

# SOUTH WEST SOUNDINGS

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Edited by Jonathan Seagrave

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**WEBSITE.** [www.swmaritime.org.uk](http://www.swmaritime.org.uk)

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Yes, we usually have pictures of boats, but this is Adrian Wells' very own crane ! ( see visit to Bude Canal and Museum p 5 - source Rolle Canal website. )



## EDITORIAL

You will see in the news section that *Bessie Ellen* is returning to Plymouth and is up for sale. In some ways this is not good news, as it has suddenly become very difficult for boat owners in Denmark to continue to charter, owing we understand, to an attack of extreme H&S

Would that it were a simple gain for us, but *Bessie* joins *Kathleen and May* and *Garlandstone* as authentic West Country vessels in dire need of a long term, sailing, future.

In an ideal world, the three of them would be maintained as a small fleet, and could work the tourist towns and festivals together. Certainly, sailing in company is attractive for the tourist customer, and offers operational flexibility, too. In these troubled times, perhaps there might yet be rewards for a bold move. Steam railways have done well from “stay at home” holidays, with record figures, but heritage ships seem not to have benefited in the same way.

With postage costs continuing to rise, *Soundings* will remain slimline, but, content and editorial time permitting, will appear 4 times a year. David Clement has once again outpaced the space available for reviews ( and many thanks for all of them ). These are all available on line, and will be printed as space permits.

I hope to re- introduce pen and ink sketches on the cover in future editions, Pete Stuckey has kindly offered to kick off, and maybe other artist members would like to follow on.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the AGM.

**Jonathan Seagrave**

**Next copy date: September 1st 2010**



## FUTURE MEETINGS AND OTHER EVENTS

June 5<sup>th</sup> AGM, Exeter

*September 18/19<sup>th</sup> Maritime History Conference, Exeter*

*October 16<sup>th</sup> NMM Falmouth ffi see page 30 full announcement*

November 6<sup>th</sup> about £ 25 ( details tbc) Launch of David McGregor Library, Bristol

*(Italics indicate an event of interest but not organised directly by the Society)*

**Confirmation of events will be published either in the next edition or in calling notices for bookings, which will be sent to members at the appropriate time.**





## REPORTS OF MEETINGS

### *Bude Stratton Museum and Bude Canal 17 April*

There were 12 members at this rather sparsely attended meeting. We enjoyed superb weather for the day. We started by walking the Bude canal with Chris Jewel of the Bude Museum and History Society as our guide. The canal was built to bring lime rich sand from the bay to farms inland. It featured tub boats, and inclined planes for most of the rise, with only the sea lock and two locks, now restored, on the initial section. The plane must have been an impressive structure in its heyday.

The original route ran for 33 miles, but the ambitious plan to link to the Tamar and bypass Lands End did not materialize. It was designed by James Green. Many older buildings along the have been sympathetically restored, though there have been casualties too.

The canal restoration was part of the waterfront regeneration, and was completed last year. The scheme didn't replace two low bridges, so the locks are currently only useable by canoes and small boats. Plans for a slipway are threatened by the sale of Council owned land. It seemed to be a case of spoiling the ship, as the restoration done sofar has been to a high standard. It is a very pleasant walk and well worth a visit.

At the end of the walk we saw the remnants of a tub boat in the small canal museum, and various other artefacts.

After we returned, we looked round the Bude Stratton museum- small but very well presented- and a selection of archive material set out for us.

Most of us lunched pleasantly in the museum's little restaurant, and afterwards, Martin Hazell treated us to "Over the Bar", a slideshow and with musical accompaniment- based on a tape he made with fellow singers some years ago.

Our last contribution was from Adrian Wells, who rather modestly claimed not to be a historian. He nonetheless proceeded to describe the history of the Rolle Canal, also engineered by Green, which partly runs through his land.

Five years ago he started to dig around grass on the coping of the sea lock. Restoration "has become a hobby out of control", and with help from the Waterways Recovery Group, BWB and some funding, and a huge amount of hard work by himself and friends, he has largely restored the lock and parts of the quay. In order to move heavy gates etc he bought a second hand 50 ft crane ! Altogether it is a most impressive achievement. He also took on *Advance*, but without any support she is now decaying rapidly.

Thanks go to Adrian, Martin and the members of Bude Canal and Harbour Society and the Museum for a very worthwhile day.

Contacts and further information on the canals from:-

<http://bude-canal.co.uk/>

<http://www.therollecanal.co.uk/>

**Jonathan Seagrave**



## ARTICLES

### *A Short Sea Voyage*

Two o'clock in the morning. 27th June 1988. Countess Wear Sewage Works Wharf, beside the Exeter Ship Canal.

The motor vessel *Countess Wear*, main engines running, deck lights on and nobody about. I climb onto the ship and up to the bridge and Captain Ron Gardner looms out of the darkness. He had been sitting in a chair waiting for me. Waiting, as he said, to see if I would turn up. I place my briefcase in the captain's cabin on the main deck. I do not look at it again during the voyage.

On the port side, aft of the captain's cabin, a large room, gutted. This had been the crew's quarters for the other five members. A toilet and washbasin adjacent. On the starboard side, the crew's mess with bench seats and a table. Aft of that, the galley with a large drainer sink and a cooker. And aft of that again, another lavatory or washing area with two washbasins. Adjacent to the crew's accommodation but amidships, access down to the engine room. Tim, the young assistant engineer. The main engine, the original Lister Blackstone diesel with two auxiliary generators and a mass of oil pumps, valves, banks of dials. A telegraph, allowing for engine room control, but now the engine is bridge controlled. The engine operates at a constant speed and variation is through the gearbox.

