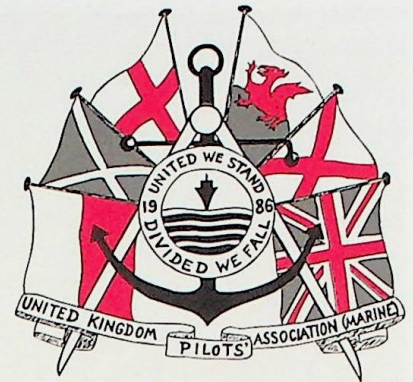


THE PILOT

October 1999

No. 259



The official organ of the United Kingdom Pilots' Association (Marine)

Editorial

Welcome to the last edition of *The Pilot* this millennium! In common with all publications it is natural at this stage to reflect on the history of pilotage. Upon analysis of the limited information available it becomes apparent that our profession has remained virtually unchanged in the development of ship handling skills. The ships may have changed but the basic art of pilotage is the safe execution of a passage and manoeuvre to place a vessel in a certain position. The principles involved of balancing the forces of available motive power, wind, and tide coupled with local knowledge of depth and hazards to safely achieve this are exactly the same today as when the first ever vessel arrived off an unfamiliar port. It would probably have been a local fisherman who climbed aboard the first vessel and used his local knowledge to take it into a safe mooring. I have heard pilotage described as the second oldest profession, I would argue that ours is in fact the oldest profession. After all it must have been a pilot who brought the first ship full of sailors into the first ever port which created the demand for the services of the so called "oldest profession"!!

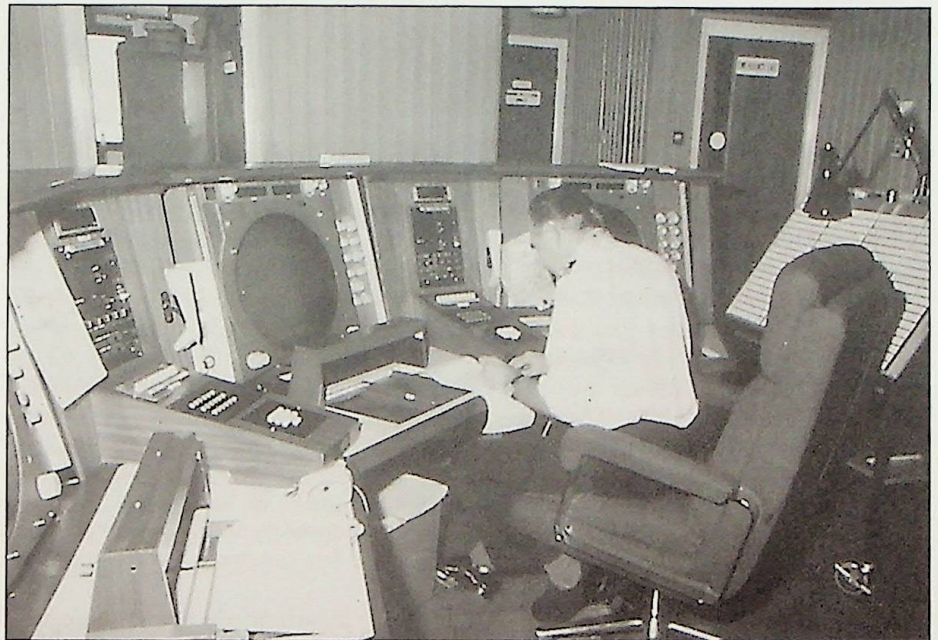
Thanks to all those who have responded to my appeal for articles, don't despair if yours has not appeared in this issue, it will appear at some future date.

HAPPY MILLENNIUM to you all.

John Clandillon-Baker
Canterbury Gate House, Ash Road
Sandwich, Kent CT13 9HZ
Tel: 01304 613020

PLEASE NOTE NEW E-MAIL
e-mail: jcb_pilot@talk21.com

Vessel Traffic Services - VTS



The original Port of London radar VTS.

Photo: PLA

Having promised you a feature on VTS for this issue I must admit to having found it quite a difficult task to produce it. Apart from the pressures of work and the pleasures of holidays there has been a considerable amount of information to cull! Pilots, ship owners, port authorities, lawyers etc. all have written at such length that I feel that there is enough material for a book. In editing the material I hope that I have covered all the current "hot potatoes" and must emphasise that the views are my own and not necessarily those of the UKPA(M).

Hopefully it will stimulate some correspondence!

What is it?

The Internationally accepted definition is: "A service implemented by a competent authority designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The service shall have the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area."

History

Possibly the earliest form of VTS was provided by someone ashore with a sounding board signalling by means of a beacon or flag to a ship standing off the port that there was sufficient water for the vessel to enter. Oil lamps replaced beacons for night-time signalling and these in turn were replaced by electric lamps. In ports such as Dover where the VTS area is very small but the traffic intense light signals are still used as a primary source of VTS information. For ports with larger estuarial approaches however very little changed until this

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century when radio permitted direct communication between the ship's Master/Pilot and the port authority. This enabled ports to identify and report on vessels prior to their arrival and to subsequently handle each ship as it arrived. The development of radar technology in the 1950s enhanced this service but it was only really in the 1970s with the development of automatic plotting and tracking that the shore VTS station was able to become more pro-active in the monitoring of shipping.

Current role of VTS

VTS provides 3 main services:

- Information
- Advice
- Direction

Information:

This is currently the primary service offered by VTS systems and enhances the information available from vessels' own resources by providing:

- Position Identity, course and speed of vessels within the coverage area,
- Liaising between ship and shore re ETAs etc,
- Tidal and weather information,
- Navigational warnings,
- Temporary information such as vessels manoeuvring,
- Specific information such as berth availability to individual shipping,
- Port emergencies.

Advice:

This function is used should the VTS determine that in the interests of safety a vessel should be made aware of a developing situation such as a vessel manoeuvring for a berth and likely to impede the passage of other shipping. It is left up to the master/pilot as to the best action to adopt to deal with the situation.

Direction:

This function uses the Harbour Master's power to order a vessel to undertake a certain action in the interests of safety for that vessel or any other vessel and overrides the decision of the master or pilot. An example would be if a vessel reported "I am now letting go from 'X' jetty". The VTS operator observes another vessel whose passage may be impeded by that action and requests the vessel to stay alongside. Should the vessel intending to leave ignore that advice and state his intention to leave regardless then the Harbour Master or his "designated deputy" may issue a special direction ordering the vessel to remain alongside. Failure to observe such a direction can result in prosecution of the Master. This power of course is available to any Harbour Master regardless of whether or not a VTS system is in place. In practice it is rarely used.



The latest Port of London VTS Centre (Pilot's console in foreground). Photo: PLA

Remote or Shore Based Pilotage

Controversial and emotional terms, which put a gleam in the eye of ship owners, and harbour authorities who would like to remove the expense of providing a pilot. Pilots, unsurprisingly, vociferously defend their territory against such intrusion from outsiders and debates on this topic are always "lively" to say the least! So, is it feasible and will it happen? My own personal opinions are yes to the first and possibly, but not for a long time, to the second.

Firstly let's clarify the terms "shore based and remote pilotage". The terms have been judged inappropriate by the DETR who, using the definition of a pilot as "someone not of the ship who has conducted thereof" are of the opinion that it is only possible for a pilot physically on the bridge to have "conduct" of a vessel. This opinion has been reinforced by the MAIB in their report into the *Albatros* grounding which occurred whilst the master of the vessel was being guided out of port by a pilot on board a pilot cutter. A vessel cannot therefore be "piloted" from a VTS centre.

Existing Technology

The technology necessary to enable a vessel to be controlled from a VTS centre has been available for at least 30 years so the question that needs to be asked is why hasn't it been done? In my opinion the answer is simple and is a result of the total inability of the shipping industry to develop an internationally standard radar transponder for shipping. A basic transponder costing a few hundred pounds would remove the three failings of VTS systems. These are the correct identification of vessels, the ability to maintain tracking in poor weather

involving loss of target due to sea or rain clutter and vector swap/loss when vessels pass close or run adjacent. It seems unbelievable that technology developed during the second World War for guiding aircraft has never been introduced into the maritime world but as usual because the Industry could not identify any financial advantage in fitting them there was no incentive to develop a marine version. The incentive of a reduction of pilotage requirements has now caused a flurry of activity to introduce a system compatible with VTS. Ship owners and port authorities are impatient to introduce a system to remove the expense of a pilot. Manufacturers are rushing to develop the required equipment but no internationally agreed specifications have yet been produced. Consequently there are currently 3 concepts undergoing trials with the proponents for each one claiming it is the best.

Radar based transponders, as used by aircraft, are probably the most useful for a VTS centre which is already uses radar to track targets. Since the radar echo and transponder signals are carried by the same medium then no ambiguity can occur between 2 targets close together even though their radar echoes may have merged on the VTS screen. This system is really only useful as a means of identifying and tracking a ship but without providing any other information.

