

THE PILOT



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Editorial

As I predicted in the July issue, the operators of the *Cosco Busan*, Fleet Management, have come to an agreement with the prosecutors to make an out of court settlement of a fine rather than face a court case and possible jail term.

The sum agreed of \$10m still has to be approved by the judge in December but if, as seems likely, the fine is formally agreed then the settlement will enable Fleet Management to slip away quietly and avoid the glare of publicity that a court case would have generated. So, with the Master and officers of the *Cosco Busan* (rightly) immune from prosecution as a result of their co-operating with the NTSB investigation, the media and residents of California will be satisfied that justice has been done by putting John Cota behind bars as the criminal responsible for the oil spill.

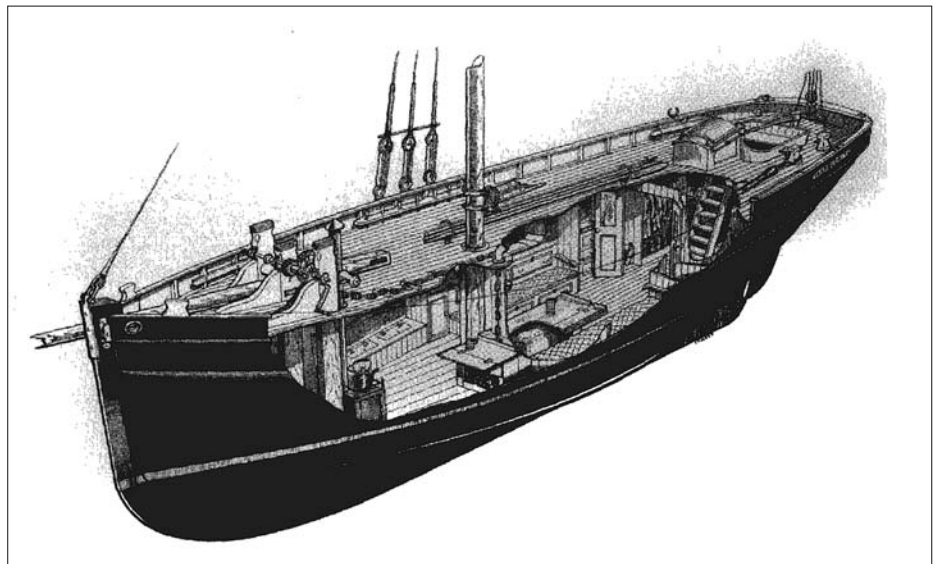
Although I understand that there were other factors in this case that led John Cota to plead guilty to the pollution charge, was he really guilty of a criminal offence? Although I'm no lawyer, my understanding of criminality is that "the act does not make a person guilty unless the mind is also guilty". Based on this criteria, since there is no evidence to suggest that John Cota set sail that day with the deliberate intention of causing a pollution incident to kill an endangered species he isn't a criminal and shouldn't be in prison!

Although the media have now moved on, satisfied that the witch hunt has successfully found the guilty party, the *Cosco Busan* case has already encouraged other environmental legislators to commence criminal proceedings. In Norway the Captain and Third Officer of the vessel *Full City* are under house arrest charged with criminal gross negligence after the vessel's anchor flukes broke in a storm and she set onto rocks causing 300 tonnes of bunkers to leak out. Questions over this case obviously need to be answered, but a criminal prosecution? A worrying trend indeed!

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THE BRISTOL CHANNEL SAILING PILOT "SKIFFS"

In the October 2007 issue I ran a feature on the pilot gigs of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. That feature was based on information contained within a, long since out of print, book called "Azook" by Keith Harris who kindly permitted me to freely use his research for my article. In addition to the gigs, the waters of South West England were also frequented by another famous pilot craft, the Bristol Channel sailing skiff, or cutter as it now more commonly known. Despite the ongoing massive popularity of this sailing design, the only authoritative book on the craft was written in the 1970's by Peter Stuckey. The book was updated and re-published in 1999 but again has long since been out of print and used copies rarely appear and attract very high prices. At the time of writing there is one copy on the internet in the USA with an asking price of \$216! In what was probably my best investment in recent years, I purchased a copy in 1999 when it was republished and Peter Stuckey has kindly granted me permission to use extracts from the book for this article. As an introduction, I cannot better Peter's own which dedicates the book to: those brave men of the Bristol Channel who, with their stout boats, went seeking "downalong".



Typical "Skiff" c.1900

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The Pilotage History

In order to better understand the role of the Bristol Channel skiff it is useful to understand the pilotage area that they covered since the pilots also served vessels trading to ports in South Wales as well as Bristol. The picture however is not as clear cut as the name suggests because due to the competition between pilots in those days there are records in the Welsh ports of their own pilots and in a further complication, the Bristol Channel pilots were not based in Bristol at all but at the small village of Pill at the mouth of the river Avon.

The records of pilotage out of Pill go back to 1497 when barge master James Ray was appointed by the Mayor and Corporation of Bristol to pilot John Cabot's *Mathew* on its historic voyage to the New World. Pill subsequently became the centre for Bristol Channel pilots but the relationship between Pill and Bristol was not a happy one and this strained relationship could probably fill a book of its own so suffice to note for period covered by this article that the pilots operated under the Bristol Channel Pilotage Act of 1807 from which the following extract defines the pilotage area as;

from a certain Place about Four Miles Eastward of King Road and so down the River Severn and Bristol Channel to the two small islands called the Stipe Holmes and the Flat Holmes ... (and their authority shall) be extended to the Appointment of Pilots for the conducting of Ships and Vessels into and out of and upon the whole of the Bristol Channel, and the several Ports, Harbours and Creeks belonging to and issuing from the same ... (that is) all Vessels passing up and down and upon the Bristol Channel to and from the Eastward of Lundy Island, and in or upon the several creeks of the said Channels.

The fact that theirs was a tough life can be appreciated by the photo of Pill pilots and "Westernmen" taken around 1880!

The Sailing Skiffs

There are no historical records of skiffs and their construction prior to the early 19th century but like many craft the evolution would have been gradual over the centuries to meet the three main requirements of speed, seaworthiness and ease of handling. The very nature of pilotage in those days where pilots were in direct competition with each other would have meant that any design element which gave a new boat the edge over existing boats would have been incorporated by others and there is no doubt that this constant drive to gain advantage over others is what caused these remarkable vessels to not only become the best sailing craft of their day but also for the design to be one that is still renowned as one of the best blue water sailing craft in the 21st Century.

The earliest reliable record is from the 1795 Register of Ships which was instigated by the Corporation of Bristol that year and lists 12 Skiffs and provides their tonnage which ranged between 14 and 24 tons but no other details. Other records from the early 19th Century provide more details of some skiffs still surviving from the 1780's & 90's and the lengths of the craft ranged between 33 ft (10m) and 40 ft (12.2m). The sail plans weren't recorded but the skiff *James and Samuel* which is listed in the 1795 register was sold in 1812 and the equipment included 1 mainsail, 2 foresails, 4 jibs, 1 squaresail, 1 gaff topsail and 1 topmast steering sail.

The earliest photograph of a skiff is that of the *Trial* which belonged to pilot T Vowles (1847-78), and shows the squaresail yard which was seemingly a common feature on the early skiffs.