Back to the bridge and at 2.15 a.m. Capt Gardner decides to go. He and the mate cast off. The stern swings out around the bow. We go astern, and the bows clear the wharf. The Suez Canal searchlights are switched on. Shafts of light point up to the M5 viaduct ahead of us. Down the canal in the darkness, under the M5, with the lights of lorries looming over the railings high above us.

Topsham swing bridge appears up ahead, swung open by the Council canal man, and we glide through. I recognize him from twenty years before, from the 1960s. Then, Dutch, Danish and German coasters, of 200 tons GRT or less, regularly travelled the canal to Exeter. With timber, or oyster shell, and cargoes of petrol, in the *Esso Jersey*. But by this time, June 1988, all this has gone. Only the *Countess Wear* is left working on the Exeter Canal.

We glide down the long straight stretch to Turf Lock, with the sound of night birds in the reeds either side. The top gates are open and we slide in silently, broken only by the thrust of the engine going astern. We lock down in 10 minutes or so it seems, while Captain Gardner tells me that he had been with the *Tillerman* and with the *Guidesman*, both Rowbotham tankers trading to Exeter, before joining the *SW2* in 1963 as mate. Since 1976 he has been in command. In the early days, with Exeter City Council the owners, there was a crew of six: Master, Mate, two deckhands and two engineers. There were always problems with the engineers as to who did what, of what little there was, and finally he took over responsibility, with one assistant engineer. One of the deckhands was made redundant with the introduction of an autopilot. The ship now operates quite successfully with just three crew.

It is still quite dark as we lock down into the Exe Estuary, pushing out into the narrow channel from the lock, the ship heeling over as she ploughs her way across the mud bottom. We are carrying only 190 tons of sewage sludge in the main tanks. The aft pair of tanks hold about 140 tons but these are empty today. This is because of the neap tide. On a spring tide, with enough water in the river, the ship can carry the full capacity of about 336 tons.

The search lights are off now and in the darkness we criss-cross the river, following the red and green lights on the navigation buoys, past black shapes in the dark grey morning, of lines and lines of moored yachts and boats. Off Exmouth Docks dawn looms. A mountain of scrap at the harbour entrance and a floodlit coaster in the docks. The radio crackles and the Coastguard asks the captain if he can see the *Danica Green*, due at Exmouth this tide, and throughout the outward journey, from time to time, the Coastguard calls up that ship. We spot something on the radar. But this turns out to be much larger.

Off the Fairway Buoy we head straight out to sea, for six miles. When we reach that distance from any point on shore, checked on the radar, the Captain says he is ready to discharge the cargo. I go down to the engine room and watch, deafened by the roar of the main engines, the clutch being slipped on the main pump. Then the mate, the assistant engineer and I climb back up to the main deck and stare over the ship's stern. Two trails of black liquid stream away as we move slowly ahead in an otherwise featureless sea. No basking sharks, just a couple of gannets. I am told that it takes about 20 minutes to discharge our cargo. It would have been 35 to 40 minutes for a full load. It is obvious when the tanks are nearly empty because patches of clean sea water appear in the black trails. Sure enough, when the sludge thins out, the Captain goes full ahead, turning hard to starboard and we head flat out for home, the bows noticeably higher in the water.

Sea ballast is taken on in the two midships ballast tanks and when they are overflowing - seawater flooding over the deck - the ballast is complete with 90 tons, the forepeak tanks filled as well.

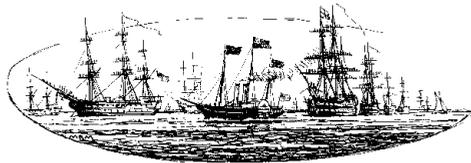
We pass up the channel in the early morning, against the ebbing tide. Past the parklands of Powderham Castle, across the river to Lymptone and back to Turf Lock, the river sucked away from the mud banks and the propellor churning up a black brown ooze astern. Ten minutes to spare, the Captain tells me. Otherwise we would have to stay in the river until the next tide. That, he said, had never happened to him because it would be so inconvenient. The ship slips into the sea lock without touching the lock sides. A master helmsman, the Captain. The gates are closed by turning a hand-operated windlass on the opposite side to each gate, and the lockman working them saves his strength. There is much of this day to come. The lock fills quickly and it is near 8 a.m. when we leave the lock entrance, through the narrow stop gates with reflectors on each side to guide the ship in the dark. Up the canal to Topsham bridge with a few early fishermen and marsh and estuary birds calling on each side. Through the swing bridge, which is set, as are all the others, on an angle to the cut, without a touch. Then up under the M5 to the wharf and beyond to Limekilns where the captain puts the helm hard over to starboard, then astern and we are neatly round before moving back to the wharf where we come sweetly alongside.

A long flexible plastic pipe 1 foot in diameter is bolted, with three bolts, to the flange of a fixed pipe on the ship's deck, midway between the two sets of tanks. The centre of the plastic pipe is supported by a strop from a light goose-necked davit on the ship's side. The other end of the pipe is bolted to an outlet on the wharfside. A valve is opened, the mate goes to a shed alongside, and starts an engine. The pipe starts to jerk and bob about, as the City's sewage sludge courses into the two fore tanks..... The start of another working day.

