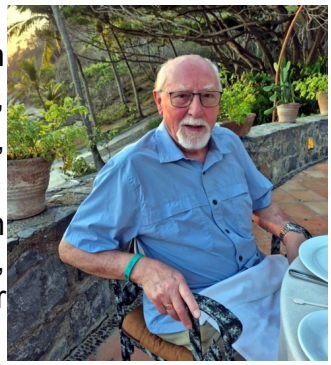
SEA TIMES

The Newsletter of the Nautical Professional Education Society of Canada
(Society founded in 1995 by the British Columbia Branch of The Nautical Institute)

August 2025

CROSSED THE BAR

Captain David Batchelor FNI 1942 – 2025: Sadly we have to report the passing of a Founding Member of the British Columbia Branch of The Nautical Institute (NIBC) and of the Nautical Professional Education Society of Canada (NPESC).



David was born in Lymington, England. The family lived in North Harrow for many years, before his parents moved to the Isle of Wight, where he met his wife Penny. They married in 1968. Their firstborn, Ian, followed soon after in late 1968 and Christopher in 1973.

David's life was deeply shaped by the ocean. From his early days in the Sea Cadets in England to his career with British Petroleum, beginning as a Deck Apprentice and eventually qualifying as Master Mariner, his love for the sea was lifelong.

In 1974, he courageously moved his family to Canada, continuing his service with the Canadian Coast Guard where he helped save lives and trained others with care and commitment. His leadership later extended to the Pacific Pilotage Authority starting as Operations Supervisor and later as General Manager, where he brought wisdom and dedication to his work. In his own time, he spent many hours volunteering with the Mission to Seafarers, both serving on the Board of Directors and at the Flying Angel Club at Deltaport.

I believe David would not mind if I share the following letter with you. He sent it to me three years ago. It refers to an article I had included in a Newsletter for "The Friends of Empire", a lunch group which was temporarily unable to meet for lunch because of Covid. "Empire" was "Empire Stevedoring", a company that is now known as "Global Container Terminals (GCT)". David was not a member of that lunch group but I soon found I was sending the Newsletter to many other people that I knew (and some I did not know). The article was titled "Remembering the Glory of the Old Ocean Liners" and the front page picture he referred to appears on the next page.

David Whitaker

This splendid publicity poster shows Southern Railway's Pullman boat train "The Cunarder" taking newly-arrived passengers from Queen Mary (left) up to London, and comes from a book entitled Landscapes Under the Luggage Rack by Greg Norden.

Hi Dave, thank you so much for including me in the newsletter mailings, I always enjoy them.

The latest, July 2022, edition really hit me between the eyes and evoked many happy childhood memories. The front-page picture and article immediately had me devouring the article.

As a child in the very early 50's, every summer my family would go on holiday for 2-weeks to a friend's house in Lymington, opposite the west end of the Isle of Wight. On one Thursday of each holiday we would take the bus to Hythe on the western shore of Southampton Water, ride the electric tram to the end of the pier then take the passenger ferry to Southampton. I would be agog at the various liners that were docked at the passenger terminals. You might ask, why a Thursday? That was the day of the week when the Union Castle ships with their distinctive lavender-coloured hulls with red and black funnels (see picture) sailed for Cape Town, South Africa. They sailed promptly at 4:00 pm. We usually managed to time our return trip so that we would see the sailing process from the ferry, so had a great view of these elegant ships as they eased out of their dock and headed down Southampton Water to the Solent and beyond. As an aside, I remember that we always had lunch at Mayes department store (now part of the John Lewis chain) in Southampton and I would have fish and chips followed by coffee ice cream!!!

