

# SOUTH WEST SOUNDINGS 95

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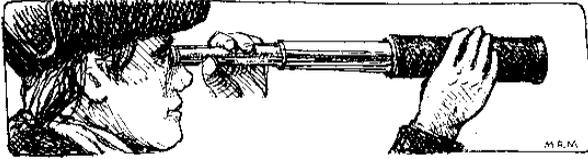
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A reminder/invoice is included with the April edition.  
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setup includes a reference that identifies who you are,  
and send to the Membership Secretary ( details back  
cover).

Overseas Members are most welcome but we now  
only offer *Soundings* as an e-edition to them.

## FUTURE MEETINGS AND OTHER EVENTS



We hope you will be able to support some of these events.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> Jun</b>	<b>AGM Topsham (notice enclosed)</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Jul</b>	<b>Mount Edgecombe (notice enclosed)</b>
<b>27<sup>th</sup> Sep</b>	<b>Swansea with West Wales society ffi David Clement (notice enclosed)</b>
<b>September date tbc</b>	<b>Brixham Trawlers sail ffi David Clement (notice enclosed)</b>

*(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.**

**Next copy date: August 1st. 2014**

### **PROVISIONAL AS AT PRESS DATE**

**Day sail on the recently restored Brixham trawler *Pilgrim* ,  
from Brixham. Competitive price , date in  
September/October to be finalised ( see enclosed notice)  
12 places only. Firm commitment and cheque needed by end  
June. ffi David Clement (back cover )**

## EDITORIAL AND MEMBERSHIP

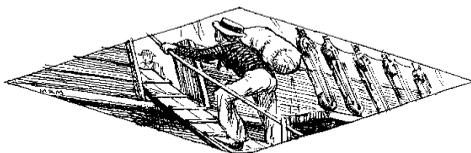
Lighthouses have always captured the imagination, and this edition has a strong Godrevy theme, with contributions on the famous Cornish lighthouse whose future is looking a little uncertain, as Trinity House seeks to offload it with its considerable ongoing maintenance costs.

When you receive this, we will be almost exactly 30 years old. There is a look at the start of the Society from founder member David Clement, and long may we continue! To do this we need new members, and a very warm welcome aboard to those listed below. We also need younger members. When I was about nine, my parents supported my nascent interest in ships by taking out a sub for *Sea Breezes*. Why not consider a Society sub. for a grandchild or other younger relative? At the £10 student rate it won't break the bank, and might launch a lifelong interest. Here is a challenge to you all. If we recruit, say, 20 young members we could have a junior section in *Soundings*. At the very least, I'd welcome reviews or short contributions from young relatives, to get the ball rolling.

Our membership stand at 356. Many thanks to the majority who have updated their SO, we seem to have largely sorted out the increase. Those who haven't updated will find that we can't continue both MSW and SWS. We do want you to remain as full members! We will send a final reminder in the next SWS for those who have still not done this.

This edition should include draft accounts as an insert, calling notices for the AGM at the ever agreeable surroundings of the Globe at Topsham, the Mount Edgcumbe meeting, the Swansea meeting, and a day sail at Brixham. Do come along to the AGM if you can, we keep the formal business to a minimum. It is really useful to get some feedback from you. We would also welcome anyone interested in joining the Committee, (we badly need a secretary as Peter Sims has had to step back for health reasons) or anyone who has ideas for, or even consider organising, a meeting. David Clement has put huge energy into this, and it is time to spread the load.

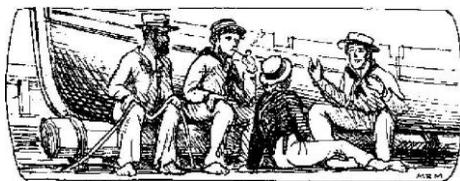
I would like to thank Dee Holladay and Bob Cutts for helping out at our stand at SW Ship Show, and other recent contributors. Our best wishes for summer sailing, reading, and researching. **Jonathan and Gillian Seagrave**



## Welcome Aboard

Dr. R.D.	Gidden	Portishead
T.W.	Stride	Portishead
Michael	Owen	Wrighton
Hilary	Tunstall- Behrens	London
Alan	Avent	Gunnislake
Michael	Burt	Plymouth
Lesley	Plant	Kenilworth
Clive	Charlton	Bere Ferrers
Derek	Tyrrell	Bristol
Stephen N	Richardson	Helford
Martin H	Pacey	Congresbury
Sheilah	Openshaw	Kingsclere
Gillian	Bathe	Fordingbridge
Kenneth	Hogg	Hillingdon
Nigel	Hall	East Harptree
Charles	Phesse	West Grinstead
Sarah	Parsons	Falmouth
Andrew	Gater	Saltash
David	Gunn	Shipston-on-Stour
Michael	Wilson	
Keith	Ball,	Wanstrow Somerset

We welcome contributions from new members, including local news items that don't make the national media.



## REPORTS OF MEETINGS

### **SWMHS meeting at Poole – Sat.5<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

Our thanks must go to member Dr. Nigel Pearce (with his wife and daughter assisting) for organising such a successful meeting at the Poole Museum. Inclement weather did not stop 45 folk attending, the venue being a superb adaptation of an old waterfront building. On the ground floor were the remains of a famous ancient longboat discovered locally. Our meeting room was in the roof space – very cosy. The title of the day was ‘Over & under the seas’ and for once SWMHS went ‘foreign’!

