini](#) to intercept Hartenstein to take on his survivors and then to proceed to the Laconia site and rescue any Italians they could find.

Raeder also requested the Vichy French to send warships from [Dakar](#) and/or [Côte d'Ivoire](#) to collect the Italian survivors from the three submarines. The Vichy French, in response, sent the 7,500-long-ton (7,600 t) cruiser [Gloire](#) from Dakar, and two sloops, the fast 650-long-ton (660 t) Annamite and the slower 2,000-long-ton (2,000 t) [Dumont-d'Urville](#), from [Conakry](#), [French Guinea](#), and [Cotonou](#), [Dahomey](#), respectively. Dönitz disengaged the Eisbär boats and informed Hartenstein of Raeder's orders, but he substituted Kapitänleutnant [Helmut Witte's](#) [U-159](#) for U-156 in the Eisbär group and sent the order: "All boats, including Hartenstein, only take as many men into the boat as will allow it to be fully ready for action when submerged."

U-156 was soon crammed above and below decks with nearly 200 survivors, including five women, and had another 200 in tow aboard four lifeboats. At 06:00 on 13 September, Hartenstein broadcast a message on the 25-metre band in English (and [not in code](#)) to all shipping in the area, giving his position, requesting assistance with the rescue effort, and promising not to attack. It read:

If any ship will assist the ship-wrecked Laconia crew, I will not attack providing I am not being attacked by ship or air forces. I picked up 193 men. 4 53 South, 11 26 West. — German submarine.



Over a thousand were adrift in the Laconia's lifeboats.

The British in [Freetown](#) intercepted this message but, believing it might be a [ruse of war](#), refused to credit it.

Two days later, on 15 September, a message was passed to the Americans that Laconia had been torpedoed and the British merchant ship [Empire Haven](#) was en route to pick up survivors. The "poorly worded message" implied that Laconia had only been sunk that day and made no mention that the Germans were involved in a rescue attempt under a cease-fire or that neutral French ships were also en route. U-156 remained on the surface at the scene for the next two and a half days. At 11:30 on 15 September, she was joined by U-506, and a few hours later by both U-507 and the Italian submarine [Cappellini](#). The four submarines, with lifeboats in tow and hundreds of survivors standing on their decks, headed for the African coastline and a rendezvous with the Vichy French surface warships that had set out from Senegal and Dahomey.

**American bombing:** During the night the submarines became separated. On 16 September at 11:25am, U-156 was spotted by an American [B-24 Liberator](#) bomber flying from a secret airbase on [Ascension Island](#). The submarine was travelling with a Red Cross flag draped across her gun deck.



Consolidated B-24D Liberator

Hartenstein signalled to the pilot in both [Morse code](#) and English requesting assistance. A British officer also messaged the aircraft: RAF officer speaking from German submarine, Laconia survivors on board, soldiers, civilians, women, children.



Lieutenant James D. Harden of the [United States Army Air Forces](#) did not respond to the messages and turned away and notified his base of the situation. The senior officer on duty that day, Captain [Robert C. Richardson III](#), who claimed that he did not know that this was a Red Cross-sanctioned German rescue operation, ordered the B-24 to sink the sub. He later claimed that: 'He believed that the rules of war, at the time, did not permit a combat ship to fly Red Cross flags. He feared that the German submarine would attack the two Allied freighters diverted by the British to the site. He assumed that the German submarine was rescuing only the Italian POWs.' In his tactical assessment, he believed that the submarine might discover and shell the secret Ascension airfield and fuel tanks, thus cutting off a critical Allied resupply air route to British forces in Egypt and Soviet forces in Russia.

Harden flew back to the scene of the rescue effort and at 12:32 attacked with bombs and depth charges. One landed among the lifeboats in tow behind U-156, killing dozens of survivors, while others straddled the submarine itself causing minor damage. Hartenstein cast adrift those lifeboats still afloat and ordered the survivors on his deck into the water. The submarine submerged slowly to give those still on the deck a chance to get into the water and escape. According to Harden's report, he made four runs at the submarine. On the first three the depth charges and bombs failed to release, on the fourth he dropped two bombs: 'The sub rolled over and was last seen bottom up. Crew had abandoned ship and taken to surrounding lifeboats. — Lieutenant James D. Harden. The crew of the *Liberator* were later awarded medals for the alleged sinking of U-156 when they had in fact only sunk two lifeboats.