The second thing that caught my eye was the train. They were commonly known as the Boat Trains. I have always had a great interest in steam trains, as did my father. The locomotive heading the train in the picture is one of three classes that the Southern Railway owned. The three classes were "West Country", named after West Country towns; "Battle of Britain" named after various WW2 RAF squadrons; and, to me, the most important, "Merchant Navy" class named after well-known shipping companies of the day such as Clan Line and Shaw Savill Line. In total 11 of these locomotives have been preserved and are still operated by volunteer organizations throughout the UK. During the heyday of steam, Southern Railway operated 30 Merchant Navy Class locomotives. They were designed by Oliver Bulleid. Point of interest - because of the design of their cladding they were affectionately known as "Spam Cans"! For those who are interested, there are some great websites giving lots of information.

The third thing of note are the carriages, the famous Pullman units. They were used on "posh" trains as they were elegantly and luxuriously appointed inside and had the distinctive brown and yellow paint jobs. Again, a number of these carriages have been preserved (see picture taken last month on the North York Moors Steam Railway at Grosmont).

Thank you again for the great work you do on this newsletter – lots of good information.

Very best wishes, **David Batchelor**

If you would like to read the article, "Remembering the Glory of the Old Ocean Liners", please let me know and I will email a copy to you. David Whitaker whitknit@telus.net

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Command at Last, by Captain Sandy Kinghorn: By 1971 I had been in the Blue Star Line twenty years from Cadet to First Mate and was beginning to wonder if I would ever rise to the dizzy heights of command. Containerisation had arrived – two new box boats, *Columbia* and *California Star* would soon be coming into service and we knew that one box boat carried as much cargo over the year as four or five of the old conventional ships. So in future they wouldn't need so many ships. So they wouldn't need so many Masters. Promotion was slowing although I knew I was near the top of the list.

Then on 15th April I was enjoying leave with my wife and family when the Marine Superintendent Captain Harry Windle telephoned and said they suddenly needed someone for the *English Star*, sailing from Tilbury for New Zealand in three days time. Would I break my leave to join her?

The *English* and I were old friends. I had been her Third Mate on three trips to South America in the nineteen fifties, her Chief Officer for two round-the-world voyages in the late sixties and knew her to be one of the company's classier ships with twelve passengers.

English Star

As Chief Officer I knew she was a complex vessel, but a great one to sail in. When I said I would be pleased to go, he added, "As Master of course." Wow!

She was not the usual job for a first trip Captain but Captain Windle went on to say I would only be taking her to New Zealand where I'd transfer to the *Caledonia Star*, allowing Captain Jacky Calabrase to come home with the *English*.

The trip out was uneventful until we came to our West Indies bunkering port of Willemstad, in Curacao. Approaching that berth port side-to, you drop your starboard anchor and pay it out as you come alongside, to heave you off when you depart, without needing a tug to turn you round. Proceeding down the narrow channel called the Sint Anna Baai, the Mate called me from forward to say that he couldn't get the anchor up. Fifteen fathoms of chain and our starboard anchor were trailing along the bottom and when I told the Dutch pilot he said, "Never mind Captain, plenty of deep water outside – no danger. Cheerio!" With which he left.

Instead of turning to starboard and heading for the Panama Canal, I headed straight out clear of the shipping lane and stopped the engine, then went forward with the Chief Engineer, to see why our anchor would not come up. With much backing and filling, suddenly a groan came from the windlass and the anchor came up a few feet, then stopped and we seemed to jerk upright as something heavy fell off it. Clearly it had caught something on the bottom. The bridge over the channel had recently fallen down and it looked as though we had picked some of it up. Wrapped round our anchor we had a great lump of steel-bound concrete, now clear of the water, by which time it was dark so I carried on towards Panama with our chunk of bridge still attached to the anchor. **This was a good start to my first trip in command!**