VHF and GPS transponders both use coded signals to transmit data to the VTS centre and provide location, identification course and speed made good. In addition to this information is the possibility to "piggy back" extra information i.e. ETA, draft, compass heading, engine settings etc. thus increasing to possibility of positive control of the vessel from a VTS centre. The drawbacks of these systems is that the data signals, in originating from a different



Photo: PLA

The advantages of the new PC based display (right) compared to the previous radar displays (above) can easily be seen.

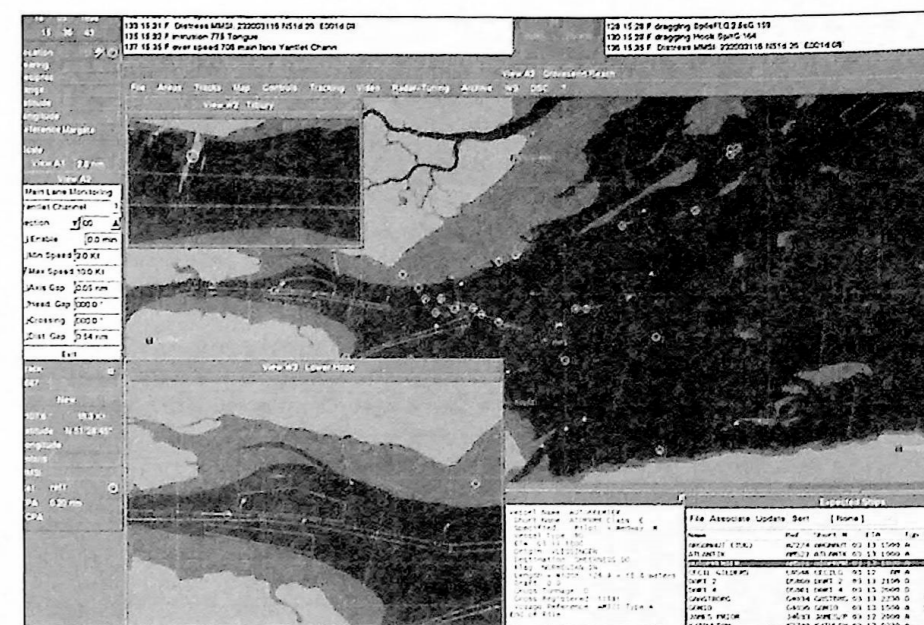


Photo: SOFRELOG

medium to the shore radar VTS station, may not exactly correspond with the radar echo tracked by the VTS leading to a possible confusion between tracked targets. A fundamental failing of any VTS system is that if a target is not correctly identified then the information is not only useless, but potentially dangerous.

In my opinion a successful transponder system will need to incorporate a combination of radar and GPS signals and all craft (including leisure users!) will have to be fitted with at least the radar transponder with each class being allocated a unique identity code. The format will also have to be compatible with every VTS system in existence!

Assuming that the technology is put in place two major problems still need to be overcome if VTS is to extend its control over shipping, namely berthing and on-board manning levels.

Automatic berthing: The only totally automatic berthing system currently in use is on board the *Stena HSS* vessels. The system requires very expensive ship and shore installations and has on at least one occasion failed causing severe damage to one of the ships and the berth. I am unaware of any proposals to develop a standard

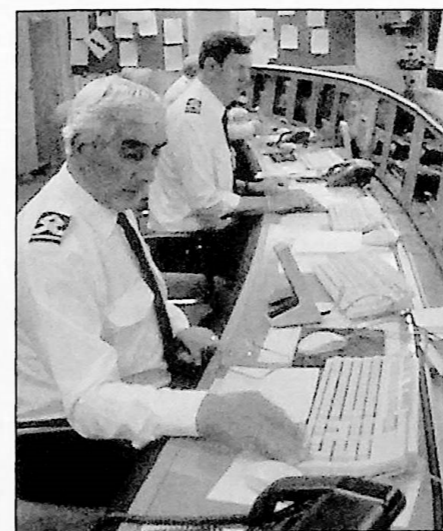


Photo: PLA

automatic berthing system for general use

On-board manning: During the last 10 years the manning levels, especially on the coastal trades, have been reduced to such an extent that the MAIB has identified the low manning of vessels as a significant cause of marine accidents. The increasing use of former Eastern block officers with poor knowledge of English is also of great concern. The DETR proposed requirements for harbour authorities to undertake formal risk assessment of districts coupled with proposed legislation on seafarers hours could well identify the safety argument for providing a pilot as valid.

Pilots and VTS

Pilots now accept the VTS as a valuable aid to safety and increasingly are being incorporated into VTS centres to provide expert advice. In London pilots have replaced the duty officer in the VTS centre during the last 6 years and despite difficulties from both harbour masters and pilots in defining the role and responsibilities it is now accepted on both sides that the overall quality of the VTS service has improved as a result. London now possesses a new "state of the art" PC based system and, having had first hand experience of operating it, I can report that the quality of information and user friendliness have dramatically improved. However, the service still relies on vessels reporting in on VHF to establish identity and is still prone to vector loss/swap problems in common with all current systems available. All these latest systems still only display radar derived historical course and speed made good and can only therefore be used for information and advice. I know from experience that "rogue" ships utilise all the resources of a VTS officer and duty pilot and the quality of service offered to other shipping is therefore compromised as a result.

The Future

A well run fully manned vessel with modern navigational equipment is probably capable of safely navigating through a compulsory pilotage district without a pilot on board. The question is how does one identify these vessels? My own thoughts are that in an extension to the existing exemption certificate system a "VTS compliant" ship could also be declared exempt. Systems already exist to provide VTS information to pilots by means of portable units. These, however, are cumbersome and impractical. It would be fairly simple for manufacturers to develop a marine radar/ECDIS unit capable of interrogating and downloading VTS information from a port. The bridge team would be able to obtain information concerning tidal data, other shipping movements, berth availability etc by interacting directly with the port VTS and other tracked targets and the berth. The vessel's track could be automatically monitored with alarms for off-track and proximity sounding on board. VHF transmissions could be virtually eliminated for such vessels. As a result VTS centres would become less involved in monitoring and communicating and become data processing centres possibly reducing the VTS manning requirements. With a special port discount available to such vessels companies would see an immediate benefit from running well manned fully equipped vessels thus accelerating the process. Sub standard vessels/operators would soon be eliminated from the seas. I personally see this as the way forward rather than investing vast resources in trying to develop positive control systems in a VTS. In the future a qualified pilot/watch-keeper will see the whole picture from on board VTS information and other aids supplemented by visual lookout.

PILOT INJURED - MAIB REPORT

A recent MAIB report detailed an incident whereby a pilot had suffered an injury whilst disembarking from a small coastal tanker.

The incident occurred in moderate conditions after the pilot had made his lee and was waiting at a gate in the ships railings for the cutter to come alongside to take him off. When the cutter approached it was realised that the freeboard of the cutter was greater than the freeboard of the ship and that the step up from the deck to the cutter was too great to board from the position adjacent to the boarding gate. The pilot decided to work his way aft outside the ship's railings to a point where the freeboard of the cutter was less. When the cutter closed the ships side it sheared towards the ship and crushed the pilot's left leg.

The main finding of the MAIB was that the accident occurred as a result of changing an established routine "without thinking through the consequences". However the "Lessons learned" in my opinion raise an interesting point with paragraphs 2,3&4 stating the following:

2. Safe transfers between pilot (sic) and

ship require the pilot launch to be hard alongside before the pilot attempts to board it. They also require someone to be responsible for its safe execution. The moment the pilot stepped outside the rails in this instance someone should have said "stop".

3. The moment the pilot decided to step outside the railings, the risks escalated. He might have got away with it and obviously thought he could, but that is how so many accidents occur. He should not, under any circumstances, have stepped out and put himself between the vessel's railings and the pilot launch nor should he have attempted to step across until he had been told it was safe to do so by the person controlling the operation.

4. The person in charge of the transfer must have a good overall view of what is going on, the knowledge to think through the possible consequences of any action being taken and the authority to give instructions to all concerned.

I have highlighted the above texts in bold type because whilst identifying the need for

"someone" in charge the MAIB have failed to identify who this might be. As I see it there are 3 distinct areas of responsibility with a very grey area where no ladder is used:

The ship is responsible for the safe rigging of the ladder and the pilot's safety whilst on the ladder.

The Cox'n of the cutter is responsible for deciding whether or not a safe transfer to the pilot cutter is possible and for bringing the cutter alongside the ship and the AB on the cutter has a responsibility for advising the pilot when he feels it is safe to transfer.

Finally the pilot himself must make the ultimate decision as to whether or not to transfer.

In my opinion it is virtually impossible for one person to "control the operation" and I feel that the most important lesson to be learned from this accident is for a pilot to place his own safety above any other consideration.

JCB

MARITIME COURSES

SHIP HANDLING COURSES

Cost effective training that develops skills and builds confidence in ship handling, within a safe environment.

Courses for Pilots, Masters and Officers run from March to November and can be specifically tailored to suit customer requirements.

The centre has a fleet of 6 scaled manned model ships up to 300,000 Dwt. including a state of the art twin screw vessel with thrusters and independent rudders.