**Kevin Patience**, ex East African colonial businessman & maritime engineer & wreck explorer, gave an excellent account about the RN stamping out the slave trade in Zanzibar & the East African coast in the later nineteenth century. He consulted a wide range of written sources & was also able to visit & to record the sites where events took place. After clearing out the slavers on Zanzibar & Funzi Island there were three ‘wars’ in the 1890s to halt slaving on the mainland. ‘Send a gunboat’ was amply illustrated by the shortest war, some 45 minutes long, when an overwhelming RN squadron bombarded the would be sultan’s palace & sank his gunboat, before imposing a new sultan amenable to the British. Kevin was able to discover long lost graves to RN seamen on Pemba, and also, bringing the story back home, made recent contact with the Portland family of 19 year old AB Stone who was buried on Pemba Island over 100 years ago. Also he noted that there still survives today, at Chatham Historic Dockyard, HMS *Gannet* an example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century gunboats which policed the waters of Empire. Kevin has written a book about this little known aspect of Imperial history. Medals won during these 1890 ‘campaigns’ are now collectors items.

**Nigel Pearce**, ex oceanographer, expedition doctor & retired GP, presented material about St Helena (having family connections from there) and also referred to oceanography and the Atlantic slave trade. Photographs taken on St Helena, an island a mere 10 x 5 miles wide, were fascinating. The amount of forts all over the island illustrate just how important this outpost once was. The UK government are currently funding a major project to provide the islanders with an airstrip, now that vessels rarely call. It is hoped that tourism to the place where Napoleon was exiled to & where Boer war prisoners were once kept will produce income. One fact which is not usually known is the number of slaves actually freed by the RN West African squadron – some 26,000 between 1840 and 1872. The majority of slaving in the South Atlantic was to present day Brazil, fewer having been sent to the West Indies islands.

After lunch **Tom Wareham**, curator of the Museum of London Docklands, (and an ex student of Mike Duffy at Exeter University) presented on, ‘The pirate Captain Kidd & his influence on the East India Company’. What struck me was that modern political corruption, ‘insider’ trading, and doing hidden deals with your mates in the ‘City’ is not a modern phenomenon! Taking us through the ‘dense’ underworld of late 17<sup>th</sup>. century politics Tom was able to make me feel sorry for Captain Kidd, a sea captain down on his luck, would be chancer and privateer, but accused of piracy, and executed for the murder of his ship’s gunner in May 1701. He was very much the ‘fall guy’ for a coterie of wealthy nobles & government ministers. It is even possible that the monarch, William III, was implicated. What really sealed his fate was his attack on Mogul pilgrim and treasure ships sailing from India to Arabia. This caused the East India Company to be stripped of trading concessions in India until the matter was cleared up, RN vessels taking over Mogul convoy protection from East India company ships. One result of the celebrated case of Captain Kidd was that Admiralty Courts were set up to thwart local interests in smuggling and piracy. The fascination with hidden pirate treasure probably comes from the Kidd case when he suggested that he had hidden treasure and would only say where if he was released. To protect political corruption he was of course executed.

There is the suggestion that some treasure did find its way into government coffers and that this was used in the building of the Greenwich RN college. It is even possible that divers may have recently found the wreck of Kidd's Mogul treasure galleon off the North American coast. The 'Pirates of the Caribbean' film franchise may even owe its recent success to Captain Kidd.

**John Dinley**, a retired orthopaedic surgeon and now in a second career as a marine scientist & deep blue researcher, gave a presentation regarding the history of the 'Royal research vessels' ranging from Henry Hudson at the start of the 17<sup>th</sup>. century up to present times when we have four \* research vessels, by warrant from the monarch, run by the Institute of Oceanography from Southampton & British Antarctic Survey. The importance of James Cook in the 18<sup>th</sup>. century in charting the oceans, and of Captain Fitzroy & Charles Darwin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was mentioned. Six scientists on board of 'Beagle' eventually produced 50 volumes of reports! The importance of discovering the ocean depths in modern times was spelt out. John showed recent film from the research vessel *James Cook* in Antarctica when he and other scientists discovered hydro thermal vents at great depths along volcanic ridges. Here in temperatures of 200 (white smokers & very toxic) to 350 degrees C (black smokers) living organisms were found at 2,500 metres deep. Creatures such as white crabs and even octopus were feeding on bacteria. Hydrogen sulphide was what these organisms were living in. Each chimney stack, from which the hydro thermal material came forth, could be up to 30 meters high & possibly 10 years old. Each stack had its own blind species. This really seems to be bringing 'the origin of the species' up to date!

Organiser Nigel Pearce also issued feedback forms to the audience. These could be useful in finding out about attendees' interests & comments on the day's events. Perhaps we should return to the Poole area again? Also a number of non SWMHS attendees collected membership forms. Certainly organising joint meetings with outside local groups does seem to spread the word to promote our Society.