We entered the canal in darkness so nobody noticed the Chief Engineer and his men freeing our iron and concrete piece of bridge and dropping it into the water, highly illegal there, but it was done and nobody else was any wiser. Our first New Zealand port was New Plymouth, North Island, and as *Caledonia Star* was due in Bluff, the very south of South Island, in a few days time, I flew to Invercargill and watched her come alongside. Though smartly kept she was looking her age of nearly thirty years as she came slowly through the drizzle. Built as *Empire Wisdom* in 1942 by Greenock Dockyard to a Clan Line design she had been run by them until 1944 when the Ministry of War Transport reallocated her to Blue Star Line. Renamed *Royal Star*, a twin-screw steam 'up-and-downer' she had been built to burn either coal or oil but in 1962 was re-engined with brand new MAN diesels which gave her a new lease of life. Now renamed *Caledonia Star,* she was first placed on the U.K.- West Coast of North America service with *Columbia Star*, *Catalina Star*, *Colorado Star* and *California Star* but when this trade was taken over by the new container ships she was put on the Crusader Run, running between New Zealand and Japan. I would be taking her on this run until she was deemed ready for the breaker's torch, which would be when the cost of keeping her would exceed estimated future earnings. Her crew were all British. Crusader Line was made up by Blue Star, Port Line, Shaw Savill and New Zealand Shipping Company to serve the Pacific Rim. Years before the European Common Market New Zealand was realizing that she must widen her markets and Crusader would now take her produce to Japan, West Coast of South America and the West Coast of North America, bringing their exports back.

Caledonia Star was the only Blue Star vessel ever to carry this name, a link with her Scottish Clan Line heritage. A beautiful, strongly built ship, an interesting feature was her number 3 kingposts which were not in line athwartships as is normal, but a few feet out of line. By 1942 it was known that U-Boat captains would line their periscope sights on a ship's kingposts when firing their torpedo. She was not named *Empire Wisdom* for nothing! She retained her steam steering gear, auxiliary generator and steam refrigeration plant – two marvellous engines with enormous flywheels which her previous refrigeration Engineer had named Esmerelda and Grizelda, on varnished name boards. They were probably the last of their kind still afloat. The galley stove and baker's oven still burned coal and it was the cook's job every morning to top up their bunkers. So we had three funnels – bakehouse, galley stove and main engine!

I had never visited Japan before. An old aunt of mine had been working in a Hong Kong bank when the Japanese invaded and spent the rest of her war in an internment camp. So I had no intention of being anything more than coldly polite to her captors. Our first port was Naha in Okinawa whence we sailed up the Sea of Japan to the tiny port of Otaru near Sapporo where the next Olympic ski trials were to take place. Ashore I found it a picturesque backdrop to The Mikado with little maids dressed for the part. I was made much of by the agents in this little Hokkaido port as it seemed my predecessors Captains Pitcher and Calabrase had made a good impression.

I had expected Japan to be much more advanced, but even in the cities I found the average citizen did not enjoy a high standard of living and few even owned a car. City dwellers occupied tiny flats and in the smaller ports many lived in cramped unpainted wooden houses with sliding doors and lacking piped water.

From Otaru we made a swift dash through the Tsugaro Strait aided by a four knot current. Forging along at fifteen knots we looked forward to seeing what the next port, Kushiro, had to offer. In mid-afternoon, without warning there was a thundering crash and the ship stopped dead in her tracks, shuddering like a frightened horse. Funnel, masts and kingposts vibrated for a terrifying 15 seconds, then suddenly stopped and we sailed on serenely. Had we struck an upturned derelict fishing boat – there were no reefs nearby?

Tanks and bilges were sounded at once but we were taking no water and the vessel seemed none the worse for her experience. The mystery was solved that evening by the agent, Mr. Nishifuji. “We had minor earth tremor today, nothing significant.”


Caledonia Star

With an average of 1,500 such tremors every year in Japan, ours was hardly worth mentioning. After we had completed formalities Mr. Nishifuji asked if he may bring a few guests including his worship the mayor to see the ship tomorrow morning. This particular week, it seemed, was devoted each year to ships and the sea. The mayoral party would visit each vessel in turn – we were the only British ship – and then attend a special church service. I pointed out that we had no suitable public rooms so the party would have to be entertained in my dayroom. “How many will come?” I asked as he was leaving. “About a dozen. You make speech, I translate. No problem. Thank you so much.” and with that he was gone.