It may be thought that detailed plans would exist for the cutters, especially those built in the late 19th and early 20th century, but such plans are virtually non-existent because the construction lines were either taken from existing hulls or from half hull models. Also there was no "standard" model and lengths generally varied between 40ft (2.2m) and 50 ft (15.2m). Despite the variation in length the method of construction and timber used was fairly standard and the construction was usually of English oak, English elm and pitch pine with interior fittings of teak. Despite the lack of detailed drawings



Pill Pilots & "Westernmen" c 1880

there is the following specification for the *Kindly Light*, a cutter built for Barry pilot Lewis Alexander dated 1911:

General Dimensions: 52ft overall, 14½ ft. beam, about 8½ ft. draught. Length of keel, 38ft. Vessel to be built with round forefoot and elliptic stem. Cabin to be fitted with 2 berths and usual lockers. Forecastle fitted with 2 berths, lockers and racks for sails. Materials to be the best of their respective description and to be fitted in a workmanlike manner.

Keel: To be of English elm. (Generally the elm keels were in one length and about 18 inches deep and 6 inches wide)

Stem & Stem Posts: Of English oak.

Floors, frames, stanchions and beams: Of oak.

Keelson: Of pitch pine.

Planking: 1 oak plank round top, pitch pine to bilge, stout elm bilge 2½ inch, remainder of plank of elm or pitch pine 1½ inch.

Rails: To be of elm or oak with greenheart capping.

Decks: Best yellow pine.

Fastenings: To be galvanized iron.

Masts: To be cutter-rigged with pole size as required. Bowsprit, boom, gaff, topsail yard, two oars, boat hook. Booming out spar.

Ironwork on Keel: Ballast iron.

Rigging: Three shrouds each side of 2in wire, forestay 3½ inch wire running tackle.

Sails: One mainsail, one foresail, two topsails, three jibs, one balloon foresail, one spinnaker.

Painting: Vessel to be scraped, cemented and concreted up to bilge,



The Trial : An early skiff

to have two coats oil paint, two coats paint on bottom and top sides. Cabin to be varnished, forecabin to be grained. Brasses for rudder head and collar for trunk and head of stem post.

Sundries and Utensils: Four plates, four mugs, cooking stove, knives, forks and spoons, saucepans etc. Foghorn, bulb flashlight, Morse lamp, combination lamp, water tank 60 gallons, table in forecabin.

As an interesting note, I understand that *Kindly Light* still exists and is currently being fully restored in time for her centenary.

The performance of any sailing vessel is as dependent upon the cut and set of her sails but especially for pilots since their livelihood depended upon getting out to the boarding ground ahead of the competition.

The mainsail was of cotton in summer and flax in winter and they were fitted with four sets of reef points and were loose footed. An indication of the extreme conditions that these craft had to work in, when set to the fourth set, the gaff jaws were almost down to the boom gooseneck. Later, some cutters were fitted with roller-reefing and so were laced to a wooden jackstay or 'combe' along the boom. The disadvantage of this reefing was that as the sail was rolled the leech exerted a load on the boom between the gooseneck and mainsheet and the stronger the wind the greater the stress. However, the risk of a broken boom was more than offset by the ease of handling.

The number of headsails carried depended largely on the affluence of the owner, but in all boats it was usual to have a working foresail, which had two sets of reef-points, a balloon foresail and three jibs, namely the large jib or 'spinnaker', working or 'slave' jib and storm or 'spitfire' jib. One or more topsails were also carried

Pilots didn't normally tan or 'cutch' their sails as it was essential that their number or port initial should stand out clearly, but one Welsh pilot apparently carried a tanned jockey topsail for reasons of strategy. When cruising amongst the numerous tan-sailed fishing craft, he would set this tanned topsail to disguise himself as one of them, and work out to the westward of a rival cutter, resetting his normal sail when the advantage had been gained. Some pilots made their own sails using skills gained on deep-water sailing ships during their required 'sea-time'.

When steamships made their appearance the pilots rapidly exploited the possibility of using the ship to tow the skiff back to port in order for it to be available immediately for the next job! This resulted in the unique structural fitting of heavy towing bits being added to the foredeck of the craft. Somewhat understandably, the crews apparently hated being towed because with the ship steaming at full speed it was exhausting to keep the skiff under control with the foredeck awash!! Pilot Frank Trott actually fitted a proper tug's towing hook to the fore side of his cutter *Marguerite*. *Marguerite* is also still sailing today.

The Skiffs at Work

The other important aspect of the skiffs was that handling should be manageable by a cox'n and deck hand so the deck fittings, rigging and layout were designed with the same eye for efficiency as the hull and sail plan.

The mainmast was a stout spar with wire shrouds but no backstays, and was usually surmounted by a short fidded topmast which was supported by a topmast forestay and a pair of wire shrouds, but often no spreaders and, again, no topmast backstays. The spars

were of pine and very heavy in order to eliminate as much supporting rigging as possible, as in the case of the bowsprit which, although sometimes fitted with an adjustable bobstay wasn't fitted with shrouds in order to facilitate the frequent adjustments necessary to change jibs or reef jib. The bowsprit was normally shipped through a hole in the bulwark to starboard of the stem post.

Just abaft of the aforementioned bitts was the fore-hatch which gave access to the foc's'le and forepeak and aft of that a little forward of amidships was the mast. Spare spars and sweeps were stowed fore-and-aft in two vertically mounted iron hoops. Aft of the mast a companion hatch was situated at the fore end of the self draining cockpit. There was usually just one seat athwart-ships at the after end of the cockpit and as additional useful feature, the cutter *Pet* had a lavatory pan built into one corner of the cockpit seat! Generally skiffs had no toilet fitted below!

Behind the cockpit coaming was the mainsheet horse and rudder post. The lower mainsheet block was not on a running traveller but was located at the centre of the horse by two very heavy flanking coil springs, or buffers. These buffers were highly necessary as the cutters were frequently gybed all standing as a standard manoeuvre when working and there was seldom time -or hands -to spare for the refinement of overhauling the sheet to ease the load. Generally speaking, the horse was about 2ft to 2ft 6in in length and was mounted between two very strong iron uprights, just high enough to allow clearance for the tiller arm.

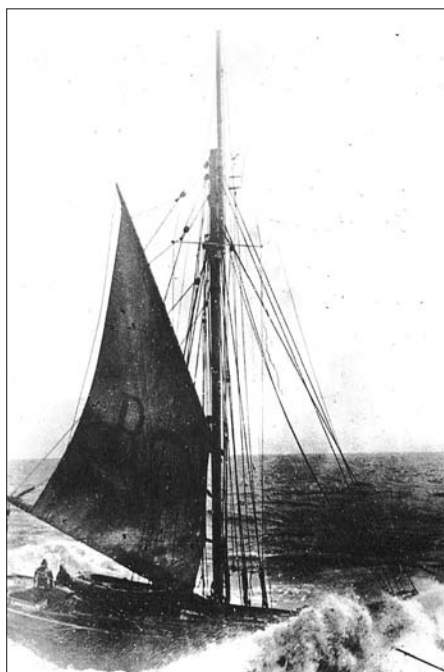
The pilot's boarding punt was kept on the port side, abaft the main rigging, stowed in chocks right way up. This was usually a clinker-built boat about 13ft length painted white so as to be easily identified at night.