Ignoring Commander Hartenstein's request that they stay in the area to be rescued by the Vichy French, two lifeboats decided to head for Africa. One, which began the journey with 68 people on board, reached the African coast 27 days later with only 16 survivors. The other was rescued by a British trawler after 40 days at sea. Only four of its 52 occupants were still alive. The order given by Richardson has been called a [prima facie war crime](#). Under the conventions of war at sea ships, including submarines, engaged in rescue operations are held immune from attack.

**Post-bombing rescue operations:** Unaware of the attack, U-507, U-506 and the Italian submarine Cappellini continued to pick up survivors. The following morning Commander Revedin of Cappellini found that he was rescuing survivors who had been set adrift by U-156. At 11:30am Revedin received the following message: Bordeaux to Cappellini: Reporting attack already undergone by other submarines. Be ready to submerge for action against the enemy. Put shipwrecked on rafts except women, children, and Italians, and make for minor grid-square 56 of grid-square 0971 where you will land remainder shipwrecked on to French ships. Keep British prisoners. Keep strictest watch enemy planes and submarines. End of message.

U-507 and U-506 received confirmation from headquarters of the attack on U-156 and were asked for the number of survivors rescued. Commander Schacht of U-507 replied that he had 491, of which fifteen were women and sixteen were children. Commander Wurdemann of U-506 confirmed 151, including nine women and children. The next message from headquarters ordered them to cast adrift all the British and Polish survivors, mark their positions and instruct them to remain exactly where they were and proceed with all haste to the rescue rendezvous. The respective commanders chose not to cast any survivors adrift.

Five [B-25s](#) from Ascension's permanent squadron and Hardin's B-24 continued to search for submarines from dawn till dusk. On 17 September, one B-25 sighted *Laconia's* lifeboats and informed *Empire Haven* of their position. Hardin's B-24 sighted U-506, which had 151 survivors on board including nine women and children, and attacked. On the first run the bombs failed to drop, U-506 [crash dived](#) and on the second run the B-24 dropped two 500 lb (227 kg) bombs and two 350 lb (159 kg) depth charges but they caused no damage. On 17 September, the British at Freetown sent an ambiguous message to Ascension informing them that three French ships from Dakar were en route. Captain Richardson assumed the French intended to invade Ascension so the submarine hunting was cancelled in order to prepare for an invasion.



The French cruiser [Gloire](#) (right) picked up 52 survivors, all British, while still 60 miles (97 km) from the rendezvous point. Gloire then met with the sloop Annamite with both meeting U-507 and U-506 at the rendezvous point at a little after 2:00pm on 17 September. With the exception of two British officers kept aboard U-507, the survivors were all transferred to the rescue ships. Gloire sailed off on her own and within four hours rescued another 11 lifeboats.



At 10:00pm Gloire found another lifeboat and proceeded to a planned rendezvous with Annamite. At 1:00am a lookout spotted a light on the horizon, which was investigated despite this meaning Gloire would not be able to make the rendezvous, and a further 84 survivors were rescued. A new rendezvous was arranged, the ships meeting at 9:30am with Annamite transferring her survivors to Gloire. A count was then taken: 373 Italians, 70 Poles and 597 British who included 48 women and children. Gloire arrived at [Dakar](#) on 21 September to resupply before sailing for [Casablanca](#), arriving there on 25 September. On arrival, Colonel Baldwin, on behalf of all the British survivors, presented the captain of the Cappellini with a letter that read as follows: 'We the undersigned officers of His Majesty's Navy, Army and Air Force and of the Merchant Navy, and also on behalf of the Polish detachment, the prisoners of war, the women and children, wish to express to you our deepest and sincerest gratitude for all you have done, at the cost of very great difficulties for your ship and her crew, in welcoming us, the survivors of His Majesty's transport-ship, the Laconia.'