The Mate suggested dressing the ship overall in honour of the occasion, which, I knew from experience meant hard work, getting out all the flags, bending them onto a line stretched from forward to aft via the mastheads in a colourful ‘rainbow’ display. I appreciated his suggestion.

“What will you talk about?” he asked a little anxiously as my disparaging views of Japan were well known aboard by now. Well, the war was a long time past, I told him, and if we British ostracized everyone we had fought against we’d do precious little international talking.

“Quite,” said the Mate, leaving hurriedly. But the point was well made, what would I say?

Ten to eleven saw me pacing the deck in my best whites, nervously rehearsing my greeting and speech. The mayoral party was due to arrive at eleven and the Japanese have a name for punctuality. But the time came and went and by a quarter past I was wondering if they had found another, more interesting ship, one perhaps which could speak Japanese? Five minutes later a dense, laughing throng swept round the end of the wharfside shed, dozens of them, led by two pretty girls in pink, attended by press cameras. The Mate brought them up to my room where I greeted each with my version of Japanese “Good Morning.”

The prettier of the two girls, Miss Port of Kushiro, curtsied and presented me with a huge bouquet of flowers while her shyly smiling partner gave me a wood carving of a fisherman spearing a salmon. I was touched (and still have that carving in my study over forty years later.) Coffee appeared and the mayor made a short speech welcoming us to Kushiro whose people appreciated the cargo we had brought them, which helped the port to survive. He hoped we would enjoy our stay here, and trusted we should soon return in safety and happiness to our cherished families. I was impressed by the lack of cant in this elderly gentleman’s quiet voice.

In reply I told them that this was my first visit to Japan, that I had come full of prejudice as a result of the war, but that I had found my previous dislikes were dispelled by the kindness and friendliness I was being shown in their country. I added that we too were glad of the trade which brought us here and hoped that it would increase to benefit us all, bringing with it not only greater prosperity but a better understanding between our two peoples. It was hardly original but it seemed to go down well as they gave me a standing ovation. After more coffee and pleasantries they departed for the next ship.

Nishifuji returned that evening all smiles. Our visit, he said, had been the best of the lot. Of seven ships visited, only in the *Caledonia Star* had they been invited into the Captain’s ‘own house.’ Only I had made a speech and, without a doubt we had the best show of flags.

I felt we had done our bit for Anglo- Japanese relations and the agent thought so too, it seemed, as he insisted on taking me on a Japanese pub crawl. His director accompanied us and paid all the bills. We not only drank but ate in each house and I began to appreciate the considerable stamina needed to stay the pace at an international level. The director was a smartly suited gentleman in his late sixties, grey haired and dignified and he and I spent the late evening hours propping up a bar exchanging reminiscences. I found I was enjoying Japan after all.

From Kushiro we spent several days in Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya and Kobe. One of our motormen was admitted to a Yokohama hospital run by American nuns. Each afternoon the agent drove me up the long hill to visit the patient and I generally walked back picking a different route each time. Thus I saw that while the main streets resembled main streets all over the world, the back streets a few yards away revealed another world.

Small, unpainted houses with high peaked roofs and curling tiles crouched alongside old warehouses and ancient temples. Harbours were full of ships and barges clustered around us at every port.

A barge crew consisted of a young man and his wife, often with a baby strapped to her back. When they were ready to go, father went below to start the engine while mother and baby took the wheel. Japan's coastal waters provide an excellent training ground for apprentice shipmasters like myself, particularly in port approaches. Collisions occurred daily, though not, I hasten to add, involving *Caledonia Star*. Fishermen abounded. At night the sea would be covered to the horizon with their bobbing white lights through which we picked our way with care. After a month around Japan it was a holiday to set off on the quiet run back to Auckland, even with the excitement of evading a typhoon. Our second run north, I was told, would probably be our last, before we went to Kaohsiung to be scrapped.