Skiffs generally had fairly high bulwarks, of about 1ft 6in to 2ft, with a removable section through which the punt was launched to be rowed to and from the ship, Many punts had a standing wire strop fastened between the inside of the stem and transom at the point of balance, and to get the punt back on board the cutter a burton from the masthead was made fast to the eye in the strop, thus making it comparatively easy to hoist it inboard.

There were a few deadlights flush mounted into the deck to provide daylight below but there were rarely any ventilators (they got enough fresh air!) fitted so the decks were clear of obstructions for working.

On station the cutters were required to display a pilot flag which in 1849 became the white over red flag still in use today. At night an

all round white light was displayed supplemented by a kerosene flare every 15 minutes with each port having a sequence code for displaying the flare. For example the flare code for Bristol was two shorts and a long. After 1858 the cutters were required to display sidelights at night when underway but contemporary accounts indicate that this was frequently ignored, especially in calms when it was not unusual for cutters to extinguish all their lights and get the sweeps out and row the cutter to gain a Westerly advantage over other cutters. Once a ship was encountered that required the services of the pilot, the ship would heave to while the cutter would work into the lee of the ship and "out punt" to transfer the pilot across for boarding. One man and the pilot would do the rowing whilst the man remaining on board would sail clear single handed and once the pilot had shipped return close under the lee of the ship to recover the punt and other man. The cutter would then either sail or be towed back to the home port ready for the next run out. Occasionally more than one pilot would be on board so the cutter



The cutter Cymro under tow!
photo N Alexander

would remain out on station looking for other work. I refer to both the cutter hands as "men" but it was normally the case that these cutter hands were related to the pilots and were pilot apprentices themselves so there was no on board distinction of cox'n and deck hand

There are some today who question whether the skiffs were actually sailed by two men but this was definitely the case. Peter Stuckey wrote the book when some of the old sailing pilots were still alive and he undertook interviews which has left us a valuable records of those days. These first hand accounts reveal not just a life of hardship and danger but almost unbelievable accounts of seamanship skills.

The following are extracts from the story of Captain George Buck who served his apprenticeship skiffs in the early 1900's.

Once we were hove to about 5 miles SW of the Wolf Rock, the wind had died away to a flat calm, the sea like a mirror, very dark without a cloud in the sky and the stars shining in the water the same as in the sky, all the lighthouses showing their lights all around the horizon and the Lizard light flashing in the sky. I was on 12 to 4 watch when a ship's masthead light came in sight. I took a bearing and saw she would pass a long way to the north of us and, having no wind, the only thing I could do was show the Bristol signal on the flashlight, though as the flashlight was usually used by fishing boats in this area ships generally gave it a wide berth. We were expecting one of Pyman's ships along, called the Cober, she being five days out from Gibraltar. I decided to call one of the pilots (we had two on board) and when he came on deck I suggested calling the other pilot, launching the punt and pulling as far as possible to get as close as we could, then to show the flashlight and hail her with the megaphone. We pulled until she was abreast of us, still more than a mile away, showed the flashlight and started to hail her, but eventually had to give up and had started to pull back to the skiff when we saw her port light come in sight and she came towards us, and sure enough it was the Cober bound for Bristol. I put the pilot on board and he towed me back to the skiff. The next night we still had a flat calm. In the 12 to 4 watch I heard my mate come below and tell the other pilot a ship was in sight a long way to the north. I turned out and suggested another pull, the pilot agreed and this time he took an oar and we made the punt fly through the water, stopping now and again to show the flashlight. We were just deciding to give up when she went hard-a-starboard and steamed towards us. She was bound for Bristol and of course I expected to be towed back to the skiff, but when the pilot suggested this to the captain he told him had lost a blade and a half of his propeller and wanted to make sure of his tide. The pilot looked over the bridge and told me but I did not care, being happy to think we had another ship, and started to row back. After pulling for some time I stopped to see if I could pick up the skiff's light but with so many stars



"Out Punt" Painting by Peter Stuckey

reflected in the water I could not find it but I could see the Wolf light and knew if I pulled in that direction I was bound to find her. It seemed I had been rowing for hours alone in the world and I started singing to keep myself company. Then I stopped rowing, looked around and saw a light and was close to the skiff. My mate was pleased to see me back and I often wonder how many miles I rowed that night.

...It was very dark and blowing hard as we were approaching Barry entrance when suddenly a blue light (a signal for a pilot), was shown from a large ship at anchor in the roads. We sailed off to her and she was the Everton Grange (twin-screw) bound for Avonmouth. We hailed her, told them to put a ladder over and we would put a pilot on board.

The weather had by now got worse with a strong west wind and confused sea, with the tide ebbing west. The ship was lying across the tide, with the tide running on her lee side at about three knots. This meant we had to keep well to leeward, drop the punt with the pilot and myself, and the man in the skiff would have to get back into the wind, then come back and pick me up. If he lost the wind under her lee the tide would set the skiff down on the ship and do some damage. Everything went along fine. I put the pilot on the ladder and the skiff was coming back to pick me up with sufficient way to take her in to the wind again. I was about to jump aboard with the painter when the pilot hailed us to come back and take the Liverpool pilot in as he wished to catch the first train back to Liverpool in the morning. I rowed back to the ladder and then saw that the skiff had lost the wind and was setting down on the ship and we could do nothing to stop her going alongside. We managed to get a couple of fenders over and she brought up on the ship's starboard quarter close to the propeller, the tide pinning her there. I made the punt fast to the skiff and asked them to pass us down a rope to heave us clear of the ship's quarter as every time she rolled she smashed our bulwarks and the propeller was very close. But before we got the rope the propeller started to revolve and we yelled for them to stop it. The engines were stopped right away, they passed us down a rope and as they hove us amidships the pilot looked over the ship's side and asked what all the shouting was about. I told him we had been close to the propeller and felt sure it had touched our bottom. The pilot, using the ship's engines, then brought her head to tide and we were able to sail away from her.

I pulled up the floorboards in the steerage to make sure we were not making water as the blades of the propeller had been whizzing round abreast our cockpit. When we found everything was all right we asked if the Liverpool pilot still wanted us to land him. The reply being 'Yes', I rowed back to the ladder and took him off. We got alongside the skiff and having hauled the punt on board, set more sail and as we shaped course for Avonmouth I made a pot of tea. The next day the pilot came on board to survey the damage. It was not serious, about six feet of bulwark damaged. We pulled up the floorboards over the pump-well and found she had not made any water. The pilot then asked me why I had been shouting and I told him if he had been on board the skiff with that propeller churning round alongside he also would have done some shouting and I was still of the opinion that the propeller had touched our bottom. About three weeks later we put her on Ilfracombe Strand to scrub and tar her bottom and we found the bottom scored to a depth of about 1/2 inch over a 3 foot length! It was the only time I was really frightened.

..We were cruising about 30 miles west of Lundy Island in a strong westerly wind and rough sea, expecting the Dominion liner, Manxman. We knew there were no skiffs to the westward of us and if she came along she would be ours. We had three rolls in the mainsail, reefed foresail and storm jib. About midday the pilot decided to run towards the island as the wind was increasing, as sometimes, when blowing hard, the wind would decrease to leeward, but when we got abreast the north end of Lundy the wind



Pilot skiffs at Pill circa 1910

increased, so, putting another roll in the mainsail, we decided to run farther up Channel. About 8 pm we rolled the mainsail down with the jaws of the gaff on the mainboom, double reefed the foresail and hove-to, being now between the Nash and Foreland Point.