The submarine Cappellini had been unable to find the French warships so radioed for instructions and awaited a response. The French sloop Dumont-d'Urville was sent to rendezvous with Cappellini and by chance rescued a lifeboat from the British cargo ship Trevelley, which had been torpedoed on 12 September. After searching for other Trevelley survivors without luck, Dumont-d'Urville met Cappellini on 20 September. With the exception of six Italians and two British officers, the remaining survivors were transferred to Dumont-d'Urville. Dumont-d'Urville later transferred the Italians to Annamite, which landed them at Dakar on 24 September. Of Laconia's original complement of 2,732, only 1,113 survived. Of the 1,619 who died, 1,420 were Italian POWs.

**Survivors:** From Casablanca, most of the survivors were taken to [Mediouna](#) to await transport to a prison camp in Germany. On 8 November, the [Allied invasion of North Africa](#) began liberating the survivors, who were taken aboard the ship Anton which landed them in the United States.

One of the survivors, Gladys Foster, wrote a detailed description of the sinking, the rescue and then subsequent two-month internment in Africa. Gladys was the wife of Chaplain to the Forces the Rev. Denis Beauchamp Lisle Foster, who was stationed in Malta. She was on board the ship with her 14-year-old daughter, Elizabeth Barbara Foster, travelling back to Britain. During the mayhem of the sinking the two were separated and it was not until days later that Gladys discovered her daughter had survived and was on another raft. She was urged to write her recollection not long after landing back in London. Elizabeth married Major Peter Charles Crichton Gobourn in 1953. She died in [Cheltenham](#) in January 2010 at 82 and was survived by her three children and seven grandchildren.

Doris Hawkins (missionary nurse, SRN, SCM) survived the Laconia incident and spent 27 days adrift in Lifeboat no. 9, finally coming ashore on the coast of Liberia. She was returning to England after five years in [Palestine](#) with 14-month-old Sally Kay Readman, who was lost to the sea as they were transferred into the lifeboat. Doris Hawkins wrote a pamphlet entitled "Atlantic Torpedo" after her eventual return to England, published by Victor Gollancz in 1943. In it she writes of the moments when Sally was lost: "We found ourselves on top of the arms and legs of a panic-stricken mass of humanity. The lifeboat, filled to capacity with men, women and children, was leaking badly and rapidly filling with water; at the same time it was crashing against the ship's side. Just as Sally was passed over to me, the boat filled completely and capsized, flinging us all into the water. I lost her. I did not hear her cry even then, and I am sure that God took her



immediately to Himself without suffering. I never saw her again." Doris Hawkins was one of 16 survivors (out of 69 in the lifeboat when it was cast adrift from the U-boat). She spent the remaining war years personally visiting the families of people who perished in the lifeboat, returning mementos entrusted to her by them in their dying moments. In Doris's words, "It is impossible to imagine why I should have been chosen to survive when so many did not. I have been reluctant to write the story of our experiences, but in answer to many requests I have done so; and if it strengthens someone's faith, if it is an inspiration to any, if it brings home to others, hitherto untouched, all that 'those who go down to the sea in ships' face for our sakes, hour by hour, day by day, year in and year out – it will not have been written in vain".

Survivor Jim McLoughlin states in *One Common Enemy* that after the incident Hartenstein asked him if he was in the [Royal Navy](#), which he was, and then asked why a passenger ship was armed, stating, "If it wasn't armed, I would not have attacked." McLoughlin believes this indicates Hartenstein had thought it was a troop transport rather than a passenger ship; by signalling to the Royal Navy, *Laconia* was acting as a de facto [naval auxiliary](#).