In Auckland we took aboard three horses, show jumpers, together with their Japanese trainer, Kikki, who would look after them on the voyage north, to Moji in South Japan. Several of us had birthdays on the way north and Kikki was surprised to see that on a British ship it is the birthday boy who buys the drinks. His own birthday arrived and he insisted on being one of the boys. When he had a few onboard his face became bright coppery red, but he took the resultant cracks about the rising Sun in good part.

This was the first ship I had been in where the crew as well as the officers had their own bar. Both ran well, without trouble and I was pleasantly surprised that rather than increasing drunkenness the bars abolished it. This was partly because it was accepted that the bar would be closed if trouble arose but mainly demonstrated that if chaps are trusted they will generally behave well. She was also the only ship I knew where the lads had organized themselves into long-running competitions of scrabble, draughts, dominoes, cribbage, chess and darts. The two teams, officers and gentlemen took turns at providing hospitality. Indeed, the social life aboard *Caledonia Star* was the most enlightened I had ever come across.

Finally I was ordered to Kaohsiung in Taiwan. As Communist China had just been admitted to the United Nations and feelings ran high across the Formosa Strait, I took the longer way round, to the east of the island, to avoid possible cross fire. The town was on a war footing. A destroyer guarded the harbour boom, the surrounding hills bristling with rocket launchers directed at the mainland. After several days at anchor off the entrance a pilot came out, accompanied by Customs officers, who proceeded to dump our medical supplies overboard – to prevent drug smuggling, they said. As the harbour boom closed behind us, and technicians began dismantling our radio equipment, I realized that this was the end. The lagoon where ships were broken up was a spooky nautical graveyard where dozens of ships lay at crazy angles in tiers, waiting to be torn apart by the burner's torch and fed to the insatiable steel mills.

Far removed from most natural sources of iron ore, the Far East has long been interested in buying the world's scrap. A ship is sold at so many U.S. dollars per ton of her light displacement. In other words if the ship without cargo, fuel or stores, were placed on a gigantic set of scales, her price amounted to that weight of steel. All else is of little importance, even brass and copper, and most of the woodwork is burned. Bonfires were dotted over a desolate no-man's-land between the lagoon and the distant smoky chimneys of the steel mills. Here the people who broke up the ships lived in squalid shacks made of ships' timber and canvas. There were no quays. a ship would be run ashore alongside the bank, the next ship would go alongside her, and so on, The ships near us had long been abandoned by their crews and ours was the only one showing lights at night, a cheerful spark of life in the land of the dead. We were run into the side of the *Texaco Kenya*, a tanker built in 1952, where a man and a boy were burning off the bridge deck and wheelhouse.

When they had cut round, a wire rope was hooked on and a derrick from a ship's mast standing on the bank, powered by old ships' winches nearby, swung the huge piece of ship on to a trailer which then took it to the mill. Dismemberment went on all the time, accidents were common and life was cheap. Fires broke out frequently in her cargo tanks and our crew became adept at extinguishing them before they spread to our ship. Nobody else seemed to care but we were still interested in preserving what was ours until the time came to leave. We lived aboard for eight days while the financial details were concluded in London.

On the ninth day the agent gave me the coded telegram which advised me that the deal had concluded and that I must now sign my ship over to her purchasers. At my desk for the last time I signed the required documents closely watched by the agent and the two Customs officers. At the last signature the Customs officers began stripping my bunk, stuffing the pillowcases with sheets and blankets, taking the curtains from the portholes as they went ashore. Such items were, it seemed, Customs perks. I had been favoured this morning by a rare visit from the agency manager himself who asked me eagerly, "Have you a screwdriver, Captain?"

A modest request, I thought, giving him one from my desk drawer. To my amazement he bounded up to the wheelhouse, laughing like a schoolboy, to return with our brassbound teak steering wheel under his arm.