We never cared to give up the chance of a ship and we were certain if the Manxman came along she would be ours and, being a large ship and loaded, we should manage to board her. At 10pm the pilot came on deck and the wind seemed to be increasing, with heavy squalls and confused sea, so he told me to put the helm up and run for Barry Roads. This skiff was the old Glance and she would run in any sea and never take any water over the stern. Just before midnight the pilot came on deck again and told me to make a pot of tea and call my mate. This I did and was on my way to the cockpit with a cup for the pilot when I heard a crash and when I got to the cockpit I found that the mainboom had snapped like a carrot. The mainsheet and the end of the boom were towing in the water and the mainsail was in ribbons. We had a difficult job getting the broken piece of boom on board and were afraid it might hit the side and break a plank but we finally got everything secured and again running before the wind. I thought we should go to Barry but the pilot said we would go to Pill as we would require a new mainsail and mainboom.

Lowering the foresail and jib, we put a spare foresail fore side of the mast, hoisted it up and were away like a scalded cat. When we reached the river we hoisted the reaching foresail aft side of the mast for a mainsail, set the foresail and arrived at Pill just before high water. While we were mooring, the havenmaster's office hailed the boatman's shelter to say that the Manxman was in King Road and had asked for a pilot. We had not only lost a mainsail and mainboom but also a good paying ship. That was just the luck of the draw in the days of competitive piloting

This is just a small selection of accounts from George Buck and others in the book but provides a valuable insight into the life of pilots who earned their livelihood from the skiffs. Although several pilots and boatmen lost their lives in this service their losses were remarkably low considering the conditions they suffered and were probably no more than those of other occupations in those times. The testimony as to the seaworthiness of the skiffs and the relationship between the men and their craft is summed up by George Buck as follows:

....when boarding ships at night during dirty weather, we were always glad when we had the punt back on board. In the daytime we took little notice of the weather and it had to be very bad when we could not board and it was not very often we had to run for shelter. The skiffs were fine craft and in bad weather would heave-to with the fore sheet to windward and the helm lashed a little down and they would work to windward off a lee shore.

Off Duty

The pilots relationship with their skiffs continued even when they were off duty and racing "Reviews" were held at each port and were enthusiastically supported by the local community. Occasionally the skiffs raced against professional sailing yachts and frequently beat them especially in windy conditions. When on service, speeds of 10 knots were frequently achieved and this

speed was often exceeded during racing when the additional sails were set.

Ilfracombe was the popular holiday resort for the Bristol Channel and the flat firm sands provided a good place for repairs and sprucing up of the skiffs. The pilots and crew's families would be lodged ashore in boarding houses and carnivals and other entertainments were enjoyed by all.

The 21st Century

The remarkable sea keeping qualities of the Bristol Channel skiffs and cutters has ensured their survival, with many original craft having been fully restored and maintained. Although during the latter half of the 20th Century the advent of fibre glass cruising and racing yachts somewhat eclipsed these wonderful craft, in recent years there has been a revival of interest and as well as restorations, lines are being taken from original hulls for new builds. In particular they are increasingly popular for the charter market. In ocean races they continue to win trophies when competing against modern yachts and since 2006 an annual pilot cutter "Review" has been held at St Mawes in Cornwall which is seeing an increase in turnout, despite the economic downturn. Meanwhile the reputation of the design for serious "blue water" cruising remains unsurpassed. Such a legacy is a fitting tribute to those hard working pilots and men who earned their living from these legendary craft.

JCB. With thanks to Peter Stuckey for permission to use extracts from his book.



Off duty racing

PENSIONS NEWS

Well here we are racing towards winter, with summer only a fond memory. Actually there really is not a lot that was memorable about last summer's weather!

THE SECRETARIAT

Annual Accounts 2009

We finally managed to get the Trustee's Annual Report & Accounts for 2009 out to members around the middle of August. If you have not received a copy, but would like one please let either Loretta or me know.

Additional Voluntary Contributions

Loretta has sent out the additional voluntary contributions renewal to those few members still contributing to the AVCs scheme. The next step is the annual AVCs benefit statement which we are currently awaiting receipt from Equitable Life and Aviva (aka Norwich Union).

Summary Funding Statement

All of you should have received a copy of the annual funding statement sent out in September. This has resulted in numerous telephone calls to the Secretariat and pilot trustees from worried members. I realise that it made less than palatable reading but it contained information that we are required to tell you by statute. One pensioner even told me it looked like an obituary notice, for which I apologise but my colour copier went on the blink halfway through printing them and I could only use the black print setting as I was up against a deadline.

Change of Address

We have had several instances of returned correspondence and would like to remind members that we are not psychic and if you are changing address please write and tell us your new address.

Early Access to Pensions Lump Sum

In *Setting Pensions Free*, the LibDem MP, Steve Webb, presents an argument for

extending early access to pensions savings. He would like members to have the option to take the tax free cash sum early, to clear mortgage arrears, put down a deposit on a house or for a large capital purchase. This more flexible approach could provide a significant boost to the economy and may even increase the total amount saved.

Expat Pensioners and Widows

If an appeal to the European Court for Human Rights succeeds over 500,000 expatriate pensioners and widows could see their state pension double. At present expats living in countries where the UK does not have a reciprocal social security agreements, such as Australia, South Africa, Hong Kong and Canada have had their state pension frozen.

If the appeal to the Grand Chamber is successful, those affected pensioners could see their weekly rate double to £82.05 a week depending on their level of national insurance contribution. A decision on the appeal should be made by March 2010.

The countries that the UK has social security agreements with are: Barbados, Bermuda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Israel, Jamaica, Jersey and Guernsey, Mauritius, Montenegro, Philippines, Serbia, Turkey, USA (whew!) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

Total PPF Levy fixed for 2010/11

The Pension Protection Fund (PPF) has announced that the total levy for 2010/11 will be £700m, increased in line with wages inflation.

Consultation on Future of MPs' Pensions

The Senior Salaries Review Board has published a consultation paper on MPs' pension as a first step to reducing costs.

Pension Deficits at all-time High

The FTSE 100 companies with defined benefit (final salary) pension schemes had a combined deficit of £96bn at mid-July 2009.

Chadwick's Interim Report

Sir John Chadwick has issued an interim report indicating a more flexible approach will be taken to determine the relative losses of Equitable Life's policyholders. They will no longer need to demonstrate that they relied on flawed government information.

Ombudsman Overcomes Case Backlog

The Pensions Ombudsman has managed to reduce his backlog of cases in 2008/09 by around 90% according to his report and accounts for 2008/09.

TPAS copes with Maladministration

In 2008/09 The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS) saw a rise in the number of complaints of about 10%. The main reason for the increase was a 59% rise in complaints about maladministration.

Regulators New Statement on Economy

The Pensions Regulator (tPR) has issued a third statement setting out its position on the current economic volatility. TPR indicates that it will view favourably flexible approaches in setting recovery plans to reduce deficits.