*M.V. 'Countess Wear' was launched as 'SW2' January 1963 from the yard of John Bolson and Sons of Poole. Owned by Exeter City Council, then South West Water Authority from 1974. Sludge tanker. Length overall 122 ft. Breadth 24ft 6 in. Depth moulded 11 ft Draught, summer 10 ft. Displacement, light ship 210 tons, loaded to 10 ft: 580 tons, cargo capacity 350 tons or 75,000 gallons, service speed 9 knots. Main engines Lister Blackstone 6 cyl unidirectional turbocharged diesel developing 495 bhp at 750 rpm. Direct coupled to Hindmarch/MWD reversing gearbox of 3:1 ratio. Auxiliaries: 2 Lister Blackstone 6 cyl diesels each driving 60 kW 220v GEC generators at 1500 rpm. Cargo pumps Sigmund unchokable driven by the auxiliaries. Built to Lloyds Register 100 X41 for cargo having a flash point below 150° F. and classified for operation within the limits of Berry Head to Beer Head at a maximum of 20 miles from shore. She made in excess of 5,000 voyages, carrying more than 1.8 million tons of sewage sludge, between April 1963 and 31st December 1998.*

Where is this classic small tanker now, I wonder?

**David Wheeler**



## REVIEWS

### *Ambitious for Glory - The Career of a Victorian Naval Officer*

Captain P.L.Saumarez, DSC\*, RN & James P.De H Saumarez  
ISBN 978 07552 1212 5 Paperback, 225 pages , a Bright Pen book.

Anyone looking for an exciting account of a Victorian officer's life in command of a gunboat, or a description of the difficulties of life as a post Captain, will thoroughly enjoy these memoirs from the Public and Private Journal of Admiral Saumarez (1827-1903) .

James Saumarez' father, Philip, originally transcribed this Journal but feared at his death, that the material had been lost. James later found a draft of the Journal and has now put a new transcription together, using additional documents and complete with concise introduction and valuable commentary, enlightened by his own life in the Service.

The Journal records Thomas Saumarez' life between 1857 and 1862 and covers his notable service in West Africa ,South America and China. As with so many naval journals there are obscurities and gaps but it is packed with incident and fascinating details of Royal Navy warfare, Chinese piracy, where Thomas' initiative was not always welcomed, the frustrations of naval administration, and the attraction of local life and travel. Wherever he went, Thomas's enquiring mind reported graphically on the world around him, with perceptive comments on local topological, political and domestic issues. Details of his action in command of *HMS Cormorant* in the *Arrow* war add vividly to our knowledge of that war and highlight the bravery of its young officers. The US Consul thought Thomas should have been rewarded with a CB - so did Thomas. He was not backward in asserting (and exaggerating?) his own claims to promotion, a necessary skill in those Old Navy days of stagnant promotion lists.

When, in 1861, Thomas was rewarded with the post Captaincy of *the fine frigate, Forte*, on the Brazil Station, we see a change in his Journal. It becomes more personal as he expresses the frustrations of life as a Captain inheriting an indisciplined and undermanned ship, and trying to turn it into a 'smart ship' in a fair minded way, '*so many complaints and the more you do for them, the more you may*'. There are details of desertion and problems of manning, endemic drunkenness, poor quality seamen and difficult officers. But Thomas was apparently a forward thinking and progressive Captain. His perceptive and humanitarian comments at this time foreshadowed naval improvements to come.

Thomas' ebullient and proactive temperament brought him into increasing friction with his superiors, especially Admiral Warren and the Minister, Christie. Apparently, it was his choice of company, the *leading of the place*, which proved the final straw. Social status was becoming essential to the successful naval officer's career. Saumarez, despite his distinguished naval family, had no current 'interest', aristocratic, political or naval. His supporters did not carry enough weight. At a time when the lists were packed with post Captains waiting for active promotion, and the demands for more officers of the Pax Britannica were yet to come, the outlook was poor. Despite his efforts, his active naval life came to an end, and his promotions to Admiral were on the retired list.

This is a book the general reader and the historian alike will wish to have on their shelves. I recommend it.

**Mary Jones.**

*Dönitz's Last Gamble; the Inshore U-boat Campaign* by Lawrence Paterson, Seaforth Publishing, Barnsley, 2008 .£25. ISBN 978-1-84415-714-3

Lawrence Paterson is well known for his writings about U Boats and has previously provided detailed descriptions of the 1st U Boat Flotilla, 2nd U Boat Flotilla, and U Boats in the Mediterranean. In this work he turns his attention to the last year of the war from 1944 until 1945 and the change of strategy by Dönitz in response to the overwhelming odds that his U-boats faced.

Initially the U- Boat had been quite successful at severing the sea lines of communication between the North America and Britain and as a result great shortages were felt by its people through denying much needed resources - including the food Britain relied on.

However warfare is rarely static and most threats are followed by some form of counter measure. Such was the British success that on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1943, the U Boat was withdrawn from the North Atlantic due to unsustainable losses, and Admiral Dönitz, C-in-C of the German Navy had to rethink his strategy. The U-boat did not return to the North Atlantic until September 1943, and then without much success.