**Consequences:** Main article: [Laconia order](#). The *Laconia* incident had far-reaching consequences. Until that point it was common for U-boats to assist torpedoed survivors with food, water, simple medical care for the wounded, and a [compass bearing](#) to the nearest landmass. It was extremely rare for survivors to be brought on board as space on a U-boat was barely enough for its own crew. On 17 September 1942, in response to the incident, Admiral Dönitz issued an order named Triton Null, which later became known as the *Laconia* Order. In it Dönitz prohibited U-boat crews from attempting rescues; survivors were to be left in the sea. Even afterwards, U-boats still occasionally provided aid for survivors.

At the [Nuremberg Trials](#) held by the Allies in 1946, Dönitz was indicted for war crimes. The issuance of the "Laconia order" was the centrepiece of the prosecution case, a decision that backfired badly. Its introduction allowed the defence to recount at length the numerous instances in which German submariners acted with humanity where in similar situations the Allies behaved callously. Dönitz pointed out that the order itself was a direct result of this callousness and the attack on a rescue operation by US aircraft. The Americans had also practised unrestricted submarine warfare, under their own equivalent to the "Laconia order", which had been in force since they entered the war. [Fleet Admiral Nimitz](#), the wartime commander-in-chief of the [U.S. Pacific Fleet](#), provided unapologetic written testimony on Dönitz's behalf at his trial that the [U.S. Navy](#) had waged unrestricted submarine warfare in the Pacific from the very first day the U.S. entered the war.

## 10 [North America Branch Articles](#)

### 10.1 [Marine Accident Investigation \(MAI\) in Canada - Captain Brian Thorne \(ThorneB49\)](#)

Having its genesis in the British Merchant Shipping Act of many years ago, the Canada Shipping Act (CSA) was amended over the years to meet Canada's unique marine transport needs and advance marine safety. Included in the CSA was a section enabling investigations into marine casualties to determine the cause(s) and form the development of safety regulations. The definition of marine casualty included Accident Aboard Ship (e.g. death or injury of a crew member) and Potentially Dangerous Shipping situations (e.g. near collision). Originally Steamship Inspectors were appointed to carry out these inquiries.

In the 1970s a Division in the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) was formed, the Marine Accident Investigation Division, to carry out this responsibility. The CCG at that time reported to the Minister of Transport; it consisted of many other Branches, including Fleet Systems, Vessel Traffic Services, Coastal Radio Stations, Steamship Inspection etc. When such a casualty warranted, the Minister appointed a marine officer, with the necessary powers, to carry out an inquiry. The Minister's powers in this regard were delegated to an Officer by Ministerial Appointment. Practically it was the Chief of the Division who decided an inquiry was warranted.

The duly appointed single marine officer investigated a shipping casualty and produced a report for the Minister – it was legally called a Preliminary Inquiry (P.I.) because its main purpose was to provide the Minister with the facts to enable him/her to decide if a Public Inquiry was warranted. Of the many P.I.s ordered every year (typically averaging 270) only about one a year warranted a Public Inquiry. Most Public Inquiries were driven by a high level of public concern over the seriousness of the occurrence. The Public



Inquiries satisfied public need but were not considered by Officials and the Department as being entirely satisfactory because, a) Canada had few Admiralty Court Judges b) Often counsel had political connections c) Judges tended to rely on their criminal experience requiring the evidence to meet criminal standards.

The P.I. report was considered privileged information for the Minister and never released in spite of legal attempts to have them made public. By law it was the Inquiry Officer's report to the Minister. Occasionally when demand became such, a Summary Report of definitive facts was released, involving vetting by the Legal Department. Then in 1983 came the 1st Access to Information Act which made all Government of Canada documents (with some exceptions) available to the public – subject to the removal of personal information. It was ruled that Preliminary Inquiry reports were public documents. A complete change but the basic law remained the same in that a single inquiry officer reported to the Minister.