A Costly Affair

I had to include this item as it appeals to my sense of humour.

According to an extramarital dating website cheating husbands and wives spend massively more on their love affairs than they do on the pensions. According to the website cheaters spend on average £3,500 a year or £291 a month on maintaining the affair, including hotels, phone calls and flowers which is five times more than the average £59 a month spent on pensions (source: Halifax 2009).

It is amazing the articles you can discover in turgid pensions magazines.

Debbie Marten
debbie@pnpf.co.uk

Retirements

May 2009 to July 2009

D Barnicoat	Falmouth	June
GHR Duff	Yarmouth	May
SD Wood	Liverpool	June

Pensioners Deceased

May 2009 - July 2009

LE Fane	Ipswich
FI Forsaith	Shoreham
JJ Frankish	London South
J Hamilton	Clyde
TD Hettle	London TH
RD McGlashan	Forth
ET Milford	SE Wales
AJ Moore	Harwich
PA Roberts	Dover
JS Robertson	Clyde
WG Wilcox	Liverpool
EF Williams	SE Wales

TECHNICAL & TRAINING

IMO Nav 55: Pilot Transfer Arrangements

Background

During Nav 45 in the summer of 1996 there was an attempt to remove pilot boarding arrangements from SOLAS V Regulation 17 and downgrade it to a code. This was reversed and it was re-inserted in Regulation 23 and strengthened by Resolution A889. During Nav 55 we further strengthened the boarding arrangements and I believe our gains will save lives and reduce injury.

I would like to put on record my following observation:

The lobbying effect that IMPA had was amazing, the way that the brotherhood of international pilots came together was not matched by any other organisation, group or delegation. The importance of having so many pilots on so many country delegations acting in a discrete and professional way was very apparent and can't be overstressed. Additionally the advance work done by the steering group, guided by IMPA paid off. It was a pleasure and an honour to work with this group.

Anyone who is still questioning the value of IMPA membership needs their head examined!

Unfortunately incidents are still happening. During the Nav 55 session a French pilot was seriously injured when a **BRAND NEW** ladder parted at deck level and he and the remains of the ladder fell 8 meters into the water between the ship's hull & pilot cutter. Approximately 3 months ago an Italian pilot suffered injuries when he fell from a ladder when he was attempting to board via the pilot ladder and side door, and earlier in the year a Turkish pilot died when a ladder broke and he fell into the sea.

Achievement

Nav 55 was a success and the proposed amendments to both the regulation and resolution that we drafted have now been forwarded to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) 87 and will be adopted at MSC 88.

While the process of approval and adoption by MSC may be seen as longwinded and bureaucratic, these are necessary for legal and other reasons. An attempt was made to bypass the process by the Cook Islands which failed. However, after discussion at the Plenary as to the importance of improving arrangements urgently and bring into force the new draft wording, the Secretariat informed Plenary that an IMO circular could be

promulgated, referring to the proposed changes and asking each administration to act accordingly in advance. Therefore this is happening!

One further major achievement which was clarified is as follows:

The inspection of Pilot transfer arrangements come under SOLAS 1.

SOLAS 1, Regulation 8, surveying of lifesaving appliances and other equipment of cargo ships, (8(b), (i), (ii) and (iii) provide for the survey and inspection of various life-saving and other equipment, including means of embarking pilots" to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the present regulations, are in satisfactory condition and are fit for the service for which the ship is intended.

The above is very important, it requires that pilot ladders are surveyed and inspected at the above survey and periodically at port state inspections. The MCA are now aware of this and I & the T&TC will be assisting them in this duty. This is a verbal request from Paul Townsend / Keith Tatman (MCA) and I am working in formalising it.

I will outline the main changes and try and explain below:

SOLAS 23/23

■ All equipment must comply with the regulation and standards adopted by IMO (ISO 700)

■ The prohibition of mechanical hoists. This may say "Shall not be used" to avoid a major expense of removing the equipment by just moth balling it.

■ The securing of accommodation ladder, pilot ladder and manropes (if required) to the ship's side, 1.5m above the platform.

■ The securing of the accommodation ladder to the ship's side to avoid it coming off the hull.

■ Certification by manufactures of pilot ladders.

■ Permanent identification (tag) marks on a pilot ladder.

■ Records to be kept on a ship as to the date the identified ladder is placed into service and repairs effected.

■ Changes to the maximum angle the accommodation ladder makes with the hull (changed from 55 to 45%) and to the minimum height above sea level now specified at 5 meters.

■ Accommodation ladder lower platforms which have an entry hatch (trap door or man hole) are to be renamed "Embarkation platforms" and the pilot ladder and manropes (if required) extend through the platform to the height of the upper hand rail.

■ Side doors shall not open outwards.

■ Manropes (if required) to extend to the height of the stanchion or bulwarks at the point of access to the deck.

Resolution A889

(Which will be renumbered when endorsed)

● Tripping lines, when used, to be secured at or above the lower spreader, lead forward and not hinder the pilot or obstruct the safe approach of the pilot boat.

● Side ropes of the pilot ladder shall have a minimum breaking strain when new of 24 KiloNewtons (2.447 tonnes per rope part = 9.789 Tonnes in total).

● Spacing tolerance to be reduced and permanent markings to assist in length of ladder paid out to be visible. (Both these are measures to assist in getting the height above pilot boat deck level correct to avoid pilot boats hanging up or damaging a ladder.)

● Side ropes to be of one continuous rope with the midpoint being located at a thimble at the top of the ladder large enough to accommodate at least 2 turns of a securing rope.

● Side ropes to be secured together above and below the ladder rungs with a mechanical clamping device which is properly designed for the purpose or a seizing method. Step fixings (Chocks or widgets) to hold the rungs level must be used and clamped.

● Hand holds rigidly secured to the ship's structure at or near the point of access to be provided.

● Arrangement for the safe approach of pilot cutters are to be provided where "Rubbing bands" or "Sponsons" are part of the ship's structure. These shall be cut away to provide at least 6 meters of unobstructed ship's side. (There are some exemptions to this rule, mainly for small offshore type vessels, which have safety zones.)

● A complete new section on ladder reels will be in the resolution.

Brian Wilson. Chairman

REMEMBER

It is in your interest, if involved in any accident or injury, however trivial it may seem at the time, to inform:

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Thames Barge Match: *Pilotage Skills Win The Day*

Saturday 13th June saw 14 traditional barges assemble for the 79th Thames Sailing Race (or "Match" in sailing barge terms). The Port of London Authority's involvement is crucial to the management of this annual event since much of it takes place in the main shipping channel. VTS monitoring is supplemented by VHF information updates during the Match and further support is provided with moorings and other facilities ashore. This year's event coincided with the Centenary of the Port of London Authority and for the third year the PLA chartered the Staysail Class barge *Wyvenhoe* for the Match.

The *Wyvenhoe* was skippered by Richard Titchener and crewed entirely by PLA staff, including two PLA pilots, Chris Spurling and Dave Lloyd. Richard ensured that Dave and Chris were aft at the wheel prior to the race, not just to assist with the main and staysail sheets but also to provide invaluable, up to the minute, "local knowledge" of the tides and depths, which allowed more use of the river.