Exercises take place on a sheltered 13 acre lake with many scaled miles of channels and more than 30 berths.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

This course uses a ship simulator to provide mariners with the opportunity to deal with various emergencies and develop procedures to assist in the safe conduct of the vessel.

All courses can be tailored to meet individual customer requirements and accommodation can be arranged for officers attending courses.

RADAR & VTS SIMULATION

Courses include:

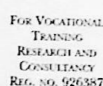
- Automatic Radar Plotting Aids (ARPA)
- Radar/ARPA Updating
- High Speed Navigation Course
- Navigation Control Course
- Small Vessel Navigation Control Course
- ECDIS Operator Course
- Vessel Traffic Services Courses



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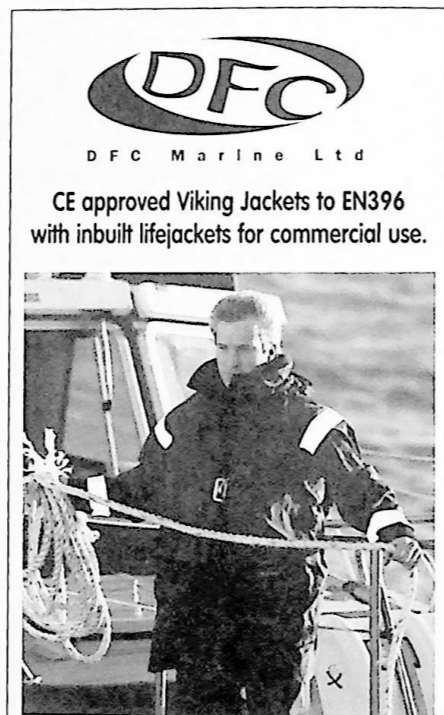
Web pages: <http://www.solent.ac.uk/wmc/>



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e-mail: dan@danfellows.co.uk

PENSIONS NEWS

Actuarial Valuation 31 December 1999 - changes in contributions and benefits

If you are a serving pilot, you will have received a letter confirming that it has been necessary to increase contributions and to change two benefits in order to achieve financial balance within the Fund.

Contributions

The rate of contributions to the Fund will increase on 1 January 2000, from 14.4% to 21% of Pensionable Earnings. For self-employed pilots the rate translates into an increase from 12.59% to 17.36% of Gross (Contribution) Earnings. Employed pilots will pay 8.4% and their employers 12.6%.

Benefit changes

- 1) The guaranteed rate of post retirement pension increase will be replaced by Limited Price Indexation (retail price indexation up to 5%) for all future service built up, or awarded, after 1 January 2000.
- 2) The service enhancement in the case of ill-health retirement will be restricted to age 60, in place of the previous age of 65. This change will apply from 1 September 1999. This will also affect the level of a death-in-service widow's pension which is based upon 50% of a pilot member's ill-health pension as at the date of death. [For Special Members (those who joined the Fund at least 22 years ago), the full 30% addition to pre-membership and transferred-in service will continue to apply].

Reasons for the changes

After reducing contributions in 1989 and 1992, and improving ill-health benefits at the same time, the current changes were not undertaken lightly but were necessary to satisfy the funding requirements of the Pensions Schemes Office (Inland Revenue). The abolition of tax credit reclaims from equity dividends had a significant impact on the Fund (and many other pension schemes). Low inflation, low interest rates, improved longevity and high costs of ill-health retirement have all played a part in the Fund's current finances.

Existing benefits

However, the provision, in 1989, of 5 years' service in place of the "double credits" for *Special Members*, will remain in place. Also, an early retirement pension, **without reduction for early payment**, from age

58 will continue to be available to most pilots.

The extension of child allowances, and the removal of the reduction in a widow's pension where the marriage had existed for more than ten years, are two other recent benefit improvements that will remain in place.

Illustration of current ill health benefits

In order to demonstrate the effect of the ill-health benefit change, I show below two calculations, one for a pilot who joined the Fund in 1978 and the other for a pilot who was originally licensed by Trinity House (a *Special Member*).

1) J. P. Jones

Date of birth 30 September 1944
Joined the Fund on 1 July 1978
Retiring on 31 December 1999

Service in Fund
01.07.1978 to 31.12.1999 = 21.5 years
Ill health enhancement **
01.01.2000 to 30.09.2004 = 4.75 years
Topping up Scheme (in full) = 0.25 years
Total service 26.5 years

Total Pension Entitlement:-
26.5/60 x £38,000 = £16,783.33pa
or
Maximum tax-free cash sum of £57,000
plus
Residual pension of £11,083.33pa
[£16,783.33 less £5,700 (57000/10)].

** The above enhancement relates to service after 31 December 1999 and will therefore attract post retirement increases in line with LPI (RPI up to 5%pa).

The rest of the benefit will be increased by at least the 3% p a guaranteed rate.

2) I M Sailing

Date of birth 30 June 1938
Became licensed on 1 Oct 1963
Joined the Fund on 1 April 1971
Retiring on 31 December 1999

Pre membership credit = 3.00 years
(39.3% of actual pre Fund service)
30% uplift on 3 yrs service = 0.90 years
Service in Fund
1.04.1971 to 31.12.1999 = 28.75 years
5 years (awarded in 1989) = 5.00 years
Topping up Scheme (in full) = 1.50 years
Total service 39.15 years

Total Pension entitlement:-
39.15/60 x £41,000 = £26,752.50pa
or
Maximum tax-free cash sum of £61,500
plus
Residual pension of £20,602.50pa
[£26,752.50 less £6,150 (61500/10)].

All of the above entitlement will be increased by at least the guaranteed rate of 3%pa.

The future

The new rate of contributions from January 2000 will still be less than the underlying rate for future service of 29.6%. If investment returns do not meet expectations then contributions will have to rise again in future years.

Despite the increase in contributions and the two entitlement changes, the Pilots' National Pension Fund continues to provide extremely good benefits. For those who remain in one final salary scheme for a significant part of their working lives, particularly during the years leading up to retirement, a 60th defined benefit pension scheme is considered to be the very best option. Post retirement increases and widows' pensions are very expensive ancillary benefits if they have to be bought by a personal pension "pot". The continuing low levels of annuity rates are not helpful to those who need to draw their pension and have little choice over the timing.

Jan Lemon

Retirements

BG Ball	Milford Haven	Jun '99
JT Buckham	Hartlepool	Jul '99
MS Dickinson	Humber	May '99
MR Goodwin	Bristol	Jul '99
DS Gordon	Clyde	Jul '99

Legal Defence Insurance

(Navigators & General Insurance Co Ltd
Policy No 20004375 UKPA(M) Indemnity)

Notification of Incident

Pilots involved in incidents should notify the company as soon as is practical to register the case, either by telephone or in writing to:
Navigators & General Insurance Co Ltd,
PO Box No 848, Brighton, BN1 4PR.

In office hours

Mr L Powell:
Daytime tel: 01273-863453

Outside office hours

Mr L Powell:
Home tel: 01323-729393
or
Mr S S McCarthy:
Home tel: 01444-248520

UKPA(M) Notice Board

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

The question has been raised on a number of occasions recently on the parameters and guidelines used by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch for investigating accidents in Pilotage Waters.

In response to these queries I have received the attached letter from MAIB.

NCE McKinney

Dear Mr McKinney

Thank you very much for your letter of 14 May which I read on return from my leave yesterday. As I am sure you are aware the fundamental purpose of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch is to determine the circumstances and causes of marine accident involving a UK registered vessel or any vessel in UK territorial waters. The Regulations under which we function are the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation Regulations) 1994 which are currently being revised. These regulations state that I may investigate any accident and, in practice, the Branch will carry out some form of investigation into about a third of the 1800 accidents reported to us each year.

Many of these 'investigations' merely seek amplifying information but the most serious result in a published report. Resource constraints, including the number of inspectors at my disposal on the day, will inevitably influence my ability to carry out an investigation but I will always endeavour to look into a situation where there is serious pollution or loss of life.

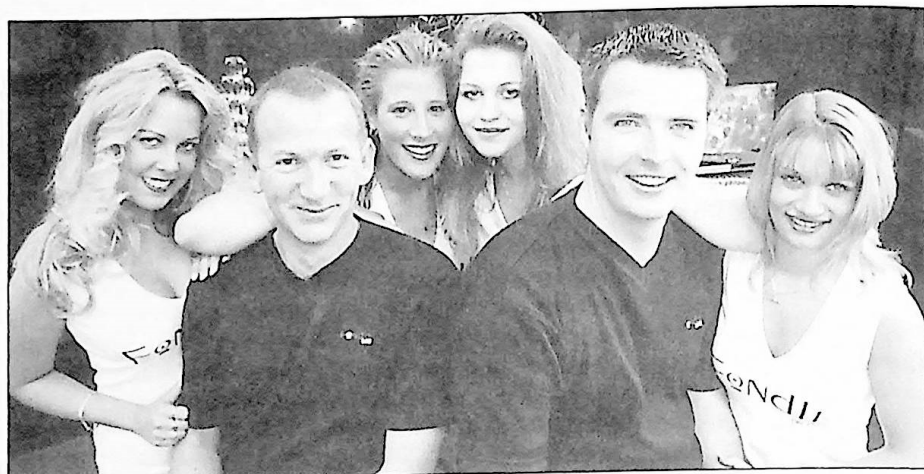
There are no specific parameters or guidelines for investigating accidents in pilotage waters. They are treated in exactly the same way as any other accident but for many of the less serious ones we often find that the locally convened investigation into whatever occurred is adequate to establish the cause. We are, however, just as likely to investigate these minor accidents and draw our own conclusions. The decision on whether to investigate is taken at the time but the most essential ingredient is that they are reported to us in the first place.