**Martin Hazell**

*\*[ A new ice capable research ship is to be built. Ed]*

## ARTICLES

*[This article first appeared in the Cornish Magazine, February 1961. I have sought the copyright owner. Cyril Noall died in the 1970's. His editor at Tormark, Ivan Corbett, tells me that when his books were still in print, they paid royalties to RNLi, so a small donation has been made in acknowledgment.Ed]*

### **The Wreck of the *Nile* near Godrevy, 1854**

On the afternoon of Tuesday, November 28th, 1854, a young man called Strick, whose home was at Newlyn, near Penzance, went ashore at the Nelson Docks, in Liverpool, after stowing his luggage on board the *Nile* passenger steamer, in order to enjoy a farewell pint with a friend in one of the nearby public houses.

The *Nile* was due to sail for Penzance at about six that evening, but there still remained some time to go before her departure; and the young Newlyn fellow no doubt felt that this period of waiting could be spent more pleasantly ashore in congenial company and surroundings than hanging around the berthed vessel.

The beer, we must assume, proved good, the conversation agreeable, and the barmaid tolerably easy on the eye, for he remained considerably longer at the tavern than he had intended; and when eventually he returned to the dockside, it was to find that the *Nile* had sailed, carrying with her all his precious belongings.

Mr. Strick stood on the quayside and cursed his unlucky stars. He had been looking forward to his voyage south on board the trim little steamer, for she provided what was, for those days, a fast and reliable means of travel between Liverpool and West Cornwall.

In 1854, railway communication between the two places was far less perfect than it is today-Brunel's Tamar Bridge, for example, still lay five years in the future-and Mr. Strick accordingly found himself faced with the troublesome problem of deciding how to follow his luggage down to Penzance without too much loss of time. Making some hasty enquiries in the docks, he found that his best means of accomplishing the journey

was to take another boat from Liverpool to Bristol, and there transfer to one of the little packet steamers which then regularly plied between that port and Hayle. Owing to the necessity for changing vessels at Bristol, the voyage proved to be a relatively slow and tedious one compared with what he would have enjoyed on board the *Nile*; and when young Strick eventually stepped ashore on the Steam Packet Quays, at Hayle, he was feeling in anything but an agreeable frame of mind.

As he moved among the people on the quay, however, he noticed that many of them were engaged in deep and serious conversation. What was it they were saying—a shipwreck?—the *Nile* lost off Godrevy, and every soul on board her drowned? Could he really believe his ears?

But the story was all too true. About twenty hours after sailing from Liverpool Docks, with Mr. Strick's luggage on board, the *Nile* had piled herself up in thick and dirty weather on the dreaded reef of rocks known as "The Stones," lying to the seaward of Godrevy Point, at the eastern extremity of St. Ives Bay. No friendly lighthouse then stood on Godrevy Island to guide mariners as they attempted to navigate this dangerous stretch of coastline; and in the blackness of that winter's night of November 30th the *Nile* had had her bottom ripped out and had gone down to her doom, leaving no living witness, either ashore or afloat, to tell the story of her death agony. By lingering over that last drink at Liverpool, Mr. Strick had lost his baggage, but saved his life.

\*\*\*\*\*

The *Nile* was a screw steamer of 700 tons register and 200 h.p., and belonged to the British and Irish Steam Company. At the time of the disaster she could still be described as a comparatively new vessel, having been built about the year 1849, at Greenock. She was commanded, on her last fateful voyage, by Capt. Moppett, who had the reputation of being a careful and skilful navigator. Like all steamers of that period, she carried sails for use in favourable winds; but in possessing a screw, she was somewhat in advance of her time, for the majority of auxiliary-powered craft were then propelled by picturesque, but cumbersome paddle wheels. However, in spite of all her good qualities, the *Nile* seems to have been one of those "unlucky" ships of which the old-time sailors used to speak with such dread. On the voyage previous to her last, when sailing to London, she had the misfortune to

run down a vessel laden with stone, just off the breakwater at Plymouth. This, together with the severe weather being experienced at the time, had made her trips rather irregular. She sailed from Penzance for the last time on Saturday, November 25th, and arrived at Liverpool on the 26th, whence she took her departure on the evening of Tuesday the 28th. Apparently, because of the uncertainty of her sailings at that time, several passengers from Penzance and its neighbourhood were left behind at the Nelson Docks, in addition to Mr. Strick. They must all have accounted themselves extremely fortunate people. On Tuesday night, the *Nile* ran into very severe weather, but seems to have suffered no harm thereby, as the steamer *Sylph*, bound from Cork to London, reported sighting her on the morning of Thursday, November 30th, in the North Channel, when she was proceeding on a correct course for the Land's End.

However, it appears that, from a cause which will never now be ascertained, she later came eighteen or twenty miles out of her reckoning, and in a tempestuous sea, thick weather and darkness, ran on "The Stones," about a mile outside Godrevy Island. The first intimation to people on shore that a wreck had occurred was the finding of some empty porter barrels and a wine cask washed up on the adjacent coast. The Coastguards and local inhabitants at once began to keep a look-out; and soon all surmises as to the identity of the unfortunate vessel were set at rest by the discovery of a small box at the back of Portreath Quay, containing papers.

From the direction in which shattered wreckage from the steamer was seen to be drifting on Friday and Saturday, the approximate position where she had struck could be computed. It was generally supposed that she had been going at her usual speed at the time; and that, after striking, those on board had backed her off into twelve or fourteen fathoms of water, where, owing to the severe damage she had sustained, the vessel immediately foundered. Weather conditions at the time were appalling, and it proved quite impossible to attempt any rescue operations from the shore. But, in all probability, everyone on board had already been drowned by the time the wreck was sighted. It seems very unlikely that the crew would have had time to lower a boat, and, even if they did, it could not have survived for more than a few seconds in that raging sea.