PI reports were mostly produced by officers in the field in geographically dispersed regional offices, with more serious investigations carried out by Headquarter staff from Ottawa. Clearly the calibre of individual officers varied. The single inquiry officer could also interview professional experts in whatever field the inquiry took, to complete the expertise. Normally, the more serious investigations were carried out by Ottawa (H.Q.) staff. As Chief of the Investigation Division, with my Technical Support Group, we often had concerns about these reports, missing information, unsupported conclusions etc. The Technical Support Group, all investigators themselves, then had the task of “cross examining” the Officer's initial report. We would then “lean” on the Preliminary Inquiry Officer to amend his report to meet HQs' objections. Clearly this was not intended in Law. A few times I had to state my intention to the Officer that I would add my own critique to his report for public release, not enshrined in law, but not prohibited. In every case the Officer agreed to the modifications. We never had a single case of public disagreement within the Division. In releasing hundreds of reports every year I can recall only ever receiving one complaint, this one concluded that a Native West Coast Fishing vessel Master had made errors causing the loss of his vessel and crew. Understandably the Native Band was upset but never disputed the actual technical conclusions.

In about 1983 the Acting Commissioner of Coast Guard sent an emissary to me requesting that he view the Preliminary Report before making it public. Fearing oversight by Coast Guard in its many roles, I declined the request, pointing out that it was the Appointed Officer's report to the Minister. This situation concerned me but was resolved when a new Commissioner was appointed. This Commissioner and I worked very well together but again he did not view the reports before release. The Government had an Office of Transportation Safety – a type of ombudsman. In 1985 as an interim measure the Branch was taken out of Coast Guard and reported to this latter office. Clearly this was still an unsatisfactory state of affairs both legally and practically. The situation was well known by the Canadian Government and Officials. At the same time they recognised the U.S. and international public acceptance, and satisfaction-with, the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). The necessary Canadian legislation was drafted and in 1990 the Canadian Transportation Safety Board (TSB – an independent body) became law. Our whole division of 52 person years was transferred to the TSB, joining the Air Investigation Group together with the 3rd mode – the Rail/Pipeline Investigation Group. From the marine point of view it seemed to go smoothly, now using a “team investigative approach”. The reports were reviewed by the Board before release and never contained statements that imply regulatory failings. i.e. just state the facts. The term “Marine Casualty” often used before became “Marine Accident”.

**Data.** An essential part of accident investigation was the production of statistics, identification of individual elements involved in and causing the accident. These forming the basis of the introduction of new domestic and international regulations. We had an excellent Data Section comprising a Data Officer and three assistants. Initially using punched cards to collect the data we moved through several stages of advanced computerization. We were proud that our systems were copied by several countries around the world.

On moving to the TSB, even prior, the Director General of TSB, an airman, had many meetings with me on the transfer. From day one he expressed surprise that the International Marine Community did not have an International Association of Marine Accident Investigators, similar to the International Organisation in Air (ISASI) International Society of Air Safety Investigators. He suggested that I spearheaded a program to form



such an Association and that he would seek approval from the Chairman and Board Members of the TSB. The Board gave its overwhelming support for such an initiative which then became a priority for me.

Having attended the Marine Casualty Group in London at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) meetings I knew most of the International Main Players. It was simply a question of writing to them to request their country's view on such an Association and whether their country would support such a proposal.

On June 1, 1992, the first meeting was held for what became the Marine Accident Investigators International Forum (MAIIF), in the TSB Headquarters in Gatineau, (Ottawa) attended by 19 participants from 19 countries and one observer (on behalf of his country). I was asked to moderate this first meeting.

It was agreed that such an Association should be formed subject to approval by each Marine Administration; the meeting was minuted in what was to become MAIIF 1. Such minutes being available.

## 10.2 MAI International Forum - Captain Brian Thorne (ThorneB49)

*By Doug Rabe (Rtd. USCG) /Brian Thorne (Rtd. TSB) Jan. 1, 2018*

MAIIF was an organisation waiting to be formed. It just so happened that Canada was the first to pick up the baton. The underlying philosophy of MAIIF was for the Maritime Countries of the world to encourage the investigation of Marine Accidents/Casualties to be primarily for the purpose of Advancing Safety, rather than Punitive as they had historically been in many countries.