Our midday meal was simmering on the galley stove but by this time we could not get ashore quickly enough because scenes like those in my accommodation had been enacted all over the ship. I took down the Queen's picture in the saloon and packed it in my case – at least they were not getting her! As we chugged away in the launch a curl of smoke drifted up from the galley funnel, and I noticed that several of my tough, hard bitten old shipmates had tears in their eyes.

I next visited Kaohsiung twenty years later to find no ships now being scrapped, fine quays alongside the lagoon, every feature of an efficient modern port properly in place. Shipbreaking had gone elsewhere.
https://www.shippingtandy.com/features/command-last/

On which ship would you find this Wheelhouse?

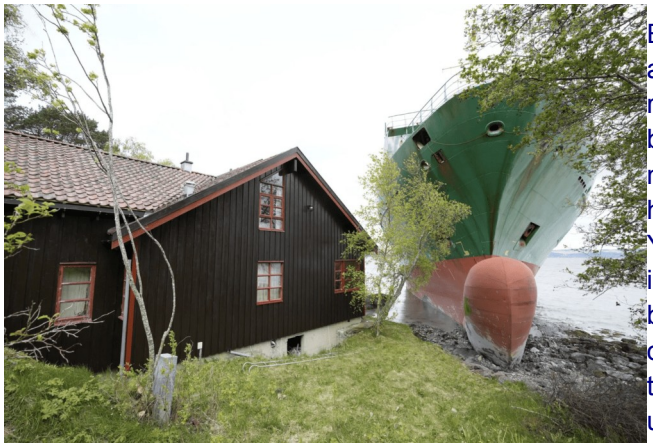
Answer on Page 16.

The origin of seafaring words: Old English, which for practical purposes can be defined as the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons before William the Conqueror arrived, came up with a handy word for something that floats and carries people.
So useful was this word “boat” that the Scandinavians took it over. Less surprisingly, it has equivalents in all major European languages, even if not quite with the same meaning - “bateau”, “boot” and so on.
But there is a clear split in Europe over the word “ship”. The Germans and the Dutch use basically the same word as the English, “schiff” and “schip”. The French and the Spanish borrowed this and the English borrowed it back with changed meaning as “skiff”.
Other borrowings and re-borrowings include the word “equip” which the French coined originally as “esquiper” to mean “to equip a ship”. The same thing happened to “skipper”, only this time it went into Dutch and German before coming back, having acquired its “sk”.
“Naval” comes from Latin like the French “navire” and the Spanish and Italian “nave” for ship. The nave of a church is also the same word as the construction of a wooden church posed the same problems as ship building, only upside down. By a nice piece of translation or similar thought-process, the Germans and Dutch also call the nave of a church by the same name as a ship.
“Navigate” comes from simply putting the Latin for “to drive” on the end of the word for “ship”.
But “nautical” goes back further through the Latin for sailor, “nauticus”, to the Greek for ship “naus”. And guess where “nausea” comes from?

Watery Words compiled by Mary Alderton - Fairplay Magazine. May 3rd 1990

The real dangers of dozing in a ship wheelhouse

As a story in May in the general press, it all seemed a bit of a laugh. The deep-sleeping Norwegian in his pretty cabin on the Trondheim Fjord, oblivious to a "huge" ship running ashore a few feet from his bedroom. He required an urgent call from his neighbour to alert him to the fact that the 886-TEU feeder containership ***NCL Salten*** had come to call and was probably going to stay for a while. It produced some excellent photographs to brighten up the weekend. Nobody was hurt and there was no pollution.



You might suggest it was almost a "good news" story. Except that it really is not funny, as this sort of accident is happening far too often and while this one resulted in a lot of bent steel and the Second Mate being arrested by the police and confessed to nodding off at a crucial navigational juncture, others have far worse consequences.