Although I know this doesn't provide the clear-cut guidance I suspect you seek, it reflects the reality of running a very small Branch with more than enough business to keep it very busy indeed.

If you or any of your colleagues would like to come and visit us here in Southampton we would be more than delighted to explain at first hand what we are trying to do and how we are doing it. I am very keen to establish links with the entire maritime community and visitors are most welcome.

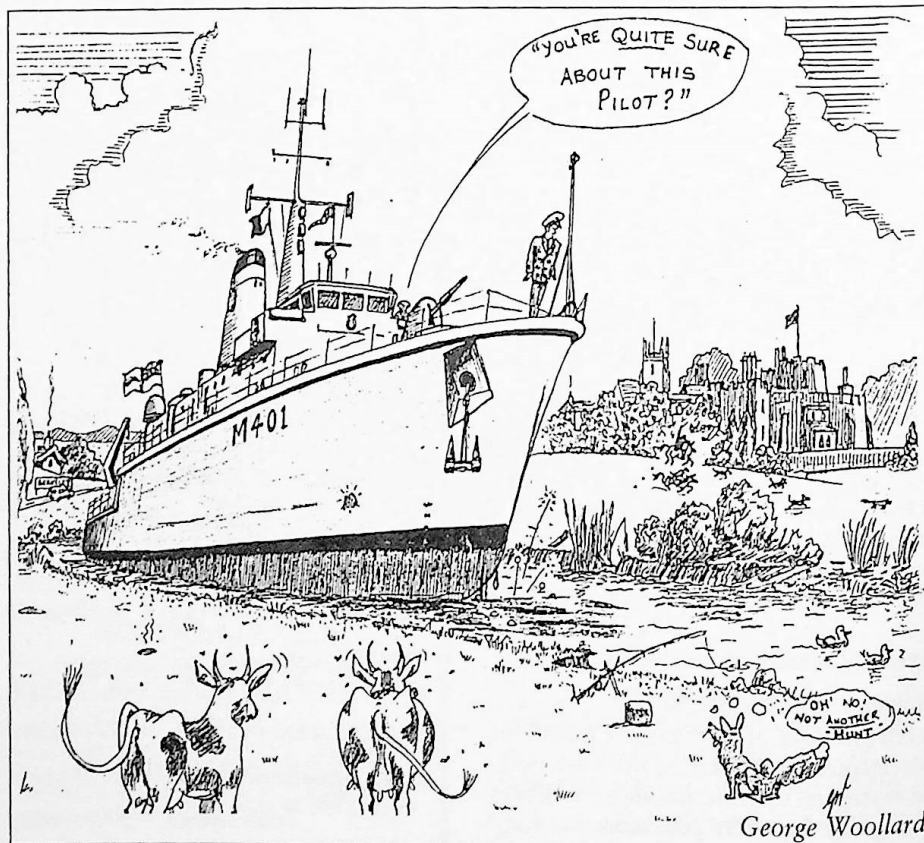
JS Lang, Rear Admiral
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

Harwich pilots Fondled?



It's not often that we get a chance for a bit of glamour in *The Pilot* so when I received this photograph along with a press release from a company called FONDLE my attention was diverted from the usual scan - bin mode! FONDLE (Fibre Optic Navigation & Deck Lighting Equipment) is a company which is revolutionising onboard lighting by using a centralised light box housed below decks. Fibre optic cables are used to pipe lighting where required. Harwich Haven Authority have been involved in sea testing the system for over two years and having been very satisfied with the concept and performance of the unit have installed the "Deckpoint" system to provide down-lighting onto the side decks of their new pilot cutter *Haven Hawk*. FONDLE currently manufacture 3 specialist lighting systems but are also developing and testing a navigation light installation using fibre optics.

Further information: Tel: 01284 718401
Web site: www.fondle.co.uk



George Woollard

HMS Belfast ~ an unusual act of pilotage

Early in June HMS *Belfast*, the well known tourist attraction was unmoored from her mooring tier in the Pool of London for the first time in 17 years to be towed to Portsmouth for dry docking. The delicate task of piloting this historic vessel was undertaken by PLA river pilots Peter Widd and David Hocking with the Worlds' media in attendance. Due to insufficient water to swing the ship she had to be towed out through Tower Bridge stern first with the assistance of 3 tugs. The original plan had been to swing the ship in the West India Dock "bell mouth" and connect up the sea

tow to the bow. However, since the weather conditions in the Channel were too severe for the *Belfast* to be towed to sea that day, and because the lay by berth at Gravesend required the vessel to be "head up", Peter decided to continue the stern tow to Gravesend in order to avoid having to swing the vessel twice. Peter found that the towing arrangement of 2 tugs on the stern and 1 on the bow worked well giving reasonable directional stability, a point of particular concern for the awkward transit of the Thames flood barrier (another media focal point)!



PLA pilots Peter Widd and David Hocking
Photos courtesy of PLA

The 24 mile tow was successfully completed and following an improvement in the weather the *Belfast* was towed out to sea the next day piloted by PLA sea pilot Martin MacFarlan. Following the Portsmouth dry docking HMS *Belfast* was safely returned to her moorings on the 17th July by the same pilots and re-opened to the public a few days later. It is hoped that the specialist hull coating applied will provide protection for the next 20 years.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tugs: | <i>Sun Mercia</i> | Voith, Aft |
| | <i>Sun Thames</i> | Voith, Aft |
| | <i>Sun Anglia</i> | Voith, Fwd |
| | <i>Formidable</i> | Conventional, Bow tug for sea tow |

HMS *Belfast* is open daily from 1000 - 1800 summer. 1000 - 1700 winter. Charge: Adults £4.70 Children: Free

A very interesting web site including a live web-cam exists:
www.hmsbelfast.org.uk
Practical information from the Imperial War Museum web page: www.iwm.org.uk



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Group Legal Protection Insurers

Insured Incidents we will cover:
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Any pilot involved in a personal injury or industrial claim must first contact the UKPA(M) head office who will then process the claim through DAS.

UKPA(M): 0171 828 7788

Registered Office: DAS Legal Expenses Insurance Company Limited,
DAS House, Quay Side, Temple Back,
Bristol BS1 6NH

REMEMBER

It is in your interest if involved in any accident or injury, however trivial it may seem at the time, to inform your insurers within 30 days.

Bridge Windows?

After being shown this photograph I have been trying to locate the relevant legislation concerning visibility from the wheelhouse. I seem to recall from the dim and distant past of my Master's Certificate that there are rules concerning the construction and installation of wheelhouse windows but cannot recall any legislation that details the necessity to see anything through them! Can anyone help?

Photo: Mark Stanford

Five months aboard a Hong Kong Tramp in the Fifties

by Alan Osgood Gt Yarmouth (Retd)

After three years away in the Union Steamship Co of New Zealand I came home and took my 1st Mate's Certificate. I was now looking for another job.

I was offered 2nd Mate on the *John Bisco* going to the Antarctic, away for five months survey and supply. I should have accepted this position for the experience but it was only about half pay after my time in New Zealand and I now needed the money.

Then there was a job on the deep sea tug *Bustler* awaiting some unfortunate to get into trouble in the Western Approaches. Again at about half pay.

The third offer was a Hong Kong Tramp by the name of *ss Empire Merchant* at ten pounds a month better than I had earned in NZ ships.

The job had become vacant because my predecessor had found religion. He had set up his cabin as an Eastern Temple, arranging his settee as an altar and burned joss sticks etc. It seems he would not come out of his cabin when required, he would wail and chant disturbing others, so he had to go. This part of my story was told to me by the Chinese 3rd Mate who had suffered the most.

I joined the *ss Empire Merchant* in Middlesbrough. She was an old vessel, formerly *City of Kios*, a coal burner. She was on charter to the 'Ministry of Fuel' discharging coal from the USA. She was a difficult ship for bulk cargoes with 'tween and shelter decks, the coal had to be shovelled from the deck wings into the square of the hatch and down into the lower holds for discharge by grab, a long slow process with nobody very enthusiastic, a three week discharge!