The *Nile* is said to have had on board a very valuable cargo, estimated (with the vessel itself) to be worth anything from £40,000 to £50,000. Her freight included not only wines, but oatmeal, lard, butter, tallow and pork, some of which was afterwards washed ashore and salvaged. Estimates of the number of lives lost in this terrible disaster vary greatly. The *Annual Register of Shipwrecks* for that year places the figure at forty; but other accounts set it as high as 97 and even 125. As far as the present writer is aware, only one body—that of a woman passenger—was ever recovered. The reason for this probably was that most of those on board were below at the time the *Nile* struck, their bodies thus being trapped inside the hull when she went down.

The "Stones" had claimed many victims before the *Nile* came to grief here in 1854. On January 30th, 1649, the day on which Charles I went to his execution at Whitehall, a French-bound vessel, called the *Garland*, of Topsham, which had on board the King's wardrobe and "furniture" (personal effects), together with the belongings of his fugitive Queen, was driven ashore on the rocks of Godrevy Island in a great storm. Of the sixty persons on board, all were drowned, save one man and a boy, who, with a wolfdog, swam to the island and there subsisted for two days on rainwater and seaweed pulled from the rocks. After the storm had abated, they were rescued and taken to St. Ives, where Mr. John Hicks, the first historian of that place, then only a schoolboy, conversed with them. Tradition says the Queen's jewels were afterwards washed up on Gwithian Beach, where they were found and recovered by one of the villagers.

Hundreds of lives, scores of vessels and millions of pounds' worth of property were lost off Godrevy during the following two centuries, but no steps were taken towards putting a lighthouse there until the shocking disaster to the *Nile*, in 1854, so aroused the public conscience that the Government were compelled to act. On September 5th, 1856, a Trinity steamer was sent to Godrevy, and surveyed the site, which resulted in a decision being taken in the following February to build the lighthouse on Godrevy Island.

The position chosen for the light met with considerable criticism in some quarters, where it was felt that a lightship moored at the extremity of the "Stones" would afford greater protection to shipping.

These objections were, however, ignored by the authorities, and preparations for erecting the island-based lighthouse went steadily ahead.

Construction work began in January, 1858, when, during a spell of fine weather, Mr. Eva, of Helston (the contractor), landed the first consignment of materials on the island. The workmen lived in tents while the building was going forward. In March, 1858, a light vessel was anchored near Godrevy Island, as a temporary measure, for shipwrecks were still occurring in the vicinity with distressing frequency.

The new Godrevy lighthouse flashed out its welcome beams across the dark waters of St. Ives Bay for the first time on the evening of Tuesday, March 1st, 1859. From that day to this, it has stood sentinel over the dangerous reef at this spot, being undoubtedly the means of saving many a brave vessel and her crew from destruction. It thus forms a fitting memorial to the little *Nile* steamer, which, with her full human complement of precious lives, had to make the supreme sacrifice before this most necessary aid to navigation could be erected.

### **Cyril Noall**



## Floating about St Ives Bay

The Godrevy light is not just of practical importance to the fisherman of St Ives and Hayle. It also figures in one of the classic novels of the twentieth century – Virginia Woolf’s modernist novel, *To The Lighthouse*, 1927. This was pioneering in its technique of highlighting the characters’ inner thoughts, rather than the author’s descriptions of action.

Woolf’s father was Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), first editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. He bought the lease of Talland House, St Ives from the Great Western Railway in 1881. His purpose was for it to be the summer residence of his large family – four children, one of whom was Virginia, by his second marriage to Julia Prinsep (1846-1895), and two by her first marriage to Herbert Duckworth; and also many guests. The family spent every summer there till 1895, when Leslie gave up the lease because the newly built Porthminster hotel blocked their view and because his wife died in that year. (For a loving and beautifully illustrated account of their years at St Ives, see *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell- Remembering St Ives* by Marion Dell and Marion Whybrow, Tabb House, 2003).

*To the Lighthouse* was the third novel produced during Woolf’s most creative decade, the 1920’s, after *Jacob’s Room*, 1922, *Mrs Dalloway*, 1925, and before her witty but telling polemic against the injustices of the (male) patriarchy, *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929.

*To the Lighthouse* is essentially an examination of her own family and its dynamics, lightly renamed as the Ramsays. The first part, “The Window” uses one of Woolf’s favourite frames – the day’s length. It opens with one of the younger Ramsays, James, asking if they will be able to sail to the lighthouse tomorrow. It ends in a magnificent supper, organised by Mrs Ramsay, for her family and guests. In the second Part, “Time Passes”, clearly symbolic of the First World War, Mrs Ramsay dies, leaving a bereft husband, and the house lies empty and mouldering. In the last part “The Lighthouse”, the father hires a fishing boat, skippered by the local fisherman. The now teenage James Ramsay helms much of the way to Godrevy, with his father and a sister. They land, bringing a present to the lighthouse keepers. It is fulfilment, but in the context of loss, a futile gesture.