By February-March 1944 the strategy was to withdraw completely and concentrate on using U-boats closer inshore, where ASDIC detection became more difficult, due to the density layering of water, rocks and sunken wrecks. It was one last-ditch attempt to reverse the fortunes of the U-boat arm, in his country's favour. The standard VIIC had been modified to take 'Flak' for protection against aircraft attack, and some had Schnorkel, a breathing tube, fitted for more underwater endurance. U-boats were to attack the shipping entering British waters from the Atlantic, and coastal convoys, but Dönitz knew that it would only delay the inevitable. There was some success but tonnage losses were small. U-boats were also used to try and interdict military supplies after the 'D' Day landings, but that failed completely. The much vaunted 'Electro-boat' type XXI never saw action, although the author correctly states that Adalbert Schnee of U-2511 made a 'dummy' attack on the *Norfolk*, and then left the scene. Whether he did, or did not is still debated.

This book provides an excellent overview of the chronology of events of the last year of the war, albeit with some diversion into land war matters unrelated to U-boats. It contains a lot of interesting material that has not been widely written about and it also uses some references to Operational Command War Diaries [BdU-KTB]. Unfortunately some of them cannot be reconciled with the originals. Regrettably it also makes some statements which are factually incorrect. For example it states that approval for construction of the new type XXI U-boats was not done at the expense of further conventional U-boat construction; it was. In August 1943 as many as 180 orders for conventional U-boats were cancelled.

Also the notion that 'defeat could be snatched from the jaws of victory' is inappropriate. What ever happened in the last year of the war it was already far too late to have stopped the inevitable collapse. That started in June 1944 with the 'D' day landings.

Nevertheless, it is a good detailed read and will attract the enthusiast including students of naval history, in spite of the aforementioned caveats.

## **Dennis Haslop**

***Black Flag: The Surrender of Germany's U-Boat Forces 1945*** by Lawrence Paterson, Seaforth Publishing, Barnsley, 2009. £25. ISBN 978-1-84832-037-6

In May 1945, and Hitler having committed suicide, Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz became his successor. The days of the Third Reich were rapidly coming to a close, and in the final stages decline. Dönitz was also the C-in-C of the German Navy (Kriegsmarine) and had about 400 operational U-Boats, of which sixty-two were actually at sea on May 1st.

When the German U-boat fleet received Dönitz's orders on May 4 1945, 'All U-boats cease fire at once. Stop all hostile action against allied shipping, Dönitz,' the end of the German Reich was imminent and to many of Germany's submariners, it seemed as if it was a repeat of the 1914-1918 war, ignominious 'Surrender'. For almost six years the men

of the U-boat arm never gave up and now they were told to take their boats to the nearest Allied port and fly the 'Black Flag' of surrender.

Although the order to surrender was made on May 4, several Commanders did not respond to this command. Some elected to scuttle their craft rather than hand them over to the victors, just as they did in the last war, but other Commanders and crews obeyed the order and proceeded to the nearest Allied port under the Black Flag. One account provided is of a U-boat, *U-977*, that took a large part of its crew over to Argentina to surrender rather than hand-over to either British or American authorities; an inexplicable gesture. The boat spent more than two months crossing the Atlantic, frequently underwater, using 'Schnorkel' until it finally handed the boat over to the Argentinian authorities on 17<sup>th</sup> August 17 1945.

He also addresses the subject of the destruction of the German U-boat fleet after the war and what happened to some U-boats that were not scuttled, particularly the trials carried out on the new type XXI and XXIII, in order to derive as much technical information as possible, before they were later sunk.

*Black Flag* is a very detailed account of the final days of Germany's U-Boat fleet and will appeal to students of the Kriegsmarine and enthusiasts of U-boat warfare, in general. As a general read, however, some may find some of detail overwhelming and several topics appear to be unrelated to the 'Black Flag' surrender, such as the surrender on land, the end in France and military justice.

Paterson's book is well researched and offers a good, if short, bibliography, and index. But the notes are not as extensive as in his previous book, relying more on secondary sources. As with his previous work it will be of interest to enthusiasts and students alike.

**Dennis Haslop**

***Breverton's Nautical Curiosities – A Book Of The Sea*** by Terry

Breverton ISBN: 978 1 84724 776 6 Quercus Books,

[www.quercusbooks.co.uk](http://www.quercusbooks.co.uk) £9.99

Hardback 207mm x 140mm size 384 pages, profusely illustrated with drawings, sketches and tables.

This really is a fascinating book to dip into for the mine of information provided in what I feel is likely to become a best seller. At its price of just £9.99 it is actually cheap for what it contains and I would highly recommend this book to all who may ask “Where”, “Why” and “Wherefore” about all manner of nautical phrases.

The contents are grouped into nine chapters covering a multiplicity of topics: An A-Z of sea slang; Sea Conditions and Weather; Life at Sea; Death at Sea; Heroes, heroines, Sea people and Navigation; Villains of the Sea; Islands, Ports, Harbours and Capes; Animals of the Seas; and The Ocean Environment. It is sometimes difficult to think of the correct section in which an entry may appear, but this is partially assisted by the index. I feel the author has been guided to an extent by the doyen of the nautical dictionary, *The Sailor's Word Book* by Admiral Smyth published in 1867, but the author has significantly extended the content and scope of his work to incorporate the ‘modern’ world.

As Quercus say, *Breverton's Nautical Curiosities* is about ships, people and the sea. However, unlike many other nautical compendiums, the focus of this book is on the unusual, the overlooked or the downright extraordinary. Thus, someone most of us do not know, Admiral William Brown, is given equal coverage to Admiral Nelson. Without Admiral Brown releasing Garibaldi, modern Italy might not exist. And without the barely known genius John Ericsson designing the *Monitor*, the Confederacy might have won the American Civil War. Readers will be stimulated to read more about the remarkable men — explorers, admirals and trawlermen — who have shaped our world.