We eventually completed discharge and sailed at night, Chesapeake Bay for orders. Leaving the River Tees in the dark with a tug fast for'd we had to swing somewhere. I was at my station aft with orders to report distances of object astern as we swung. I was reporting on an ancient phone/speaker system, "100 feet and closing ... 50 feet and closing, come ahead Captain we are nearing a berthed tug ... 30 feet ... 20 feet ... I'm looking down the funnel of the tug!" Crunch! All my reports had been acknowledged. We bounced off the tug, and having now swung, proceeded. Soon after I reported to the bridge and the Captain managed to ask me if I thought we had done any damage, all I could say was that I did not know as it was pitch black but that we had landed heavily to say the least. Now the Chinese Quartermaster was reporting

"Steering very much to port Mr Captain". The Pilot suggested maybe we should go to anchor and await daylight to inspect any damage. The Captain said no, he wanted to be on his way, so off we went carrying about 20 degrees of helm to steer a straight course bound for the USA.

The voyage was mostly uneventful though we did pass a ship floating upside down near the Smith's Knoll LV! Later we heard it was a trawler that had been in collision in fog.

On voyage one incident concerned myself and my steward Mr Wong, I had not been with Chinese crews before and Mr Wong was a jolly little man who looked after me very well. A few days out with me on the 12 to 4 watch I got up at about 1000. Mr Wong heard me moving about and knocked on my door and asked if I would like breakfast. It sounded good to me, after 8 years at sea I had never experienced anything like this on British or NZ ships. So I dressed and sat myself down in the saloon, in state on my own, at about 1015. Meanwhile there was an unholy row going on outside the galley, but soon after my steward appeared with a full breakfast and smiling.

Next morning a similar invitation to breakfast, it might have been a little later! Great screams and yells were now coming from the galley area, the cook had taken to my steward with one of the fiddle bars from the galley stove. He had hit him with a swiping blow to the head and the poor chap was streaming blood! It seemed the cook was preparing lunch and breakfast was off! I bandaged him up and he survived but there were no more breakfasts for me!

Orders were received to proceed to Norfolk, Virginia to load coal. We arrived at night after about 12 days and berthed in the dark, loading commenced immediately and we were off on our way in about six hours, nobody having been able to see our stern or rudder for any damage. We were still carrying about 20 degrees of helm to steer a straight course, now bound for Land's End for orders.

The weather was mostly good apart from a violent thunderstorm, the wooden foremast was hit by lightning and the truck fell off and the mast split.

After about a week we received orders to proceed to Antwerp. We arrived at the berth and commenced discharge which was again very slow due to our problem of having to shovel the tween deck/shelter

deck cargo into the lower holds. One day the Chief Officer suddenly had a moment of awareness and realised we had been living dangerously, winter, North Atlantic etc. Orders were given to concentrate on emptying holds 4 and 5 as quickly as possible, fill forepeak, empty afterpeak and get the stern up to view any damage. When the rudder became visible it was obviously out of true when the wheel and steering gear were amidships.

Surveyors and dockyard people were called and were not best pleased to see our damage and to hear that we had crossed the North Atlantic twice in winter with severe rudder damage.

Upon completion of discharge we were ordered to drydock where the rudder and stock were unshipped. The stock was found to be twisted 18 degrees, so effectively we had only had about 20 degrees one way and 55 the other of helm on our two previous passages.

The stock was x-rayed, annealed, then re-keyed and refitted, other bits of damage were made good and tested to the surveyors' requirements then we were off on our way again, still on charter to MoF, to Chesapeake Bay for orders.

We were light ship of course, just bunkers and ballast. When clear of the Western Approaches the weather became bad to very bad to extremely bad. Force 12 plus for three or four days. The seas were above bridge level which was about 60 feet. The ship was pounding heavily and working all the time. We were hove to making no headway and probably dropping back, it was impossible to get sights, just rough D/F positions. With the pounding the engine room crew reckoned the boilers were moving in their cradles and it must have been a very unpleasant job firing them with coal.

On the bridge the gimbals of the steering compass collapsed and the bowl dropped down inside the housing. We had to wire up the compass bowl temporarily.

After a few days of this excess weather the Chief Officer remarked to the Captain that the ship appeared to be "down by the head". As I was the youngest and fittest deck officer I was asked if I would go for'd and have a look down No 1 hatch. Dodging the seas and picking my moment I went for'd with a sailor and a big torch to a small access hatch at the after end of the fo'c'sle, it led into No 1 shelter deck where I was able to look into the lower hold. The lower hold hatches had been blown or thrown out or

off. What a sight, deep water lashing about, floating hatch boards, spar ceiling floating about! I got out quickly and reported to the bridge.

Pumping out was tried but to no avail, debris and coal dust had blocked the bilge suctions. So, after discussions, it was decided to flood No 5 hold, easier said than done, to just below the top of the shaft tunnel (free surface in mind), because by now the propeller was not having much effect mainly fanning the air and we were having trouble to keep her head up hove to. Flooding No 5 was achieved by filling with as many deck hoses that could possibly be rigged. It worked, and after a couple of days we were able to get under way at our best possible speed which was not much because the weather was still not nice with a big sea and swell.

From distress messages we received we learnt that other ships were in trouble, a Liberty ship had deck and hull plating cracks, somebody else had been pooped and her electric steering gear was out of action, so all round things were not so good, not that we could help. After about ten days things began to improve and we started making headway but by now we were getting short on bunkers. It was decided to make for the nearest port which

was Halifax, Nova Scotia, some way north of Chesapeake Bay!

ETA was to be Christmas Day, the afternoon of arrival we passed a Shell tanker bound east, he signalled to me by Aldis light but I still had the wind and weather in my face, snow/sleet, and could not read his message, eventually I got it "Merry Xmas", and we were 23 days out from Antwerp, a passage that should normally take about 10 to 12 days.

After taking the Pilot aboard and going to anchor accurate soundings were taken, we found 14 feet of water in No 1 hold. A diver went down in the icy waters and after his survey reported bottom plate landings and butt joints opened up. There was no drydock available in Halifax at the time so the damage was temporarily sealed up with tallow which took about a week, then a dock was arranged in Boston for repairs. Meanwhile once sealed No 1 was pumped out with portable pumps.

We arrived in Boston in the early new year and went straight onto a floating dock. When it was possible to see the damage it was quite a sight with water draining out. Bottom plates had pulled away from the keel plate and other seams of plate landings, I could get my fingers into some gaps in places. Hundreds of rivets had to be burned

out and replaced. No 1 hold tank tops had been set up and lower hold deck plating seams opened up. Within the tween decks of Nos 2 and 3 holds rivets could be turned by hand in the fore and aft girders due to flexing of the hull, many had to be burned out and replaced.

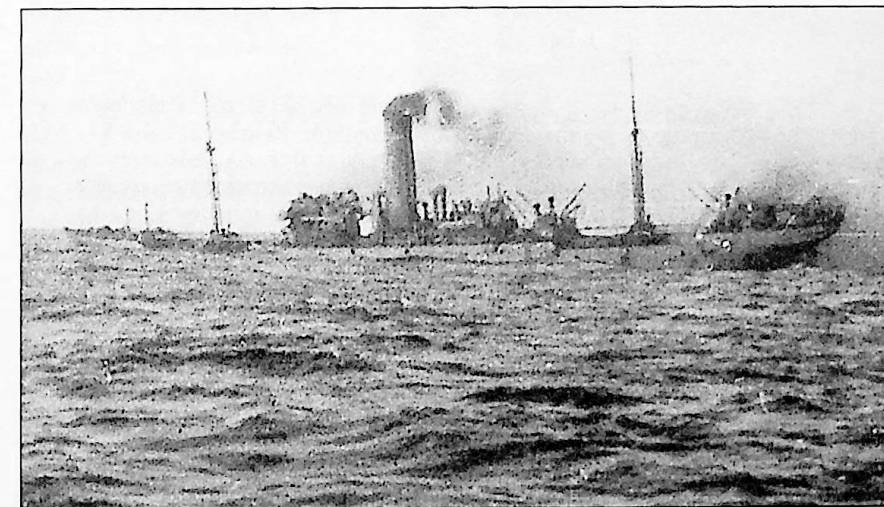
Eventually repairs were completed and we needed our compass swung after all the riveting and hammering. We went to anchor and a tug was engaged to make fast aft and to swing us around as required. Compasses corrected we let go the tug and I was sent for'd to heave up. Just as the anchor was about to enter the hawse pipe it spun round and chopped a hole in the bow, so it was back alongside again to be welded up.

Now we had orders for Newport News and sailed via the Cape Cod canal, arriving safely again we loaded coal for Europe, Land's End for orders.

It was Rotterdam on this occasion. I had had enough drama by now and did not need the money that much, so I elected to pay off and find some other ship that wasn't quite so accident prone. Also she lost her charter due to being deemed unsuitable for coal cargoes and her next charter was to be on the Indian coast, Visakhapatan etc and to various Indian Ocean islands for two years. Enough said!

Sinking of *Rhexenor* - log of U-217

As a follow-up to the Graham Allen story from July, Hugh Ferguson has sent me extracts from the log of U-217 covering the sinking of *Rhexenor*. U-217 was herself sunk on the 5th June 1943. There were no survivors.



MV *Rhexenor* following torpedo attack by U-217, 3rd February 1943.