When I was studying for an M.A. in English Literature, I noticed that, much to the confusion of contemporary critics, Woolf had moved the lighthouse to the Hebrides. I suggested that she was so involved in analysing her family dynamics and rendering them into fictional form, that, despite her obsessional nature, she did not bother with the implications of this topographical switch. There were obvious errors – one of the guests spends just a few hours reaching them; one of the guests states that they will go shopping in Edinburgh (as opposed to the much nearer Oban or Glasgow).

I wrote this up as a paper ‘Why Move the Lighthouse?’ *Cornish Studies*, 13, 2005, 53-69. One of the great pleasures of that period of my life was to be asked to give a spoken version and to go down to the Arts Centre, St Ives and look out from the lecture room across the bay to Godrevy...

Various odd thoughts from my many visits to St Ives:

1. You can sail between Godrevy Island and the mainland.
2. The locals wanted the lighthouse *outside* the dangers it lights (the Stones reef). Trinity House saved money by building the light inside the dangers. Safe water outside the Reefs is marked by a North Cardinal mark. [ *See the Hansard reference below for the cut and thrust discussion at the time .Ed*]
3. There are now a number of moorings in deep water outside the harbour (whereas previously you had to take the ground against the harbour wall, or anchor). You still roll like a pig due to the waves bouncing off Smeaton’s pier and its collapsed extension.
4. Visiting St Ives, you get a superb view from the café at the top of Tate St Ives. Up to my last visit, you could go to the café without paying to see the exhibits.
5. But you might want to shell out as a ticket also allows you to visit the house and gardens of one of England’s sculptor geniuses, Barbara Hepworth. To see her sculptors in her garden-sensational.
6. On your way down, you will see a large H against a house wall. Not a bit of a Banksie- like graffiti, but almost the last evidence of the major coastal shipping line, the Hain Tramp Shipping Line. Founded 1816, it had 36 ships in 1913. In 1917, it was taken over by the P& O. Its records are at the NMM,

Greenwich. Hain is also commemorated by the local hospital that he funded.

7. If you like marine paintings, take the little train to Penzance and walk up to the Penlee Gallery in its tropical gardens, with its stunning permanent collection of the Newlyn school's paintings of the fishermen around 1900.
8. You'll pay through the nose for food in St Ives. So, if you have transport, try Hayle. If you want to get melancholic, walk down by its quays.

## **The Future of Godrevy**

The following is from a round robin in March to local councils, tourism bodies, MPs etc, from Brian Pocock, Chair of Gwinear- Godrevy Parish Council (slightly summarised )

*“Godrevy Island (and the Lighthouse) lies within our Parish, so when Trinity House wrote to us last year to say that they would be upgrading the lighthouse optics by installing an LED light on a new pole, to then be followed by the decommissioning of the original dioptic light in the lighthouse, the Parish Council wrote to Trinity House to request that we be consulted on any future plans for the now- redundant lighthouse building, given its iconic status on our Heritage Coast and its literary connection with Virginia Woolf’s novel “To the Lighthouse”.*

*The Estates and Property Manager of Trinity House (TH) contacted our Clerk to request an early meeting to discuss future plans for the lighthouse building. In essence, Godrevy Light is surplus to requirements and TH wishes to dispose of it.*

*He indicated that as the preferred option it is TH policy to seek a local community group or trust to take on redundant lighthouses before they are put out to auction for fair market value as they are required to do. Whilst no price was mentioned for Godrevy, a recent lighthouse sale in East Anglia to a local group realised £2000. Clearly, TH recognises the challenges faced in realising any useful income from the isolated and difficult to reach lighthouse. So, in some respects, the acquisition cost should not be a major hurdle.*

*That said, the running costs are quite another matter. Godrevy is not constructed of ashlar masonry but of rubble stone and mortar with a*

*cement rendering. The structural integrity of the building is dependent on maintaining a weatherproof skin by regular painting and sealing. The Lighthouse is a Listed Grade 2 building and is registered with the Land Registry and TH intend to sell it, but not the ancillary buildings – the old oil store, helipad, solar panels and water collection - although they are alert to the fact that without a working agreement on the use of these other facilities, any sale will not materialise. In general terms, the big outgoing is the 8-year cycle of repainting which with helicoptering of contractors and materials usually costs around £100k. I have a hard copy of the latest Surveyor's report (pre- this year's storms) which shows that whilst the building is generally in reasonable order, a number of structural issues need significant repair e.g. the exterior gantry around the lantern is unsafe due to corrosion of the iron fixings, so the inescapable arithmetic suggests a significant outgoing but little chance of much revenue for our much- loved icon.*

*So what are we to do? Generally, any Grade 2 building requires a duty of maintenance by the owner but the letter of the law provides scant long-term comfort for the survival of this structure. As an interim, Gwinear- Gwithian Parish Council have applied to Cornwall Council for a "right to bid" option under the terms of the Localism Act legislation, to "keep the ball in play". So do-nothing is an option but the possible outlook is not good. Alternatively, Cornwall Council and the contiguous Towns and Parishes around St Ives Bay could fund collectively a scheme – but given the pressures on the public purse, there are certainly more important priorities for public cash. So, to my mind, we are likely to be left with either finding a charitable organisation willing to take on this project, or to establish such a trust ourselves and do some serious fund-raising. After all, the bay without the Lighthouse is as unimaginable as a brewery with no beer! A natural home would be the National Trust but I understand that they have declined.*