The sea has had a remarkable effect upon our language. We hear the terms 'steer clear of', 'hit the deck', 'don't rock the boat', 'to harbour a grudge' and the like, and give little thought to them. In the pages of this book, the reader will find the origin of 'bumpkin', a 'brace of shakes', , 'booby prize', 'to take on board', 'above board', 'bombed' (in the sense of being drunk), the 'blues', 'blind-side', 'blind drunk', 'the pot calling the

kettle black', 'ahoy', 'all at sea', 'piss-artist', 'taken aback', 'barbecue' and 'bamboozle'. Other colourful terms, which have passed out of common usage, such as 'bring one's arse to anchor' (sit down), 'belly timber' (food) and 'bog orange' (potato) are also included, as well as important pirate haunts, technical terms, famous battles, maritime inventors and ship speed records.

I could only find one item to take issue with. He suggests hurricanes are female. I have had personal experience of hurricanes Andrew and Gilbert in the Caribbean!! – but apart from that minor correction, this book is a remarkably good read in which the booklover – and not only maritime historians – will find much to entertain and to inform them.

Terry Breverton is a full-time writer and the author of numerous books on the sea, and has been awarded the Welsh Books Council 'Book of the Month' award five times. He has presented documentaries on the Discovery Channel and the History Channel and has recently transcribed and annotated the lost manuscript of a Welsh privateer.

To summarise, this is a great collection of information and well worth purchasing at its particularly affordable price.

## **D. B. Clement**

### ***Samuel Pepys – Memoires Of The Royal Navy 1690***

Introduced by J. David Davies Seaforth Publishing Pen & Sword Books, 47, Church Street, Barnsley, S70 2AS

[www.seaforthpublishing.com](http://www.seaforthpublishing.com) £19.99

Hardback 200mm x 135mm size 160 pages.

This book incorporates a facsimile of the original book which was the only work by Samuel Pepys to be completed in his lifetime<sup>1</sup> and is preceded by a comprehensive introduction by Dr. J. David Davies, who will be well-known for his seminal work on the Restoration fleet – *Pepys Navy*, also published by Seaforth and reviewed earlier by the writer.

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<sup>1</sup> Pepys's Diaries were not intended for publication and did not appear until after his death.

This delightful book examines the reasons for Pepys writing which was primarily to exaggerate his own reputation, some of the facts being distorted towards that end, and his style and content. The language is the flowery prose of the period, but the work loses nothing by that, being an interesting example of the perceived strength of the embryonic Royal Navy of those days. Pepys comments upon the Dutch Wars in which we were closely involved during that period from 1660. Pepys was the only holder of the post of *Secretary for the Affairs of the Admiralty of England* until leaving office in 1689. Subsequent war with France was less than satisfactory, and in many ways Pepys' account reflects his justification of the earlier regime under his control. A Parliamentary enquiry 1691/2 concluded Pepys' *Memoires* were broadly correct.

The facsimile presents arguments that when Pepys first left the Admiralty in 1679 the Royal Navy was in good shape, but the incompetence of the following administration 1679/83 resulted in the fleet being ruined; and that it was the work carried out under Pepys from 1686/1689 that restored the fighting ability of our Navy. Interestingly the record shows a decline in the fleet from 76 ships at sea with 12,040 men in 1679 to just 24 ships and 3,070 men by 1684. By the time Pepys left office for the final time in 1689 this had been restored to 67 ships at sea manned by 12,303 men. These figures were however exaggerated in favour of Pepys, as the actual record in 1684 was never as bad as he implied, some 39 ships being in service at that time. Dr. Davies has provided a thoughtful and reasoned interpretation of Pepys' work and has made it very much more readable and understandable for that.

I found the detailed examination of the underlying records fascinating, as earlier copies of Pepys *Memoires* appear to have taken too much at face value, whereas Dr. Davies shows the information, whilst based on facts, these statistics have been carefully manipulated for Pepys' own ends.

I found it a book that was hard to put down and would recommend it to anyone with interest in the Royal Navy of the period.

**D. B. Clement**

***White Ship - Red Crosses*** A Nursing Memoir of the Falklands War  
Nicci Pugh. Melrose Books, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4GG  
ISBN 978-1-907040-49-8. £13.99 (All net proceeds from sales, will be  
donated to the South Atlantic Medal Association.)

Nicci Pugh, served on board the Hospital Ship *Uganda* as a Trauma Operating Theatre Sister in Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service throughout the Falklands War. This book, recounting the experiences of that time, is a riveting read. First and foremost it is the personal memoir of the author and those with whom she worked. Similarly, the book is both a personal memoir and a record of care, for the service personnel to whom life-saving and stabilizing care was given on board *Uganda* during the months April to July 1982.

This story is a record of the courage, matter-of-factness and preparedness of individuals who were going to have to deal with the realities of injured service men taken straight from the battlefield by stretcher and helicopter to the Hospital Ship. *Uganda*, on her journey south to the winter of the South Atlantic, was made ready for anything and everything for the care of the injured. The beds were made up, the operating tables and anaesthetic machines assembled, the sterilizing system installed, the medical and nursing supplies unpacked and stowed away. Teaching and training of staff was undertaken and supply routes to and from *Uganda* organised: all that could be prepared was prepared in the hope that none of it would be needed. Sadly, it was. Overall the number of battle casualties admitted as in-patients on board *Uganda* was 730, 150 of whom were Argentines. There was one three hour period during intense hostilities that saw 159 casualties brought in by helicopter. And to keep the total supply of beds operational, the post-operative and recovering casualties would be moved from high dependency care to low dependency care. Once recovered enough to cope with all that such travel involved, the injured servicemen were transferred from *Uganda* where she lay off the Falklands to Uruguay, and so back to hospitals in the United Kingdom.