On its 25th Anniversary, Doug Rabe (Retired USCG) as an Honorary MAIIF Member, offered to historically record the detailed history of the organisation, otherwise it was felt that, with time, its origins, purposes and achievements could be lost. He kindly provided the following information:

W. Douglas Rabe, Chief, Marine Investigations Division, USCG Headquarters, Washington, D.C. 1988-2009, naval architect, marine engineer, marine accident investigator 1970-2009; Deputy Chairman, MAIIF, 2000-2004; Chairman, MAIIF, 2005-2009; Represented USA at every MAIIF meeting from 1993-2009

Currently, the MAIIF membership numbers some 70 individual representatives from over 40 Administrations. The objectives of MAIIF are: a) To foster, develop and sustain a cooperative relationship among national marine investigators for the purpose of improving and sharing of knowledge in an international forum. B) To improve maritime safety and the prevention of pollution through the dissemination of information gained in the investigative process. C) To encourage through cooperation the development, recognition, implementation and improvement of related international instruments, where appropriate.

The current subgroups which meet and work independently are: MAIFA – Marine Accident Investigators Forum in Asia; EMAIIF – European Marine Accident Investigators International Forum; AMAIF – American Marine Accident Investigators Forum. Under Doug Rabe's Chairmanship, MAIIF became a member of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Strictly speaking, not a country but an "intergovernmental organisation" (IGO) of which there are many (64) at IMO. MAIIF typically attends all IMO meetings dealing with marine accident investigation.

MAIIF members are guided by the principles of IMO Resolution MSC.255(84): The Code of the International Standards and Recommended Practices for a Safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident (Casualty Investigation Code) and IMO Resolution LEG.3(91): Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident. The MAIIF 26 (2017) meeting was held on Nov. 10 in Rotorua, NZ.. It is planned that MAIIF 27 (2018) will be held in Singapore. The MAIIF website can be found at [www.maiif.org](http://www.maiif.org)

## 11 Maritime Industry Focus

### 11.1 Alarming Incidents (06/07/18 Lloyds List) - Michael Grey

The need for resilience is emphasised in every walk of life these days, from the criticism of the snowflake generation's inability to cope with the vicissitudes of modern life, to technology which falls apart at the first



hard knock. In a maritime context, the limited ability of ports, terminals and logistic systems to cope with technological breakdown, either inadvertent or caused maliciously, has been given ample illustration of late.

It is a function of our reliance on technology, which, when it is working is marvelous, but when it fails, leaves all behaving like headless chickens as we rush around trying to remember how things were done before the wonderful systems made life so much easier. But all these failures teach us that we should not be too reliant on the technology, when there are determined people attempting, for whatever reason, to disrupt our world. A plan B needs to be available and rehearsed regularly. Resilience really matters.

Whether it is malicious interference by hackers, or a simple system breakdown, we are being reminded almost daily of our vulnerabilities. Our dependence, for instance, on the Global Positioning System has been regularly illustrated by instances of interference with the weak signals from space on which so much depends. Navies spend a king's ransom defending their position and timing systems from every kind of interference as it is assumed that any enemy's first attack will be on their electronics. Commercial shipping cannot afford such gold-plated defenses. GPS interference around the Korean Peninsula, the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean have been recently experienced and mariners have been warned to be on their guard around these regions. There is a tendency to assume that because position-finding is an important function of GPS, it will be navigation equipment that will be affected.

In fact, as experiments on board well-equipped ships have proved, an astonishing array of ship's equipment can be affected if the GPS goes down. In the latest Nautical Institute Seaways magazine, the regular Captain's Column recounts a series of GPS incidents that have taken place with ships near Port Said, when preparing to anchor prior to making the canal transit. Several Maersk vessel masters reported these phenomena, and the article notes that an astonishing array of equipment suddenly became inoperative at this crucial moment. The reasons for the interruption were not stated, but the consequences, on board ships where the personnel were less well-trained, could have been terrible.

**Constant distraction:** On one of the ships, the master listed the items of bridge equipment that stopped giving accurate information or stopped working because of the interruption to the GPS signal.