*Looking further a-field , the Morris Island Lighthouse in South Carolina, USA found itself in a similar position and a not-for-profit organisation was set up to purchase and restore the light- hence my introductory sentence- I would be grateful if you would click on [www.savethelight.org](http://www.savethelight.org) and take a look at what we could aspire to if we have the will.*

*Whilst TH recognise that putting together a proposition takes time – and they are happy to wait a reasonable time or until it is clear we are not able to take action - time is of the essence so I would be very grateful of an early response as to how – or if you even wish to - action a plan to Help Save Godrevy Light.” Ffi [brian.pocock@ggpc.org.uk](mailto:brian.pocock@ggpc.org.uk)*

However, by 3.4.14 Trinity House were also reported in the *Cornwall Gazette* as saying the structure needs to be retained as a white painted daymark, and that there were now no plans to sell ”at the present time”. This sounds more like the start than the end of the story.

Other “Godreviana”. There is a brief mention of the loss of the *Nile* in Dicken’s journal. A keeper who had to man solo for four days gives his account at:-

<http://trinityhousehistory.wordpress.com/2013/08/27/solitary-confinement-at-godrevy-lighthouse-1925/>

Hansard 18 March 1858 also has an entry on the debate on the location of the light.

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1858/mar/18/the-godrevy-lighthouse>

## **The Foundation of the Society 30 Years Ago**

The original and first SWMH newsletter of May 1984 gives a complete list of the original 58 annual members of the Society. I recall that at the inaugural meeting at Plymouth Polytech (not a university then) some 36 attendees joined for a sub of £4.00! The original idea was Alston Kennerley’s and mine, when we met at Dartington in September/October 1983 at Walter Minchington’s Maritime Seminar and at a meeting over lunch with Prof. Walter Minchington and Dr Stephen Fisher. I remember Walter announcing he would be “President” and Stephen Fisher refusing to pay any subscription as he did not consider he should!! The work was done by Alston and I, and a meeting was arranged at Plymouth in the planetarium with interested parties who attended the Exeter university maritime conference which was organised annually by Walter.

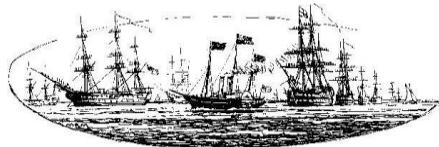
Some 36 attendees joined SWMH at that event when the Society was formally set up. I then approached the Charities Commission and with their help we became a charity with very wide powers with the intention of future-proofing our organisation. It will be recalled we held our 25th anniversary luncheon at Dartington – perhaps we might have another event to celebrate 30 years.

## **David Clement**

### **Edited extract from Soundings Vol 1**

We now have the task of establishing the Society on a firm and permanent footing.. One of the essentials if we are to achieve this is to have a publication which the members can use to exchange information, and which the Society can use to publicize forthcoming events..... The Committee plans two publications... The Newsletter, of which this is the first.. will primarily be used as an information sheet .... to inform the members of one another's interests and act as a channel for communication. We hope that members will make use of the Newsletter, and will supply the Editor with material. We would like • to run a Queries and Answers column, and hope that members will find this a useful way in that they can pick one another's brains in search for information and help in projects .The second publication is to be an annual.. We will publish edited versions of lectures which the Society may have heard during the year and more importantly, contributions from the members. The Society will only work properly and develop if the members contribute generously.

*[This very first edition of South West Soundings is now available on the member side of the website. We have surely kept to those objectives. David Clement and Dave Hills are also gradually putting up early editions of Maritime South West, and then pre 1998 Soundings. We are also considering putting up the pdf's of our out of print monographs, and are considering if we could in due course extend this as a service to members' publications if they wish. Any views on this would be welcome]*



## REVIEWS

***Sailor in the Desert.*** The Adventures of Phillip Gunn, DSM, RN in the Mesopotamia Campaign, 1915. David Gunn. Published by Pen & Sword Maritime. Barnsley, S Yorks. 2013. ISBN 178346230-2. £19.99 . 144 pages. 4 maps, 23 plates including 16 coloured paintings by Phillip Gunn. Bibliography & Index.

This book by member David Gunn tells the story of Phillip Gunn, a seaman on *HMS Clio*, a British WWI sloop, built with both sails and steam engines. *HMS Clio* was moved to the Middle East at the start of WW1 to join the defence of the Suez Canal against the Turkish attacks in early 1915. Having taken an active part in that successful defence, she was moved to join her sister ships in the Shatt al Arab in support of the British & Indian push northwards from Basra (Iraq). The three sloops supported the attacks until the rivers became too shallow for them.

The subject of the book, Phillip Gunn then volunteered for “dangerous duties” in charge of a river launch that was used predominantly to move barges carrying old 4.7” guns. These were a major contribution to the artillery support of the British and Indian army as they drove the Turks northward to protect the oil fields in Southern Persia (Iran). The book then describes Gunn’s part in the successful capture of Kut al Amara and the push towards Baghdad. During the battle of Ctesiphon, which was the British highpoint in 1915, Gunn was almost lost to malaria and was remarkably lucky to survive the horrific treatment of the sick & wounded as the army retreated to Kut after that battle.