ERRATUM!—Your editor failed to correctly accredit the photographs accompanying the "Graham Allen Story" in the July issue. All the photographs shown were taken from the book "The Fourth Service" courtesy of John Slader and not from "Merchant Fleet at War". The more observant amongst you may also have noticed that my proof reading is also suspect. The same article has the spelling of the ship's name as *Rhexenor* and *Rhexnor*. The correct spelling is *Rhexenor*. Apologies for all errors.

JCB

2nd February

2016 Alarm for diving exercises
2400 Daily run: 137.0 (surfaced) 0.8 (submerged) 137.8 (total)

3rd February

0143 Portside astern green star
0146 Diving to listen around with hydrophone. No result
0950 Shadows at 100°, Steamer, distance 10,000m, course 0°
1002 Steamer is transmitting, changes course to 330°
1010 Diving for underwater attack
1050 2 torpedos are fired from 2 tubes. Course 290°, 14 sm/h, distance ? After 2 minutes 15 seconds 1 hit (1,800m) at rear end of front hold
1052 Breaking surface. Steamer "Rhexenor" 7,957 BRT. Sunk by artillery. Cargo: Cocoabeans. On her way from Freetown to St Johns. Blue Funnel Line. 10cm gun astern. Crew: 75. Sending of distress call (SOS) and position over 600m band was received.
1210 Steamer did sink burning over her port side
1247 Did leave ships boats after taking 4th Officer Allen as prisoner. Captain and Chief seemed to have lost their lives. Take course to supply meeting point

Coastlines

A Rare Phenomenon

Master's Note to Chief Officer:

Early tomorrow morning there will be a total eclipse of the sun at 0900 hours. This is something that cannot be observed every day. Have the crew muster in their good clothes so that we may see it. To mark this unusual event I will myself explain it to them. If it is raining and we are not able to see it clearly, we will muster in the messroom.

Chief Officer's Note to Second Officer:

On Captain's orders we shall observe, in our good clothes, the sun's complete disappearance at 0900 hours. If it is going to rain, the Captain will tell us about it in the messroom. This is something that does not happen every day.

Second Officer's Note to Third Officer:

On Captain's orders we will fully observe, in our best clothes, that the sun disappears at 0900. If it rains the Captain will tell us in the messroom. This is something which does not happen every day.

Third Officer's phone call to Bosun:

Early tomorrow if the sun shines, the Captain will tell us, in our best clothes, it will disappear at 0900, or in the messroom if it rains, something which does not happen every day.

Bosun to Crew:

Early tomorrow at 0900 in the messroom, rain or shine, the Captain will disappear in his best clothes. It's a pity this does not happen every day.

JD Godden

In Convoy

At the beginning of the war we were bound from Abadan, Iran, to Copenhagen, Denmark, with a cargo of ten thousand tons of graded oils. Necessary precautions were taken for the complete blacking-out of the ship, fuses were removed from deck

light switches, ports were painted, and screens hung over the doors which were used at night.

The ship, which had quite a gaudy colour scheme in peacetime, was, within a week, given a coat of a more sober navy grey. A good ton of paint was used on deck including funnel and masts. Our boats were overhauled and fresh water and provisions checked. They were afterwards swung out and gripped to prevent them from moving when the ship rolled. In an emergency this gripe can be knocked adrift and the boat is free to be lowered on the two falls. A painter keeps the boat alongside until everybody is aboard.

We picked up our first convoy in Port Said at the Mediterranean end of the Suez Canal and were safely escorted to Gibraltar after an uneventful passage. We left Gibraltar after three days in its well-defended harbour and all had the feeling that the worst was still to come. About two days out from there we were warned of an enemy submarine in the vicinity, and we didn't welcome this news as our escort of two destroyers had left us the night before. I had just turned out for my watch on deck when one of my shipmates told me the surprising news that the *Yorkshire*, flagship of our convoy, had been torpedoed. I went up on deck and saw smoke on her afterdeck and observed her settling down by the stern. Ten minutes after she was struck she had gone to the bottom, and only three boats were to be seen to mark her last plunge. It was lucky that a neutral ship was in the offing, as we had orders that if anything like this happened to get away from the scene as quickly as possible. There was one thing which lent a touch of humour to this grim scene. One old tramp steamer, which had been told off a few times for not keeping her station in the convoy, was steaming straight into the wind, shipping green water, and showing us a clean pair of heels.

We got through the night with one big scare. The man in the crow's nest reported a ship on the starboard bow. She had not lights of course, and by the shape of it in the dark we thought it might be a submarine.

She started morsing to us and we didn't answer at first, thinking it might be for her to get a surer target. Luckily, it turned out to be a French destroyer, which escorted us until we met two British destroyers.

We had our first experience of depth charges a few nights later when making for Land's End. It was about eight o'clock in the evening when we heard two explosions which seemed to be either on our ship or very close by. We rushed out taking our lifebelts with us and we heard from the Captain that he thought the *Halizones*, a cargo boat, had been sunk. This proved wrong, however, when we were lying in the Mersey off Liverpool, for what should come steaming up the river but the *Halizones*, minus two lifeboats. Her Lascar crew had panicked and attempted to launch the lifeboats when hearing the depth charges, with the result that several passengers and members of the crew were drowned.

That same evening an outward bound convoy left for the sea. There were all types of ships, from the humble trawler to the large ocean going liner. We could see the same preparations going on as we had to make when leaving port in wartime. I am sure everybody in their hearts wished them a safe voyage and the best of luck. We were all looking forward now to a few days at home before leaving once more "in convoy."

TD Hettle

The REAL Navy

The wind had gradually eased, the southerly gale blowing for the last three days had died down to a force 3. The NE Spit London pilot cutter came back on station at about 1600, all was quiet, I was on turn. An hour later the 'phone rang, "Pilot we've got something here flashing us with her Aldis lamp - seems to be the letter 'G' - better come and see." I was at the station in a flash, just think, I might be home by midnight.

It was obviously small as it rose in the swell and it was certainly grey. It even had a gun on the foredeck, and a White Ensign.

Her Majesty's Navy wanted a pilot, I wondered why? The Captain and bridge crew were a picture of misery, water dripped off their oilskins, the canvas bridge dodger hung in rags. They had left Emden for Portsmouth three days previously, after a week on exercise with NATO in the Elbe, when the storm hit them. Why hadn't they turned back? I asked. No one spoke, the Captain took me to one side. He was, he said, RNVR, as was his crew, seldom went to sea and usually spent his training trips in the Solent. He was actually the Assistant Manager at Barclays Bank, Portsmouth. What's more it was Friday evening and he must be back at his desk on Monday morning. No time to make Portsmouth in this weather so could he please go to RN Chatham? Had he told anyone he was coming? I asked. With no VHF and only 2182 working on his radio he couldn't. When he tried, the Dutch had told him it was for emergency only. He was at his wit's end. I asked if there were any regular RN personnel on board? Only the Admiral, he said! That's regular enough for me, I thought, could we consult him?

A small round man with a bright red face, totally wrapped in yellow plastic emerged from what seemed a hole in the deck. "What ho! who's this then?" allowed the introductions to take place. "Are we off Portsmouth then? hell of a passage - remember one similar in '48 - you the Navy pilot?" In the circumstances it transpired he would love to go to Chatham, had been there in '53. "Submarines?" I asked. "No,

in charge of catering actually." It seems he was a Catering Admiral, navigation was certainly not on his menu! "Leave that to you chaps!"

I called the cutter back to the ship on 2182, North Foreland Radio appreciatively keeping quiet. The Coxswain promised to contact the Admiralty, RN Chatham and the Medway Pilots, they would arrange everything, don't worry. Full ahead was 6 knots against the tide. We were away. No one remembered that war usually stops at about 4pm on Fridays!

Darkness fell but the night was clear, the Captain, spirits lifted by the thought of soon exchanging his wet frigate for British Rail, explained that the Admiral had been in charge of entertaining on the exercise and had hitched a lift home. They had not seen him since they left the Ems. The buoys slowly slipped by and the Medway buoy finally disappeared astern, my relief, the Medway Pilot, would be going down to board the cutter any minute. Suddenly the Port Control Aldis lit the sky and trained on us. "What ship?" it said. We replied "HMS -----." "No pilot required, MoD directions", was the answer. The flood tide took us round the bend, the pilot cutter stayed firmly out of sight, the Captain stood speechless, Barclays Bank seemed a long way away. "Where's your chart?" I sung out. They didn't have one.

I had only been a pilot for a year, was not worldly wise, but was determined we were not destined to join the tankers alongside the oil terminals rapidly approaching right

ahead. Reluctantly I told the Captain that prior to joining the pilotage I had been ten years on the coast and held five exempt licences for London, one of which was for the Medway. He didn't actually say "Yippee!" but if I had asked for an overdraft I could have walked away with thousands! The clandestine pilotage continued, that old paddler, the *Medway Queen* had been my pride and joy, the familiar marks on the river like old friends. But where the hell was RN Chatham? Certainly not on my paddler's patch. We were approaching the last bend before Gillingham, on dead slow, with an empty feeling in the pit of my stomach, when the small tug steaming down the river swung smartly, put his deck lights on and slid alongside. The uniformed newcomer, the Navy pilot, greeted the Captain, apologised for not meeting him at Darteness in time, but said it was good in these days to find someone who was still a real seaman. I slid quietly away, down the bridge ladder and over the side in the lock, walking to Chatham for the first train home.