This included all the electronic navigation systems (paper charts were fortunately available for old-fashioned navigation), both radars, the AIS transceiver, the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System transceiver, both VHF radios and the Vessel Data Recorder. And at a time when the bridge team needed desperately to concentrate, there was a constant distraction of alarms of every kind sounding their high-pitched appeals for attention. It must have been a worrying experience, suddenly not knowing your position, unable to communicate and within the confines of a crowded waterway and anchorage, with virtually all the ship's navigation and communication sensors giving erroneous information, against this cacophony of noise.

Such incidents appear to be becoming more frequent, not least because if the malicious and criminal are able to jam important signals, they will increasingly do so. It also seems that the recommended method of merely duplicating equipment is no cure, if both items are similarly affected by the external malaise. It may be thought that the best sort of insurance is not to entirely rely on an electronic outfit and keep a paper chart system in case of emergencies. But if the interference extends well beyond navigation in the connected systems of a modern ship, there needs to be some more tangible form of insurance against these problems.

It is also somewhat worrying that the "ship of tomorrow" coming into service today, with its onboard sensors providing information in real time to shore-side centres, will be even more vulnerable to external attack. In many respects, these concerns emphasise the importance of not relying on a single source of navigational information and the need to constantly check instruments against each other. It also points to a compelling need for navigators not to become too wedded to their electronic pilots, but to maintain old skills in pilotage and celestial navigation.

But these must be practiced, just as emergency procedures must be regularly rehearsed. And this, of course, takes both time and effort. Can GPS signals be made more robust and less liable to interference? As with all these questions, the answer seems to depend on what you are prepared to pay. But good training and drills would go a long way to help.



### 11.2 Tanker Missing in the Gulf of Guinea - [MarEx](#) 2018-08-20

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July the Georgian government reported that the product tanker Pantelena has dropped out of contact and gone missing during a voyage in the Gulf of Guinea. Seventeen of her crew members are Georgian nationals, and according to Georgia's foreign ministry, there is a strong likelihood that she has been attacked by pirates. "We cannot confirm or rule out anything. Maybe we are dealing with piracy, because the west African coast is a risk area. Of course, we are looking into this," said Vladimir Konstantinidi, a consular official with Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ministry says that shipowner Lotus Shipping, Georgia's Sea Transport Agency, the Panama flag registry, regional maritime forces and United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) are involved in the response. Maritime piracy - particularly kidnapping - is a serious concern in the Gulf of Guinea. According to EOS Risk Group, pirates kidnapped 35 crewmembers in the region in the first half of the year. In a worrying trend, the reach of Nigerian pirates has expanded to include waters off Benin and Ghana, west of the historical area of high risk off Bonny. However, 95 percent of the attacks were still concentrated near Bonny Island, within 60 nm of shore. According to Oceans Beyond Piracy, 100 seafarers were kidnapped in the waters off the Gulf of Guinea last year, despite millions of dollars in funds for additional maritime security resources. Local authorities managed to stop only one act of piracy out of 97 recorded incidents.

Despite these risks and the relatively limited record of successful prevention, the Nigerian Navy forbids the presence of embarked private maritime security contractors in Nigerian ports, effectively banning their presence in the Gulf of Guinea. Armed shipboard guards proved successful in deterring pirates off Somalia weffective monopoly on the provision of security services: Instead of embarked contractors, shipowners may hire a privately-owned and -operated escort vessel crewed by military personnel.

The European Community Shipowners' Association has called for an international diplomatic agreement to allow the carriage of guards in the region, and it has asked the EU to negotiate with the Gulf of Guinea states to lift their restrictions. In addition, ECSA has called for EU member states to replicate the successful multinational patrols off Somalia by deploying warships to the Gulf of Guinea.