The story is written in a relaxed style, it is odd to read a history book that includes “Phil did X”, but as a personal history it works very well, being very easily readable. It clearly explains what happened to Phil and puts the action into political and military contexts.

I would have liked more history of the conflict, including more of the roles of *HMS Clio*’s sister ships, but that is possibly outside the intended scope of the book. I would also like to have seen a chapter of the

author's (Phillip Gunn's son) own recollections of Phillip and to learn how much of the book came from Phillip Gunn's memoirs and how much from personal communication. All the combatants from WW1 are now gone, but there are people who discussed details with those combatants and we would benefit from their recollections.

The book includes 16 coloured oil paintings by Phillip Gunn himself. They are artistically naive but fascinating and are unique representations of life on board HMS *Clio* and Gunn's launch. As such they are a hugely valuable archive and add greatly to the overall interest of the book.

I hope that this important book does not get submerged in the rush of publications of histories to mark the centenary of WW1. It deserves to be read by all with an interest in Maritime History, and in WW1 in general.

### **Keith Ball**

***Godrevy Light*** Charles Thomas and Jessica Mann, Twelveheadpress PO Box 59 Chacewater, Truro TR4 8 ZJ. ISBN 9780906294703 hardback 84pp. No longer on publisher's list but available on Amazon for around £15.

This book is a tribute to the history, artistic and literary allure of Godrevy, and the romance between the authors which started there. It details the sad history of wrecks, on the deadly Stones reef beyond the island, up to the *Nile* in 1854. Lost with all aboard, this led to public demand for action, and then controversy over location. Once built, it gradually came to feature in paintings and art, much of which is reproduced in colour in the book, and famously in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. For anyone fond of the area it is a fascinating compilation of the many different ways in which a lighthouse can be portrayed.

### **Jonathan Seagrave**

## **BOOKS RECEIVED**

**Maritime History of Somerset Vol 2** ed. A. Webb A4 softback and contains 225 pages, and 159 colour and black and white images. The foreword has been written by Lady Gass. ISBN 978 0 902152 26 7. Exclusively available in Taunton from Lionel and Jo at Brendon Books, Taunton's only independent book shop, at £20. Available by post from <http://www.freewebstore.org/SANHS>

**Available at the AGM, and to members till end August for only £15 see flyer enclosed**

The Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS) have just published the second volume in their series on the Maritime History of Somerset. Edited by local author, Dr Adrian Webb, volume two contains a wide variety of information detailing aspects of Somerset's much neglected maritime past. Six authors have contributed years of research into this volume which contains chapters on:

- Travel along the Somerset coast
- Tourism in Somerset
- River ferries at Pill and Rownham on the River Avon
- The development of Minehead harbour
- Sea fishing off the Somerset coast

This volume was supported by your Society. A full review will appear in the next edition.

## LETTERS NOTES AND NEWS

**SS *Great Britain*.** The famed ship and museum goes from strength to strength. From April it has been possible to climb the rigging, something that will surely appeal to the younger generation, and the Trust has also won initial support from the Lottery for a major Brunel museum on the site.

**The Underfall yard** in Bristol has also won through to secure funding for its substantial makeover.

Some readers may have had a drink in the *Mauretania* bar on Park Street Bristol, which uses panelling and decor recycled from the famous liner. In recent years it has been closed to the general public, being a room in a nightclub. The new manager, Davide Pontini, wants to reopen it to the general public and is keen to find more relics of the ship. Bristol Post 17.3.14

The *Waverley* visit to the Severn estuary has moved to the autumn, Clevedon, 2-5 September. *Balmoral* is being taken on by a new trust, who have raised around a third of the £350,000 needed to get her seaworthy, they hope to drydock in August. Volunteers are working on her, but she does look a bit forlorn in Bristol. The City gCouncil are being supportive. The new trust is looking for a more varied programme and wider use in the off season. *Shieldhall* has a full programme from June, see report below. There are more short trips this year.

*Bessie Ellen* continues her programme. *Irene* is currently moored at Bristol. *Kaskelot* sailed for London in March and is available for “charter or acquisition”. *Kathleen and May* is expected to visit Bideford briefly in August but remains based in Liverpool. ( N. Devon Gazette)

The *Greenheart* sail/solar boat progresses gradually, but *Tres Hombres* arrived in Falmouth on 15<sup>th</sup> April with goodies from the Caribbean. I hope to have a bottle of sail delivered rum for the AGM....See the fine video of her shot from *Bessie Ellen* on our Facebook page for April 22nd.

## **Advocacy etc**

Our petition inspired by the *Kathleen and May* closed in February, having just reached four figures, a total of 1015. Many thanks to those who signed. We have had some useful follow up discussions with National Historic Ships, but work on this has progressed slowly.

We have offered a letter to support a bid to preserve Godrevy if one takes place.

NHS has published a detailed consultation on categorisation of vessels on the national register. This may seem arcane, but has a powerful influence when applications are made to the Lottery and other sources for funding. Comments are due by July. We are considering a Society response when we have had time to digest it, do please get in touch if you have views ( contact Martin or Jonathan) . The paper (29 pages) is at [www.nationalhistoricalships.org.uk/pages/consultation-paper.html](http://www.nationalhistoricalships.org.uk/pages/consultation-paper.html)

Martin, Peter Sims and others are engaged in discussions on setting up a maritime forum for the Plymouth area. Contact Martin if you want to know more.