The day started dry with a light Southerly breeze. As always there was much manoeuvring of barges in the up-river end of Lower Hope Reach as the different classes of barge tried to keep clear of the start line until it was their turn. Chris and Dave provided advice as to the best place to hold station above the start line, in order to stay out of the worst of the ebb tide and consequently *Wyvenhoe* made a good start, crossing the start line about 90 seconds after the gun and was the only barge in its class to avoid a time penalty for prematurely crossing the line.

Having rounded the Sea Reach 4 buoy marking the outer limits of the course, the barge sailed close hauled onto the South shore staying well outside the main



PLA pilot Chris Spurling on the helm with skipper Richard Titchener

channel! Although there was less depth here than to the North, the pilots' tidal knowledge ensured sufficient under keel clearance to sail without the need for numerous tacking manoeuvres which the barges on the North (leeward) side had to undertake. This enabled the *Wyvenhoe* to draw ahead.

In the Lower Hope (Mucking Channel), Chris and Dave calculated how close to the shores the *Wyvenhoe* could run which again reduced tacking and ensured that the lead over the rest of the field was maintained.

A similar tactic was adopted in Gravesend Reach for the home run and at 13.31, the skipper and crew were delighted to be first over the line to win the Champion Staysail Class, followed by *Repertor* who carried a 15 minute penalty for her false start. The skipper and crew had all worked hard and extremely well as

a team to achieve their win.

Following supper at the Three Daws pub in Gravesend the prize giving was held. Michael Grey, former editor of Lloyd's List, was on hand to present the trophies and congratulate the owners and their crews. The "Mainsheetman Trophy" for the best performance in that critical role was awarded to Keith Golding of the *Wyvenhoe*. Richard Titchener was awarded "Master of the First Barge Home" and he also won the trophy for "The Master Exhibiting the Best Seamanship in Rounding the Mark".

The Thames Match had already been running for many years when the PLA started in 1909. In this centenary year the PLA's win was a fitting outcome, and congratulations go to all those involved for playing such a great part in preserving such a valuable part of London's maritime heritage.

Shelly Spurling



PLA pilot Dave Lloyd



Tactics discussed as Wyvenhoe draws ahead of Repertor

SEAWORK 2009

Having been offered a stand at this year's SeaWork Exhibition, held at Southampton on the 16th - 18th June, the UKMPA were well represented with chairman Joe Wilson, Jim Richie, Matt Winter, Kevin Constable and Mike Robarts manning the UKMPA stand. Other pilots visited the stand and greatly assisted in keeping the bar afloat!

This annual event is rapidly gaining international recognition and despite the recession attendance was well up on last year.

There was a full programme for the 3-day event which included the Annual General Meeting of the UK Harbour Masters' Association, together totalling some 500 delegates. Of interest to pilots is that OMC won the civil engineering award for their "In Transit Real Time Dynamic Under Keel Clearance System".



L - R Martin Phipps, Matt Winter, Kevin Constable & Mike Robarts

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pilot Training

A recent article in the *New Zealand Pilot Magazine* raised the point of where the next generation of NZ pilots would come from. Apparently the days of the 'Union' company have long gone and the NZ merchant navy is greatly depleted, but having started my pilotage career as a Tyne Pilot apprentice, could an apprenticeship scheme be the answer?

What has happened in New Zealand may also soon be a problem in the UK, so this could be a future method of creating pilots without relying on poaching young men from our also depleted Merchant Navy. Recent comments in the press as a reaction to GCSE results with reference to 'dumbing down' (my daughter marks GCSE maths papers and having acted as a checker I can assure you the standard of papers is embarrassingly low) the emphasis is now on 'vocational avenues' rather than everyone attending university and getting hons degrees in hairdressing! My apprenticeship consisted of acting as crew of the pilot cutters, eventually becoming a skipper with all the relevant responsibilities. We were required to trip at least weekly with the working pilots so after 40/50 trips a year x 5 you had a lot of experience. We also attended the South Shields Marine school on a regular basis. So bringing that up to date, boat handling, tripping and simulator training at marine colleges seems to be a way forward. An incentive for the ports would be cheap labour for the cutters. I don't know whether it is still the case but the Delaware pilot service was 5 year apprenticeship then straight into piloting, although the look on the 'old man's face' when a pilot in his early 20s came to the bridge of a loaded 50,000t tanker was something to behold!

Another recent article has mentioned that ABP Humber were intending to get rid of 12 pilots. I find this rather ironic when the Humber did what it did and eradicated a whole service which was self-employed. Those of us who were self-employed tried in vain to point out to pilotage authorities that in times of downturn (and the Tyne is suffering due to reduction in Nissan car traffic) then "no ships means no pay" when you're self employed (rather obvious I know). However, the new employed port pilots on the Tyne are quite happy as they are working much less for same pay!

Maybe my generation were lucky, although having to work in Jeddah during the miner's strike of 83/84 to pay the mortgage wasn't a pleasant experience.

TH Purvis (Tyne pilot retired... thank God)

Liverpool Retirements

John Curry's article on the retirement of Stuart Wood, Geoff Rafferty and John himself marks both a vintage year at Liverpool and nothing less than the end of an era in pilotage, quite possibly throughout the entire world. Their retirement is the retirement of the last three pilots trained to the highest possible standards in a system of sea-keeping, station-keeping pilot-cutters without any assistance from shore-based launches.

Having left school aged sixteen in 1960 as John explains, he, Stuart and Geoff then served as cadets for about one year deep-sea before joining in 1961 a training-system which was then at its zenith (as it had been since its introduction in 1896) and which began a long process of decline in the following year, 1962. The key to the system was the maintenance of four pilot-cutters, three of which were permanently at sea, with one in dock on stand-by. The three at sea operated in a rotation comprised of one week keeping station at the Mersey Bar (16 miles out of Liverpool), one week keeping station off Point Lynas, Anglesey (a further 36 miles to the west) and one week on tender-duty, sailing daily from Liverpool Landing Stage to the two sea-stations in order to keep the stations properly supplied with pilots. The week on tender-duty (or on-the-run, as it was known colloquially) was served during the middle-week of the three-week rotation, the first and third weeks being served at the Bar and Point Lynas respectively.

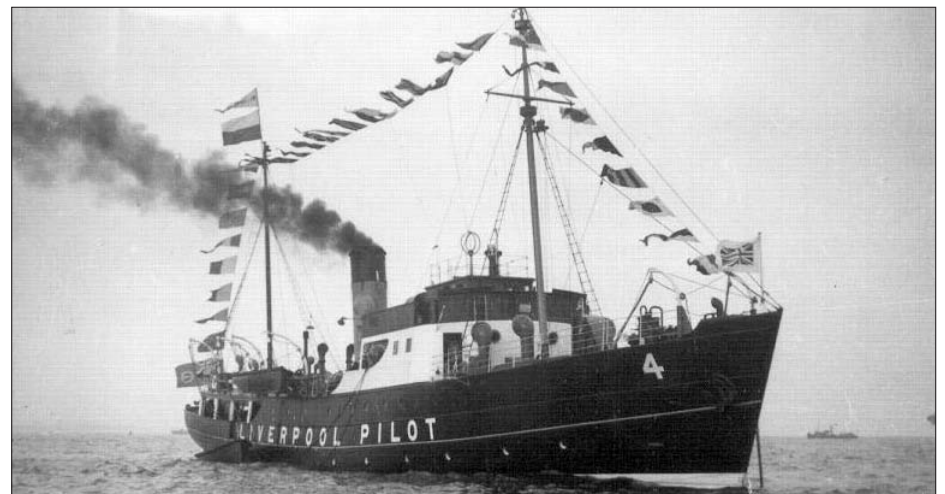
The system originated in 1896 when the first four steam-driven pilot-cutters were introduced, replacing a fleet of twelve schooners. As the schooners had been manned on deck entirely by apprentices, the replaced apprentices became the deck-crew of each newly-commissioned steamer, regulated at ten apprentices per pilot-cutter. The system was maintained for the next sixty-six years, largely unchanged through two World Wars, although a fifth steamer