### 11.3 Maritime Industry e-Article Links – Bruce Smith ([SmithB65](#)) & Ed.

*There are many maritime articles on the internet these days. Those listed below include a random selection which discuss new developments, marine engineering and navigation. (Ed.)*

#### **Future Directions in the Maritime World**

[Lean Machines](#) - Promas propeller and rudder package in its tankers - [Rolls Royce](#)

[Pitch Perfect](#) - Improving propulsion efficiency - [Rolls Royce](#)

[World's first remotely operated commercial vessel](#) - [Rolls Royce](#)

[A future for zero emissions cargo ship](#) - [Rolls Royce](#)

[Ship Intelligence, remote and autonomous solutions](#) - [Rolls Royce](#)

[Cruise Line "Arms Race" Continues](#) - [Maritime Executive](#)

[Next Generation Port Technologies](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

#### **Marine Engineering**

[A Guide to Fire Pumps on Ship](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Ship's Main Engine Lubrication System](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Bow Thrusters: Construction and Working](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Oily Water Separator: Construction and Working](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Testing the emergency generator](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

#### **Navigation**

[IALA Buoyage System \( Different Types Of Marks\)](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Effective Radar Techniques for Ship Navigators Pt 1](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Effective Radar Techniques for Ship Navigators Pt 2](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Proper Use Of ECDIS Safety Settings](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[10 Things to Consider while using auto-pilot systems on Ships](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

[Automatic Identification System \(AIS\)](#) - [Marine Insight](#)

### 12 Obituaries



### 12.1 Malcolm Geoffrey Jennings - Mrs. Mary Jennings

Malcolm Geoffrey Jennings (Geoff) was a cadet at Warsash School of Navigation in 1953, a time he always spoke of as one of great opportunity. He graduated from Warsash to work for the Shaw Savill and Albion Line, on their regular voyages between the United Kingdom, and Australia and New Zealand. Geoff came ashore in 1963 but returned to Warsash to qualify for his Master's Ticket and his Extra Master's Ticket. Geoff found work ashore with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, based initially on St. Andrew's Dock in Hull, with a 'patch' covering from Grimsby to Whitby.

Geoff enjoyed the work very much. His seagoing experience was invaluable and allowed him to keep in contact with those who 'have business in deep waters'. He was promoted to District and then subsequently Chief Inspector of Fisheries, based in London, necessitating a move 'south' to London in 1974. Geoff retired from the Civil Service in 1996 and was then able to develop his great interest in water-colour painting, almost always of maritime subjects, including his old Shaw Savill ships. He is dearly missed, and lovingly remembered, by his wife Mary, and his two sons David and Matthew, and also by his grandchildren William and Eleanor. He was truly, a Bridge Over Troubled Waters.

### 12.2 Captain Peter Lyon – (Editor)

Captain Peter Lyon was a Master Mariner and a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigation and of the Nautical Institute. After his year as a cadet at the School of Navigation Warsash in 1957 he began his seagoing career with Liverpool's Blue Funnel Line. In due course he came ashore to join the Port of London Authority before moving to UK National Ports Council, becoming their Nautical Adviser. He later founded and became the managing partner of a specialist international maritime research consultancy practice, based in London.

His retirement gave him the opportunity to enjoy his hobbies, mainly hillwalking in the north of Scotland, and touring the Western Isles, before crossing the Channel to spend seven years discovering the canals and rivers of France. However he did find time to gain a B.Sc. in International Relations with the Open University in 2010 and to have a book published in 2017, 'Merchant Seafaring through World War 1 1914-1918', for which he was presented with the Mountbatten Maritime Award (2017) for the best Literary Contribution.



Sadly Captain Lyon died in January 2018. He is survived by his wife Margaret, sons Clayton and David and daughter Alison to whom we offer our sincere condolences.

All of the books he used for his research were kindly donated to the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

### 12.3 David Rawkins ([RawkinsD57](#)) - via Alan Jordan ([JordanA55](#))

Alan Jordan has informed us that David Rawkins, a 1957 cadet, sadly crossed the bar on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018 when he was about to go into hospital due to a heart condition.



# The Union Steamship Company of New Zealand



Rangatira (1972-1986) on trials at Wellington



Kurutai at Wellington (1952-1973)



Maori (1953-1974)



Navua departing Westport (1955-1972)



Karamu (1953-1972) at Wellington



Katea (1958-1975) at Westport



Kawatiri (1950-1972) AT Evans Wharf, Wellington



Union Auckland (1969-1997) at Nelson