**The Power of the Sea** Art exhibition 5-April-6 July. Turner, Constable etc. RWA Bristol ffi [rwa.org.uk](http://rwa.org.uk) or 0117 973 5129

**Listings of summer events.** There are now two lists of events with nationwide coverage, the National Historic Ships list and a list in Classic Boats for April, which is international in coverage. The NHS list includes some inland waterway events. Of interest in our area, are Golwaran 27-29 June, Fowey Classics 1-4 August, Tall Ships Falmouth 28-31 Ug, Mylor 1-5 September. 11-14 September is Heritage Open Days, mainly buildings and a few vessels.

Humber Keel *Daybreak* was awarded 2014 *Flagship of the Year* by National Historic Ships.

John Elver organises coach trips from Bristol to visit maritime, air and railway sites. His contact details were omitted from the last edition

[johnelver@yahoo.com](mailto:johnelver@yahoo.com) Tel 07846 868101

## **S/S *Shieldhall* - Falmouth Dry Dock**

I am writing this brief update just two or three days after returning home from Falmouth where the ship is now in dry dock.

It was agreed that we would share the dock with the Tor Point Ferry. The ferry's arrival in Falmouth was, however, delayed by two or three days – partly due to adverse weather for the towage and partly other factors. For us the delay has meant a delay in pumping the dock dry and a consequent delay in commencement of the major structural renewals to the underwater section of the hull.

Nevertheless, it is good to report that “*Shieldhall*” had a smooth if slowish passage to Falmouth from Southampton (adverse winds). Most importantly, the really extensive work to be done with Heritage Lottery Fund support is now well and truly under way. Some of the plating that is to be replaced will be riveted and we are told that the sound of riveting has not been heard in Falmouth dry dock for many many years.

After last summer's sailing season some works were carried out while the ship was alongside. We now have an awning that can cover the whole of the Boat Deck and will substantially increase the shelter available to passengers. The other large and important task accomplished by early December was the removal of asbestos. With steam pipes extending throughout the ship this was a very significant job. Of course, removal of the asbestos lagging enabled complete inspection of many pipes and joints that had remained hidden for years and years. Happily only two pipes and a small number of joints needed to be replaced.

The extended dry docking means that “*Shieldhall*” will not be home in Southampton until early May. This year, to allow for unplanned delays, no sailings are planned until early June. Apart from our programme of sailings it is understood that Southampton will again hold a Maritime Festival towards the end of August. If it compares with last year's Festival then I would recommend that you make plans to attend.

### **Doug Brodie**

*[ John Elver is running a coach visit to Shieldhall on August 25<sup>th</sup>. from Bristol ffi 07846 868101 ]*

## **WEBERY**

A member reported that an email he sent to the membership secretary using the address membership@swmaritime.org.uk was bounced as undeliverable. However, this message was eventually received albeit after some delay. Investigations did not reveal any fault with our email forwarding system so the cause appears to have been a transient failure somewhere in cyberspace. If anyone else receives a bounce message when attempting to contact a committee member using the xxx@swmaritime.org.uk series of addresses please let me know, enclosing a copy of the bounce message.

## **Social media**

Our Facebook and Twitter presence is going from strength to strength. We now have 140 followers on Twitter and 38 likes on Facebook. Well worth a look, click the buttons at the bottom of any page on our website.

## **New download added to the members' area**

The new Standing Order form has been changed from rtf format to pdf, as some computers have been unable to access rich text format. If anyone cannot access the replacement pdf form please let me know and I will make both formats available.

## **Email enquiries etc**

### **Researching John Hawkins' 1567-9 voyage to Africa and the Caribbean.**

From non-member Gloriane Garth ggarth@verizon.net

I'm planning a trip to England to research a book and was hoping you could advise me about the location of various historical resources. I am researching 3 men: David Ingram, Richard Brown, and Richard Twide, all of whom were sailors on Sir John Hawkins' 1567-9 voyage (to Africa and the Caribbean). These 3 men may have been natives of the Plymouth area. Do you know where birth/marriage/death records would be from this timeframe? Do you know if Plymouth maritime records from 1560-1600 would be housed (especially lists of sailors on outbound voyages)?

## **Forum**

There was little of general interest on the forum this time. There were a few additions to the steadily growing list of Polish Navy WW 2 personnel.

Other topics include genealogical enquiries; another "Spanish Restaurant" plaque; fake scrimshaw; a home wanted for a heeling error instrument and a request for information leading to a model of "Pathfinder " No 14 Trinity House Pilot Ship stolen from the Wirral area in 2001.

**Dave Hills**  
webmaster@swmaritime.org.uk



The Society regrets to record the deaths of **Cyril King, John Porter Stretton,** and **Christine Kaye.** We are the poorer for their passing.

### **Memorial to Captain Phillips, Commodore of the First Fleet**

A fine, elegant, and informative tribute sculpture in bronze and stone has been designed for a garden at the Assembly Rooms in Bath, across from the house where Phillip and his wife lived. The community of Bath supports this project and the dedication is planned for July 2014. Ffi [www.britozeast.org.uk/](http://www.britozeast.org.uk/) and see the book review in SWS82.

**SOUTH WEST MARITIME HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**Registered Charity No. 289141**  
**(Updated 12.11.13)**

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