I imagined Monday morning at Barclays Bank, Portsmouth, the Assistant Manager in all his glory expanding on his battle with the elements to arrive in time for work against all the odds, determined to dine out on the experience for months on end. Whereas, with no "A" Form signed and not even a handshake for my pains, I told no one for nearly 30 years, having realised what fools we can be, both in the Real Navy, and without doubt, a certain pilot!

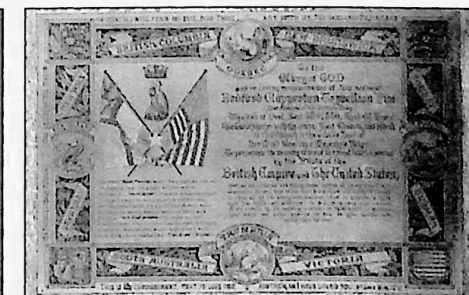
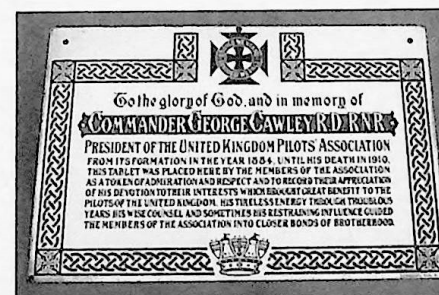
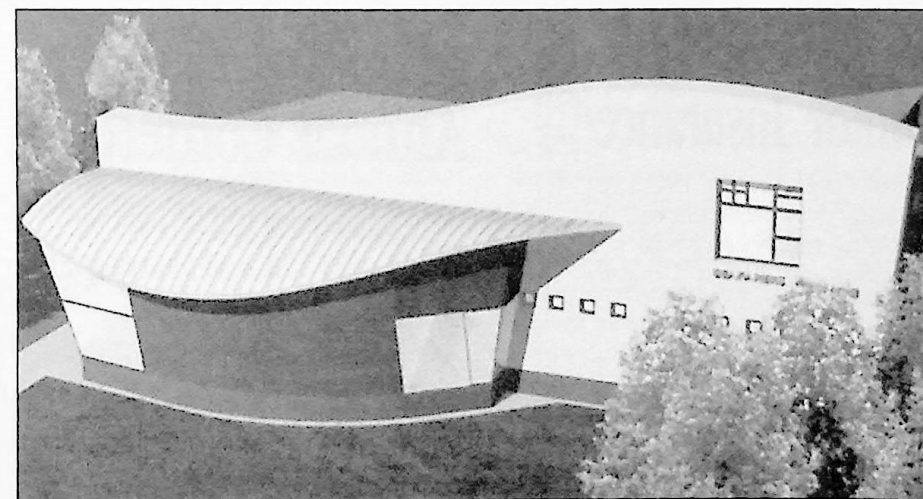
JD Godden

Seafarers' Centre at Portbury

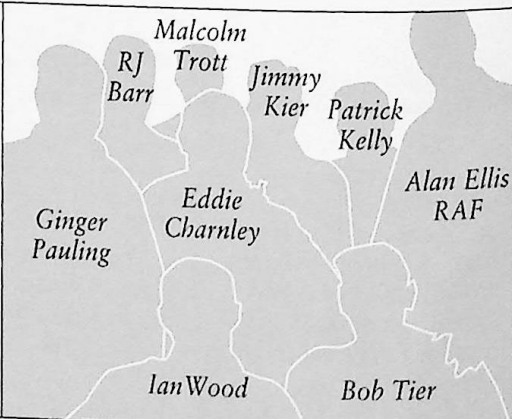
UKPA Founders Plaques

In the July issue I mentioned that retired Bristol pilot John Rich was attempting to arrange for the 2 plaques commemorating the founder members of the UKPA to be mounted in a new seafarers centre to be built at Portbury near Avonmouth.

John has advised me that construction of the new Centre is now well under way and that the builders are confident of completing the work in December. The curator of the St. Nicholas Church Museum has agreed to the transfer of the 2 UKPA plaques and is currently arranging for them to be cleaned ready for transportation. At the time of going to press no chaplain has been appointed to the centre and no date has been set for the official opening. Portbury is very close to Pill, the traditional home of the Bristol pilots.



Following Mrs Barr's request concerning the identities of those in the two photos printed in the last issue of *The Pilot* she has received a letter from HG 'Jim' Plummer. He had served as a boathand with the late John Barr and was able to identify those in the above, but, apart from recognising "Ginger" was unable to help with the second photograph.



OBITUARY

John Maurice Farmer

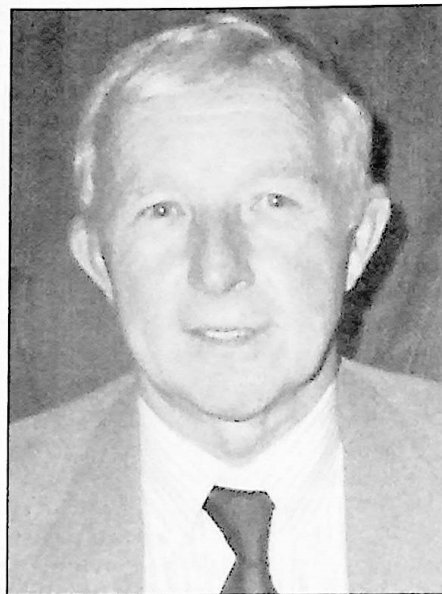
Born in Edinburgh on 22nd September 1929, John was educated at Holy Cross Academy and at the Nautical college 'Dolphin' in Leith.

He died at Greenock, Inverclyde on 16th January 1999.

His apprenticeship started in 1946 with the P Henderson Line of Glasgow and his first command was with them in 1960. Appointed a Pilot with the Clyde Pilotage Authority in 1962, John served on various Committees and was the local UKPA(M) Secretary for several years.

During his service he was choice Pilot for the US Lines. He had a compulsive interest in the workings of the UKPA(M) where his expertise and experience stood him in good stead, especially on the Technical Committee. His aim was to contribute to the constant upgrading and standing of the Pilotage Services.

During the oil crisis in 1974 he was boarding a Japanese VLCC prior to a lightening operation with a smaller tanker. On reaching deck level the pilot ladder mechanism failed and the ladder section with connecting wires ran out to its limit. He was dragged along for eight minutes until the crew manually pulled him aboard. Fortunately, the weather was fine and it was during daylight. His arms and legs were



bruised but, otherwise, he was fine and none the worse for his experience.

As oil, ore and shipbuilding declined the Clyde found themselves with a surplus of Pilots. In 1981 an opportunity arose for 6 pilots to go to Saudi Arabia to handle the pilotage of VLCCs at the new and large oil terminal of Yanbu on the Red Sea coast. John went to Yanbu where the Clyde Pilots' contingent served for three years.

On returning home the UKPA(M) voluntary redundancy scheme reduced the

number of Clyde Pilots and John settled back into his service on the Clyde.

Highlights of his service included the piloting of the *Queen Elizabeth 2* and the Royal Yacht, *HMY Britannia*. As a member of the Royal Gourock Yacht Club he enjoyed sailing his Loch Long class yacht *Aurora*.

Retiring in 1994, John spent a short time in Burma where his experience in tanker lightening techniques was passed on to the local Pilotage Service. He also spent time as a relief Pilot on the island of Aruba.

He was a member of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, a Parishioner of St Mary's Church Greenock and a member of the Catenians.

John is survived by his wife Sheila, Daughters Susan, Karen and Jacqueline and grandchildren. A great colleague and respected by all, he is sadly missed.

Ewan C Ramsay

Pensioners Deceased

May to July 1999

M Clarke-Wood	Liverpool
NR Lewis	Isle of Wight
VC Linney	London - North
E Marrant	London - Thames

UKPA(M) Motor Insurance

Motor Insurance for UKPA(M) members is available through the following brokerage, which is a subsidiary of Barnet Devanny (Scotland) Limited:

Scott Angus & Co, 2 High Street, Errol, Perthshire PH2 7QJ

Tel: 01821 642 668
Fax: 01821 642 833

Ask for Julia or Nicola

Outline of cover: Insurer - Cornhill; Rates - Minimum of 10% off standard; Extra Cover - Will allow the car to be driven by any other pilot, comprehensive cover will apply

Excluded Area - Teesside.

Please contact the brokers directly, However October's mailing will carry more details.

112th UKPA(M) Annual Conference

Conference will be held on
Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th
November 1999

at the Cophorne Tara Hotel
Scarsdale Place, Kensington, London W8 5SR
(Near to Kensington High Street Tube Station)

DETR Question & Answer Session

Andrew Burr of the DETR has agreed to attend the UKPA(M) Annual Conference in London in November (possible Thursday 11th November).