Using relevant lines from the John Masefield poem *Sea Fever* to head all but the final chapter, the author has organised and presented what must have been a truly daunting mass of written and photographic material in an accessible and readable manner. A tighter editorial input would possibly have helped the author with her narrative here.

The 80,000 words of this book are arranged within eleven chapters the first ten of which deal with the Falklands War and its immediate aftermath, including the post-conflict injuries from both ‘friendly’ fire and widely-sown mines. The eleventh chapter is an account of the work of the tri-service association, the South Atlantic Medal Association (82) and also of the Inaugural Hospital Ship *Uganda* Reunion in 2008. The final pages of the book contain maps and documents, including a diagrammatic representation of *Uganda* following her conversion to that of Educational Cruise Ship in 1968, some fourteen years before her 1982 conversion to that of Hospital Ship. There are four appendices, a comprehensive glossary and a select bibliography.

Nicci Pugh has succeeded in producing not only a personal record for all those on board *Uganda* during the Falklands War, but also an account of compelling interest to those sharing similar professional roles. She has also provided an accessible history for the general reader. It is a formidable achievement.

**Charmian Astbury**

#### **ALSO NOTED**

*Ship Shape and Bristol Fashion* ( Volume One ) DVD pub by 1<sup>st</sup> take, PO Box 1840 Yate Bristol BS37 4WB £ 12.95 + £1.00 p&p. or contact [sales@1st-take.com](mailto:sales@1st-take.com)

This DVD is drawn from film taken by the Bristol Port Authority in the 1950’s and early 60’s when Bristol and Avonmouth still had an active commercial trade with traditionally loaded vessels. Cranes, tugs etc

( BEP 10 May 2010)

## NOTES AND NEWS

### *Bessie Ellen*

She has returned to Plymouth and is for sale.

Nikki Alford says

“ We will be sailing back under UK flag again which I am sure you will be pleased to hear. It has been a long time and the old girl misses the blue water under her keel. We intend to be in Plymouth around the beginning of May to complete the surveys. I am happy to be coming back to see old friends and faces.

Western Morning News also reported :-

It is then hoped the 106-year-old gaff-rigged sailing ketch will be based in Plymouth, operating day cruises and day passenger work.

"We hope she will be around these shores for a while," said captain Keith Harris.

"We want her to be based here in Plymouth again. We want the association to continue with Plymouth, the city where she was built.

"Surveys are taking place and negotiations are continuing to see if we can find a base for her here in Plymouth."

WMN 14 May 08

### **National Cataloguing Grants Programme**

The National Archives is administering the distribution of more than £1.5 million over five years to tackle cataloguing backlogs following a successful pilot programme in 2006-07

[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/cataloguing\\_grants\\_scheme.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/cataloguing_grants_scheme.htm)

Source BAFM

## **Bristol Port**

Bristol Port company has achieved all the permits it requires for its major expansion. Commitment to construction awaits a significant upturn in trade. (BEP)

## **Empty tanks**

The 2,000 ton Dominican Republic registered *Taigeta* manned by a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian seaman ran out of fuel in 45 knot winds.

Coastguards tasked the Plymouth lifeboat along with the salvage tug *Anglian Earl* to go to the aid of the ship.

Falmouth-based Marine Towage Services sent the tug *Taktow* to tow the ship back to Falmouth where it was immediately detained under European Port State Control Regulations. She had previously been detained on safety grounds several times. Apparently the crew had not been paid for 2 months. Perhaps the clock is running backwards.

Source: This is Plymouth/BBC News

## **Fishing was easier then.... ( maybe )**

High-tech fishing boats in the UK have to work seventeen times harder for their catches than their sail-powered counterparts from 118 years ago, a new study has revealed.

The startling inefficiency is due to a drop of 94 per cent in stocks of seabed-dwelling species over the period, according to information that is routinely collected at ports but has long been overlooked.

When the data began to be collected in 1889 – after a government inquiry into the damage caused by bottom-trawlers – sail-powered vessels around the UK were landing twice as many fish as today's fleet of high-tech vessels.

By 1910 the fleet was landing four times as many, but after peaking in 1937 catches began to fall away.

“For all its technological sophistication and raw power, today’s trawl fishing fleet has far less success than its sail-powered equivalent of the late 19th century because of the sharp declines in fish,” said Ruth Thurstan, of the University of York’s Environment Department, lead author of the study, which is published today in the online journal *Nature Communications*.

The Times May 5<sup>th</sup> .

<http://www.nature.com/ncomms/journal/v1/n2/full/ncomms1013.html>

## **Shanty Festival**

The Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festival was founded and is organised by Falmouth Shout. The continuing work by members of Falmouth Shout, with the support of the RNLI has ensured that it has become a successful and popular annual event.

The dates for the 2010 Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festival will be **Friday 18th June to Sunday 20th June 2010**.

We have had an enormous amount of interest from groups from many different countries, from all over the UK and of course the usual strong Cornish contingent for the 2010 Festival.

FFI NMM Falmouth

**Sea Fever**, was transmitted on BBC Four in May this year. The three sixty minute programmes explore the changing worlds of fishing, leisure and danger as recorded on home movie cameras and through the experience of ordinary people living alongside the coastal waters of Britain.