was commissioned temporarily between 1915 and 1923. The original four steamers were themselves replaced over the years. By 1961 (when our heroes joined the system and found it at its peak) the fleet comprised one steamer dating from 1937 (a veteran of the Spithead Review of that year) and three diesel-electric pilot-cutters built in 1950, 1953 and 1958. All the cutters were built to the highest specifications, the last three having state-of-the-art gravity davits for the boat-work which formed the essential element of their existence. The cutters were commanded by licensed pilots as Senior Master and Second Master on permanent appointment. The Senior Apprentice (aged about 23) was Mate or Chief Officer of the cutter.

In 1962 the SS *William M Clarke*, Number 4 Cutter dating from 1937, was sold to the Humber and was replaced by two shore-based launches for tender-duty to the Bar station. The service of the Lynas station was maintained by overland transport so there was no longer a sea-keeping cutter on tender-duty. The oldest diesel-electric cutter (*Sir Thomas Brocklebank* of 1950) was withdrawn in 1974 upon the development of the modern shore-based station at Point Lynas and the later two (*Edmund Gardner*, Number 2 of 1953 and *Arnet Robinson*, Number 3 of 1958) survived in service until 1982 - when the *Edmund Gardner* became the prime exhibit at Merseyside Maritime Museum.

John Curry, Stuart Wood and Geoff Rafferty quite possibly have honour of being the last three pilots anywhere in the world to have trained in such a system and to have served as licensed pilots in a major port while still in their early twenties. There remain of course several pilots in service today who experienced the training-system in its twenty-year decline after 1962, but no others who had the benefit of the training-system at its peak. As a practical method of training pilots for a major port, it had no equal.

Barrie Youde



SS William M Clarke, Number 4 Cutter dating from 1937

PILOTAGE STANDARDS: "UNREALISTIC & UNWORKABLE"!!

As reported in the July issue, the DfT and MCA have effectively handed full control of pilot training and standards to the port run body: Port Skills & Safety (PSS).

The formal integration into the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for pilots that were produced nearly 10 years ago continues to be stalled by the ports and ship owner interests who "fail to see the need" for formalising any pilot standards!

It is therefore of great concern to the UKMPA that PSS has been handed responsibility for pilot training and standards. This concern has been enhanced by the departure of two key figures in the MCA (ex Dover pilot, Geoff Stokes) and DfT (James Weedon) who recognised the importance of incorporating the NOS document into the PMSC.

When Gordon Brown became Prime Minister, Steve Ladyman, the most proactive shipping minister in recent years, was given the boot and replaced by the almost invisible Jim Fitzpatrick, so most of you will probably be unaware that in June he was moved to DEFRA and replaced by Paul Clark in a low key reshuffle. Paul Clark is the MP for Gillingham and Rainham and was previously parliamentary private secretary to Ed Balls at the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Having been concerned that the

Government was devolving too much power to the CHAs (a concern enhanced by the recruitment and training policies of two CHAs in particular), ex Liverpool pilot and solicitor Barrie Youde entered into correspondence with Paul Clark, bringing his attention to the *Sea Empress* case where Mr Justice Steel made the following observation:

"The significance of these matters is all the greater in the context of a scheme of compulsory pilotage. Shipowners and masters must needs engage a pilot. They have to take the training, experience and expertise of the pilot provided at face value. While the master remains nominally in command, it has to be recognised that the pilot had the 'con' and a master can only intervene when a situation of danger has clearly arisen. The port authority imposes a charge for pilotage but in the same breath has the added advantage of the pilot being treated for the purposes of civil liability as an employee of the shipowner. All this calls for the highest possible standards on the part of the port authority."

This observation clearly places a legal obligation upon any harbour authority to maintain the highest possible standards in a compulsory pilotage area.

However, the reply from Paul Clark's office was quite astounding in that it declared that *"The Department does not accept that there is a legal requirement for*

all Competent Harbour Authorities to provide this service [i.e. pilotage] to the highest possible standard"

Even more alarming is that the letter goes on to state *"Such an interpretation would, I suspect, be unrealistic and unworkable. It would also leave no scope for the port authority in question to use their discretion or consider what factors they consider to be most pertinent for the pilotage needs of their harbour, as provided for in section 3 of the Act. Given that Competent Harbour Authorities have the discretion to consider whether pilotage services are in fact required at all or whether they need to be compulsory, it is a logical consequence that they should be able to determine the skills, experience and qualifications that they consider necessary to carry out such services"*.

Subsequent exchanges go even further suggesting that the Government considers that it no longer has responsibility for a CHA's policies with respect to pilotage!

At the time of writing, the exchanges are on-going with Barrie writing again to the Minister explaining the fact that by delegating powers to CHAs, under the 1987 Pilotage Act, Parliament couldn't legally cede its own power of central oversight by ministers.

We await the outcome with interest. Watch this space!

JCB

PILOTS' GOLFING SOCIETY

The 34th meeting of the Marine Pilots' Golfing Society took place at Hollins Hall just outside Leeds on Sunday 6th September to Tuesday 8th September 2009. Twenty seven pilots from eight ports, Milford Haven, Manchester, Liverpool, Sullom Voe, Forth, Tees, Ex Humber and Bristol taking part. Overall an excellent three days with winners coming from Milford Haven, Sullom Voe and Ex Humber.

Winners were:

Manchester Salver:	I Leask (Sullom Voe)
Wimslow Cup:	M Love (Ex Humber) & P Pullen (Milford Haven)
Hawkestone Cup:	I Leask (Sullom Voe)
Pilots' Cup:	D Fortnum (Ex Humber)
Milford Cup:	P Pullen (Milford Haven)
Nearest Pin:	D Fortnum (Ex Humber)
Jim Purvis Memorial Shield:	D Fortnum (Ex Humber).

The above was kindly sponsored by Milford Haven Port Authority and Switter towage Milford Haven.

D Raddings

Next year's events are:

Spring	Staverton Park on Sunday 24 to Monday 25 April 2010
September	Whitefields Hotel Rugby on Sunday 5 to Tuesday 7 September 2010.

Anyone interested please contact Peter Ryder at: pilotlight10@hotmail.com or Tel: 01646 600711



I Leask, D Fortnum, M Love, P Pullen



Dave Fortnum suffering from post golf stress disorder!! The only thing in the picture that he did not win is the hat and that magical club that has wafted him into glory!!

photo:D Raddings

OBITUARIES

William (Bill) G. Wilcox (1911 - 2009)



After several months of illness senior retired Liverpool pilot Bill Wilcox died on July 15th 2009 at the grand age of 98.