Any questions from the Districts in relation to published draft codes will be welcomed and should be forwarded to the UKPA(M) by the end of October for tabling to Andrew Burr at Conference.

UKPA(M) HOLIDAY INSURANCE

DON'T FORGET!!

The UKPA(M) have negotiated the following competitive rates for Holiday insurance:

Single: £34 p.a.
Married: £49.75 p.a.
Family: £55.50

At present cover is restricted to serving and retired pilots under the age of 65. Negotiations are currently taking place to extend cover for those over 65. For an application form and latest information contact: Davina at Transport House.

LETTERS

Not So Equitable Life

Dear Sir,

May I use the good offices of *The Pilot* magazine to air my concerns about the Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme of the PNPf, as administered by the Equitable Life Assurance Society.

Many pilots, like myself, facing a shortfall in their pensions due to late joining of the PNPf, or poor transfer deals, joined the AVC scheme to boost their pension. This scheme was widely believed to be tax efficient and safe, with the option of dabbling in the stock market by the unit method, or building up a with-profits fund, with its annual guaranteed bonuses, and its non-guaranteed terminal bonus.

Possibly, those pilots who preferred a cautious approach to their investments backed the with-profits approach, and those who joined pre '92 were glad to know that their benefits included a right to a Guaranteed Annuity from their fund, regardless of what happened to annuity rates in the future.

Nor were those pilots who joined pre '92 alone in looking forward to a Guaranteed Annuity. Over one hundred thousand people bought products from Equitable Life with the right to a Guaranteed Annuity.

In the days of steady inflation, insurance companies gave the right to a Guaranteed Annuity with an easy heart, knowing that higher annuity rates were easily available on the open market, and would therefore not cost the companies anything to provide.

However, with low inflation, annuity rates have dropped to abysmally low levels, so that pensioners retiring today in money purchase schemes, where annuity purchase is the only option, are facing real hardship in their retirement. If nothing else, this proves the superior value of the PNPf with its pension rights based on final salary. Thus, the Guaranteed Annuity has become an asset worth having.

In this long-awaited era of low inflation, what is the response of Equitable Life to the Guarantee given freely and in good faith only seven years ago? Why, under the pretext of mutuality, the Society proposes to cut the final bonus of a member who takes up the Guaranteed Annuity. This will have the effect of rendering the Guarantee worthless.

Using the funds of policyholders, the management of Equitable Life have taken a test case to the High Court, to see if they can get away with cutting final bonuses in this way. Whilst the case is sub judice I would not wish to comment on the legality of their actions. However, I certainly would question the wisdom of Equitable Life's

management in taking this to court in the first place. Their action has guaranteed acres of bad publicity, massive costs, and will surely discourage new customers from joining them.

In my opinion Equitable have shot themselves in the foot, and the long-term consequence will be that Equitable will either have to demutualise, merge, or be taken over. No doubt the managers will be rewarded with a large pay-off for putting their ship on the rocks.

Looking to the future, one asks oneself, what would happen if Equitable did demutualise? The policy is between the Equitable and the Trustees of the PNPf. The Trustees, I am glad to say, have so far vigorously defended the right of policy holders to take up the Guarantee, and I am grateful to the Trustees for their support. However, should the Trustees be putting some thought into windfall possibilities? Very large sums of money are at stake.

RA Eades (Humber Pilot)

The Editor

I read with regret in the last issue of *The Pilot* that there were no more Port Profiles in the pipeline. When this feature was started in 1989 the Pilotage Act was newly in place and the CHA's responsibilities under the Act had changed the pilotage workplace drastically. The thought behind the Port Profile was to let all pilots nationwide know what had happened to pilotage around the country, to perhaps instil a greater unity between districts, and even help the Section Committee with information they may eventually have to obtain to run the Association.

It didn't always work like that! Many ports had such antagonistic CHAs that some pilots were unable, or unwilling, to participate in the feature at all, being threatened with dismissal should a critical article ensue. The Editor was left in no doubt by one CHA that he would bear the responsibility if a certain port was even mentioned. Over the years things calmed down and many ports participated, the various authors always saying how interesting it had been to research the archives. To their credit many Port Authorities provided statistical and photographic help to the volunteering Port Profile pilot.

All this is water under the bridge, but the demise of the Port Profile does leave the Editor with a big hole to fill. The worst thing that could happen, not only in my opinion, but in the opinion of those who matter most - the readers of the magazine - is for *The Pilot* to return to the bad old days of long-winded technical reports and foreshortened obituaries.

So how can we help? How about writing the magazine ourselves. The working pilot sees all things new in his District, both from

his hands-on operation and from his port administration. I don't believe that CHAs will summarily dismiss their pilotage workforce if port administration is constructively commented on or criticised. Ship owners will not have their Masters obtain Pilotage Certificates if shortcomings regarding a pilotage port transit are highlighted in your professional magazine. Your Section Committee will not wilt unduly if a member wants to know publicly just what is going on in a certain district, or what the future policy will be on a national issue. The Section Committee should not totally hide behind the old adage "we can't say anything because others might get wind of what we intend to do" as they did during my editorship. I believed then, and do now, it was more to do with a busy Committee member having to write yet another report that scuppered my ideas of interim reports being published, as well as those from the Annual Conference. Of all the sources which supply copy for the Editor none are more backward in coming forward than the Section Committee. What ever happened to accountability?

Which brings me to the retired pilots. Far be it from me to suggest that we suffer from the "There I was, with both anchors down, two cylinders gone off the port engine, in 50 metre visibility and a 30ft swell ..." article. But anecdotes are interesting, often funny, and readily command the attention span leading to reading more of the magazine than you intended. Not forgetting spouse or partner, sibling or friend, who may pick up the magazine and say "I didn't know that sort of thing happened - you never told us". Which is usually true. If the Editor prints, I'll start the ball rolling on another page. Let's keep *The Pilot* buoyant!

JD Godden

The Editor

Following your recent request for anecdotes and your article on the Port of Launceston, Tasmania, I thought that the following may be of interest.

Launceston today must be right in the forefront as far as modern technology is concerned.

In 1949 I was on the mv *Empire Star* bound for Beauty Point Launceston to load apples etc.

We arrived late in the evening in the dark and when the pilot came aboard, following the usual greetings, he said "Right, can anybody steer in quarter points?" There was an unusual hush, a stunned silence! After a prolonged interval plus some quiet questioning around the bridge the answer was "No!" The pilot then said "OK we'll go to anchor and berth in daylight tomorrow."

Those happy unhurried days, the golden age of going to sea.

AH Osgood,
Gt. Yarmouth Pilot (Retd)

DISTRICT QUARTERLY REPORTS

HUMBER

Retirement:
R Vincent 19th August 1999

Recruitments:

	Commenced	Anticipated
	Training	Authorisation
N Dring	1/6/1999	1/12/1899
W Bentinck	1/7/1999	1/1/2000
D Dodsworth	1/8/1999	1/2/2000
E Bibby	1/9/1999	1/3/2000

Other News:

Mark Tolson was authorised and started on 16th August 1999

TEES BAY

Retirement:
RCB Booth - Licensed 12th June '99

MITSUBISHI EXPLORES FISH AS PROPULSION SYSTEM

Engineers working for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have developed a life-like mechanical fish that is entertaining crowds at Mitsubishi's museum in Yokohama. Yuuji Terada, a senior engineer at Mitsubishi says "the real difference between this and the real fish is very small."

Just three of the 60 cm long fish, which are powered by batteries and swim around the tank using sensors to determine direction, have been built. Terada's team has built a larger 1.2 m long fish modelled on a coelacanth from the Cambrian era, some 525 million years ago, that has more complex fin movements.

Presently, the project might cause amusement, but Terada claims that propulsion systems that mimic the actions of a fish's fin could have considerable advantages over the propeller in ships and underwater vehicles. He says that using a flexible oscillating fin would be quieter and would stop ships rolling.

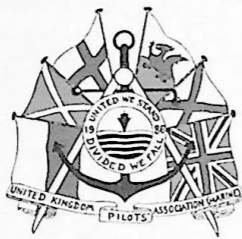
(Fairplay Magazine)

OK so long as you don't have to go astern!
Ed.



The Silver Orange Sea Bream built by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries which is captivating audiences at the company's museum.

UKPA(M) Insignia



The UKPA(M) still has available for sale to serving and retired pilots, the following items:

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- EMPA Ties £9.00
- EMPA Lapel Badges £4.00
- EMPA Car Stickers £0.50
- Pilot Flag Lapel Badges £1.25

All orders and enquiries should be addressed to Davina. Cheques should be made payable to: U.K.P.A.(M).

THE PILOT

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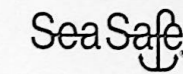
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Belfast	BJ Wilson	6 Bradford Heights, Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, N Ireland BT38 9EB	01960 362559 (H) 01232 553010 (O)
Berwick	P Blanch	c/o Harbour Master's Office, Tweedmouth, Tweed Dock, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 2AA	01289 307404
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