The series is the flagship in BBC Four's "Sea Season" and its transmission coincided with a new exhibition at the National Maritime Museum.( Greenwich) .

## LETTERS

**The Adkins** write :-

Welcome to the second issue of our occasional newsletter for 2010 – please forward it to anyone who might be interested. Previous issues of our newsletter are on our website at [www.adkinshistory.com](http://www.adkinshistory.com) We appreciate all the feedback you send us relating to our newsletters and books – keep it coming! And do let us know if your email address changes.

**Peter Broughton** writes

The Totnes Image Bank and Rural Archive covers much of South Devon, with an emphasis on South Hams and Totnes. Primarily pictorial, it has a fair amount touching on matters maritime. Website is [www.totnesimagebank.org.uk](http://www.totnesimagebank.org.uk), and the archive is based on the Old Mill at Totnes.

**Mike Bender** writes

Readers with a good memory may recall that I hoped to go with the Association of Lighthouse Keepers to Flatholm to help renovate the foghorn building and the keepers' cottage block. The trip was cancelled twice because of high winds, but eventually took place in April of this year. I thought the island might be of interest to SWMHS members. It's mainly a nature reserve, with 8000 lesser black back gulls and lots of other more obscure and harder to spot birds; herds of sheep to keep the grass and a few hens, bossed by Keiron, who sleep in a Palmerston fort.

If you are interested in military history, the Palmerston batteries link with those on Brean Down and Lavernake point to provide crossfire in the event of a naval invasion. The batteries and some of the original muzzle loading guns - or bit of them - are still extant. The island was again used in WW2, and the ditch that would have been used to resist a landing is still visible. . There is a daily boat from Cardiff Bay and you get three hours on the island. You might want to wait till the seagulls have finished breeding as they divebomb you and there's an awful lot of them. But the views all round the Bristol Channel are magnificent. To find out times etc., ring the Flat Holm Project 01446 747661 or visit the website [www.cardiff.gov.uk/flatholm](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/flatholm).

**Jamie Rountree** writes

Rountree Fine Art, which opened its doors in the heart of Chelsea, London in early September, will host a Summer Exhibition of Maritime Art. The show, which will feature ship portraits and battles scenes from the 17th century to the First World War, goes beyond the aesthetic beauty of the marine subjects and delves into the history within each picture.

Viewers can mull over paintings such as Thomas Whitcombe's glorious depiction of the English triumph over the French in the Battle of the Saintes or a fascinating watercolour of the German Zeppelin L19 sinking in the North Sea.

As Jamie Rountree, the director of RFA, explains: Marine paintings are historical documents of the day and I've always enjoyed finding the story behind the artwork. This exhibition is a remarkable collection of talented artists and maritime adventures spanning four hundred years. FFI Rountree Fine Art Maritime Exhibition, 118 Fulham Road, London SW3 6H

**Hamish Grant** Chairman MNA Bristol, writes

The Bristol branch of the Merchant Navy Association is sponsoring a memorial plaque at Welsh back listing the names of Bristol ships lost in both World Wars, as an addition to the MN memorial erected in 2001, and lit and presented in similar fashion.

Anyone interested in supporting their appeal and wanting further details should contact

Ted Williams 136 Hungerford Rd, Brislington, Bristol BS4 5HE T.  
0117 977 9748.

**Pam Beddard** writes:-

I am hoping that you and your members will be interested to know that the 170-year-old Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol, re-opens on Thursday 29 April, following a £5m restoration funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature and Bristol City Council, among many others.

Occupants include Joseph Seymour who was the master of one of Nelson's ships at Trafalgar and James Hosken, who captained the SS *Great Western* on her maiden voyage to New York and later the SS *Great Britain*.

Further details about the cemetery can be found at

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

**WEBERY**  
**A Selection of Contributions to the Forum**

**The Grahame Farr Photographic Collection**

SWMHS member **Paul Barnett** writes:

I have at long last now got to grips with some 5000+ loose photos from the Graham Farr, and will over the course of the summer add to this list denoting a photo with a small letter p

Areas of interest are historic sailing ships, figureheads, steamers, coasters, wrecks, paddle steamers, warships of 1937 Spithead review, Charles Hills' vessels, some Bill Sharman images and port location arrivals the length and breadth of the South West.

For further information please email barnadillo@aol.com

In response to enquiries, **Paul** confirmed that he has photos of Bristol Navigation Company's vessels *Hero*, *Milo*, *Ino* and *City of Bristol*.

**Paul** also tells us that he has received a ministerial pledge to protect the timbers of the last remaining Kennet barge - *Harriett*, which currently lies among the 81 vessels of the Purton Hulks.

**Maritime History in the Tudor Period - Stephen Borough, 1525-1584**

In response to the letter from SWMHS member **Kit Mayers** in SW Soundings No.50, Feb 2001.

Non-member Dennis C. Burruss tells us that he has followed the lineage of Steven Burrough back to Normandy and Harlowen de Burgh. He gives further details of Burrough's ancestors in Europe and descendants in Jamestown Virginia.

### **Plymouth registered vessels**

In answer to queries, SWMHS member **Gary Hicks** was able to advise that the two vessels in question did not appear in the Plymouth registers. For further information he referred the enquirer to his website <http://www.plymouthmerchantships.info/>

**Admiral Philip Vian** of HMS *Cossack/Altmark* fame.

A local history group in Esher Surrey is looking for confirmation that he once lived in that town.