Following his time onboard the training ship *HMS Conway* moored in the River Mersey, and time at sea as a Cadet, Bill joined the Liverpool Pilotage Service around 1929. As was commonly the case in those days, Bill was following in the family footsteps of his father and his uncle who were both serving Liverpool pilots at the time. After the usual lengthy apprenticeship he was licensed as a Third class Liverpool pilot in 1936 soon after his twenty-fifth birthday.

In 1940, as was normal practice, he was licensed as a First class pilot, and continued to serve as a pilot throughout all of those difficult and dangerous years of the Second World War.

Sadly, Bill's younger brother Norman, who had also followed in the family pilotage tradition, was lost with the submarine *Thetis* during her sea trials in Liverpool Bay in 1939 only a year after being licensed as a Liverpool pilot.

Later Bill was appointed appropriated pilot to the United Africa and Palm Line where he served for many years until his retirement at the age of sixty-five, in 1976.

His colleagues invariably found him to be a most amiable and jolly character to be in company with, but he was also very well respected by them as a skilled and conscientious pilot.

In retirement Bill enjoyed his family life to the full with his second wife Meron, having lost his first wife some years previously. He thoroughly enjoyed those many years in retirement being a very active person as his sons and daughters from both

marriages grew up and had families of their own. He also delighted in the company of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren and will be greatly missed by all his family. He will be long remembered with considerable affection by those retired Liverpool colleagues who worked with him all those years ago.

*Geoff Topp
Chairman, LPA (Retired Division)*

Ronal Douglas McGlashan (1930 - 2009)

Born in Ulverston, in the Lake district, Douglas McClashan spent a happy childhood enjoying the freedom that living in such an area provided. In 1944 the family moved to Cupar in Fife, but Douglas' father died suddenly shortly after the move and with his Mother having to find work they moved to Leith and Douglas had to look after his three year old brother, Ken. At 16 he decided on a career in the Merchant Navy and joined Christian Salversen as a deck boy. Whilst serving in this capacity one of the old sailors urged him to study "Do you want to do this for the rest of your life?". Douglas heeded this call and whilst working his way up through the certificate grades his voyages took him to South Georgia, Antarctica and Canada before returning to the Norwegian coastal trade. In 1958 he obtained his Master's certificate and shortly afterwards he was promoted to Captain. In 1962 he became authorised as a pilot on the Forth where he served for the next 27 years until forced into early retirement by rheumatoid arthritis.

Douglas married Betty in 1957 and they moved to Silverknowes Brae where they enjoyed a happy family life for the next 52 years, enhanced by the birth of their daughter, Ruth in 1959 and son Andrew in 1965 and later on three grandsons. Despite his illness, Douglas was renowned for his sense of humour and cheerfulness and having turned his skills to cooking he became well known in the local supermarkets, spending time choosing ingredients for meals for family and friends which became legendary. In the latter years of his retirement Douglas' health deteriorated further and in 2006 he was diagnosed with terminal cancer and in 2008 he became blind. Despite all the suffering Douglas never lost his sense of humour and fun and during his many stays in hospital he was a very popular patient with the doctors and nurses. He passed

away peacefully on the 10th July and will be much missed by his friends and colleagues but especially by Betty, Ruth and Andrew and his three grandsons: Rory, Lewis and Neil.

Malcolm Rose, (Retired Pilot: Forth)

John Law (1923 - 2009)



Retired Manchester Ship Canal pilot John Law died on 10 April 2009 aged 86.

Born in Manchester, John, and his twin brother Eric, grew up in Ireland. During WW2 they both joined the Merchant Navy. Tragically, Eric was killed when his ship was torpedoed whereas John went on to serve in every major theatre of maritime operations with Cunard-Brocklebanks. In 1942, whilst serving on board the *SS Fort Camosun* John, along with the rest of the ship's compliment, survived a torpedo attack in the Pacific off Cape Flattery. Despite this attack John returned to sea and was ferrying ammunition from Sydney across the Pacific when the war ended.

After a few more years at sea, John joined the Manchester Ship Canal Pilotage Service, quickly working his way up to being a first class pilot. It was a job he loved and one that he did for 35 years before retiring in 1985.

Away from 'the job' he built and sailed yachts. The first was a 24 foot Eventide which served as a holiday home for his growing family; a wife and three children.

His second was a 38 foot ferro cement yacht. Its completion was a remarkable accomplishment given that the method of construction was virtually unknown in the UK plus it was completed without the use

of power tools. He spent many seasons sailing *El Lobo* to Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia and the Med.

But sailing was just one facet of an energetic man who was able to do anything he turned his mind to. He played the guitar, painted well, built and operated model aircraft and model train sets and took on construction projects ranging from fireplaces to house extensions.

He continued to sail until his late seventies but mobility problems eventually forced him to sell his beloved yacht. He accompanied his family on trips on the French canals, but it was no substitute for deeper waters.

John passed away peacefully after a short illness. He is sadly missed by his wife Maureen, his children; John (also a MSC pilot) Mitch and Carol as well as other family and friends.

Mitch Law

A full account of John's life story which includes his detailed first hand account of the torpedo attack and about the other ships he sailed in can be found on Mitch's website: www.mitchlaw.info/dad_story1.html

The SS Fort Camosun

On June 20, 1942, The new coal-burning freighter *SS Fort Camosun* was on her maiden voyage from Victoria to England with zinc, lead, plywood, and other raw materials. Just after midnight, in a position approximately 70 miles SW of Cape Flattery, the Japanese submarine *I-25*, under the command of Commander Meiji Tagami, launched a torpedo which severely damaged the hull after which the submarine surfaced and fired on the vessel with her deck gun causing further damage. The Officers and crew abandoned ship and were rescued later that day by the RCN corvettes *Edmunston* and *Quesnel*. Although the *I-25* had reported the *Fort Camosun* as sunk she actually remained afloat but semi submerged and disabled. The *Edmunston*, along with three US tugs took her in tow to Neah Bay for temporary repairs after which she was fully repaired at Seattle and returned to serve throughout the rest of the war, surviving another torpedo attack in the gulf of Aden.

Submarine I-25

The submarine *I-25* is of interest because it carried a two-seater Yokosuka E14Y reconnaissance floatplane, known to the Allies as "Glen". Made in specialist kit form it was stowed in the front of the conning tower and was assembled and disassembled by the crew.

On the same voyage as the attack on the *SS Camosun*, the *I-25*'s "Glen" shelled a small coastal army installation. Damage

was minimal and the only item of significance destroyed was a baseball backstop. However, on 9th September, 1942, the crew again deployed the "Glen", which dropped incendiary bombs over the Oregon forest. This was the only time that the United States mainland was bombed from the air and the aim of the raid was to trigger wildfires across the coast. However,

light winds, wet weather conditions and two quick acting Fire Lookouts kept the fires under control, indeed, had the winds been sufficiently brisk to stoke widespread forest fires, the lightweight "Glen" would have been unable to fly.

I-25 was subsequently sunk by US destroyer *USS Paterson* in 1943.

JCB



SS Fort Camosun

Picture: Veterans Affairs Canada website

www.acc-vac.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=history/secondwar/atlantic/photobis#a03

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