### **14th Century Oared Warships**

Non-member David Manley is trying to hunt down any information on the design characteristics of 14th century ballingers and galleys that were constructed in Northern Europe. Tracking down this kind of material for Mediterranean vessels is pretty straightforward, but evidence for the design of vessels built closer to home seems pretty scarce!

**HMS VENOMOUS** - a Plymouth ship.

SWMHS member **Bill Forster**, author and publisher of *A Hard Fought Ship*:

*The story of HMS Venomous* (reviewed in the next issue and on the website) would like anybody with an interest in *HMS VENOMOUS* to contact him by e-mail as he intends to update the new edition as material comes to hand, on a web site he is developing.

### **Which Depth Charge could this be?**

The Netherlands Ministry of Defence is asking for help in identifying a depth charge found off Ijmuiden, they could provide photos by email. Their EOD team would be very thankful for any information!

### **Philips 43 sailboats**

Non-member Woodie Watkinson is interested in any information on a series of six 43ft. IOR sailboats built in the middle 1970's at the Philips yard. For 31 years he owned one of these boats *Inspiration* and he belongs to a group of past and present owners. They know of only 3 boats at the present time and would love to hear from anyone on the status or history of the other 3 boats. Original names were *Ocean Greyhound*, *Shipmann of Dartmouth* (owned by the Philips family), *Lizuzu*, *Inspiraton*, *Dawn of Morning*, and an unfinished hull number 6.

## **Gill of Port Isaac**

Non-member Sean Lynott owns the last "big" boat built by this builder, a 34 foot motor lugger built in 1925. He would like to hear from anyone who has information about this builder or the Port Isaac boats of this period

**Dave Hills**

dave.hills@rya-online.net

### **WATCHET BOAT MUSEUM**

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For details please ring 01984  
633117  
or 01984 634242  
[www.wbm.org.uk](http://www.wbm.org.uk)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **CORNISH MARITIME HISTORY CONFERENCE '10**

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#### ***'Cornish Ports and People'***

National Maritime Museum Cornwall  
Saturday, 16 October 2010

This year sees the return of the biennial Cornish Maritime History conference. This popular conference is again organised by SWMHS members Helen Doe and Tony Pawlyn. The previous conferences have all been well attended by many in the SWMHS. This is the fifth conference and will be held as before at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. Yet again there is a programme of speakers who will be sharing their latest research. The nineteenth century was a time of great activity in Cornish shipping and so this year's programme has a strong nineteenth century bias. Speakers include:

Neil Hawke	<i>William Strike of Porthleven</i>
Dr Catherine Lorigan	<i>The Maritime Trading links of the North Cornish Coast'</i>
Anne Pond	<i>Falmouth and Plymouth docks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century</i>
Mike Grose	<i>The Port of Truro</i>
Mike Prettejohn	<i>Elizabeth Ann: The Gorran Haven Crabber Project</i>
Dr David Jenkins.	<i>The St Just Shipping Company</i>
Dr Alston Kennerley	<i>Falmouth for orders</i>
Joanna Thomas	<i>Cornish Women at Sea</i>

Early booking is recommended as this event continues to prove very popular.

**COST:** Adults £27, Students £23, Museum Ticket holders £23 (includes all refreshments, lunch and admission to the Museum and Library)

All enquiries to : [tonypawlyn@btinternet.com](mailto:tonypawlyn@btinternet.com) or [h.r.doe@ex.ac.uk](mailto:h.r.doe@ex.ac.uk)

### Shieldhall Dates – see website ffi.

Sun 6th 11:00 Friends and Families.(2) 15:00 £18.00
Fri 18th 11:00 Afternoon Solent Cruise 15:00 £25.00
Fri 18th 19:00 Jazz Cruise (Shieldhall Stompers) - Sold out last year! 22:00 £20.00
Sat 19th 13:00 Four cruise ships (May see some of The Round IOW yacht race.) (3) 19:00 £30.00
August
Wed 4th 10:00 Cowes Week 15:00 £27.00
Thu 5th 14:00 Cowes Week 19:00 £27.00
Fri 6th 18:30 Cowes Fireworks. 23:59 £31.00
Fri 20th 10:00 From Poole to view the Bournemouth Air Festival. Return to Poole. 19:00 £35.00
Sat 21st 10:00 From Poole to view the Bournemouth Air Festival. Return to Poole. 19:00 £35.00
Sun 22nd 10:00 From Poole to view the Bournemouth Air Festival. Return to Poole. 19:30 £35.00
Mon 23rd 13:00 From Poole to Southampton.(1)(2) 18:30 £20.00
Sat 28th 14:00 Four cruise ships excursion (3) 20:00 £30.00
September
Sun 12th 10:00 Round the Isle of Wight □ 19:00 £38.00
October
Fri 8th 05:00 Greet "Queen Elizabeth". (Early morning) (3)(4) 08:00 £30.00
Tue 12th 15:00 Bon Voyage "Queen Elizabeth". (Late Afternoon) (3)(4) 19:00 £40.

### Purton dates

Scheduled site tours Hope to see you on the bank - Paul

Sunday 6th & 20th June 2010 2pm

Sunday 4th & 18th July 2010 2pm

Sunday 15th August 2010 2pm

Sunday 5th & 19th September 2010 2pm

Sunday 17th October 2010 2pm

Sunday 21st November 2010 1pm

Sunday 19th December 2010 1pm

**SOUTH WEST MARITIME HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**Registered Charity No. 289141**

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