You have to wonder, how many hurrying feeder ships in the frantic European distribution network there are, being driven, in dawn's early light, with a tired Officer of the Watch fighting off sleep. Each, impressed by the need to maintain the schedule, but some just unable to remain alert, saved by the fact that at the crucial moment, there was no traffic, shoal or an alter-course position coming up.

We had a horrible reminder of this a couple of months ago off the mouth of the Humber with the *Solong* crashing into the anchored *Stena Immaculate* to wreck both and kill one of the containership's seafarers.

But you do not have to probe the records for long to find plenty of other groundings and collisions where a lone watchkeeper, exhausted, distracted or asleep, has failed to keep the ship safe. There has been no shortage of clever ideas to keep watchkeepers awake and alert; from movement alarms to marine versions of the "dead-man's handle," but people annoyed or bored by the inhumanity of a device that treats a sentient human like a battery chicken, just turn them off. And there is no getting away from the fact that the odds are stacked against tired people preventing their minds wandering, or just surrendering to the circumstances.

A warm wheelhouse, all sealed against the outside environment to protect the fragile electronics against the sea air. The comforting hum of the machinery, the hypnotic scan of the radars, the thrum of the diesel and the rocking of the sea. Good grief; if you are a person who suffers from sleeplessness, this is the perfect recipe for sending you off. And above all, the design of the modern bridge, where the brief seems to have been to make a watchkeeper's life less of a challenge, requiring less skill and, just like life ashore, fixated by screens.

Watchkeeper's challenge: staying awake on a "posture-perfect" chair

Crammed with consoles and instruments, with insufficient space to pace up and down, dominated by that "posture-perfect" chair, situated just where a sensible person might wish to stand and examine the bearing of a light or judge a collision risk. To people of a certain vintage, who kept watch entirely on their feet, and knew that to sit down in the pilot chair or chart-room settee was to risk the sack, the presence of such chairs in the modern wheelhouse is an anachronism.

How can any watchkeeper stay awake if they sit on that? But then, we are told by sincere and well-meaning operational managers – people today just will not tolerate having to stand for their watch. And to do them justice, a six-hour watch, with a sleep pattern interrupted by port calls ad infinitum, with accommodation that is probably vibrating and noisy, is not what would be recommended for either a long life or a satisfying career. Watchkeeping Masters, not enough support on board, ferocious and unforgiving schedules all combine, we are told, to many people being almost zombies by the time their tour ends.

But can anything be done other than more fancy instruments and equipment to make the lives of these hard-pressed people less intense? Probably not in a hurry, with Trump-induced congestion all around Europe and the feeders going like the clappers to shift the logistic logjam, while the long-haul tonnage waits at anchorages for a berth. Just make sure the logbook records your rest periods, not counting those in the wheelhouse chair.

Maritime Magazine

Michael Grey*. May 30th 2025. (Photo by Norwegian Coast Guard)

**Michael Grey is a past Master Mariner and former editor of Lloyd's List. This column is published with the kind permission of The Maritime Advocate.*

https://maritimemag.com/en/the-real-dangers-of-dozing-in-a-ship-wheelhouse/

Jannel Robertson
Deckhand

To: The Nautical Professional Education Society of Canada.

I write this letter to inform you of my progress in my maritime career. Since finishing my nautical program last spring, I am proud to have successfully attained my first Certificate of Competency: my Bridge Watch Rating (STCW 11/4: Rating Forming Part of a Navigational Watch). I obtained my sea time sailing on tall ships and being part of the old maritime tradition of transport by sail.

I sailed across from Europe on the two-masted Schooner s/v *Ide Min*, a sailing cargo vessel on its way to the Caribbean to pick up coffee, chocolate and rum, to be transported by wind https://kaapkargo.com/Ship. Then had the opportunity to sail on the beautiful Lugger, s/v ***Grayhound*** around Brittany, France and to Cornwall, England and back. https://grayhoundventures.com/. I have also continued to work in boatyards on old traditional wooden ships. I again helped the Hawila Project in Denmark https://www.hawila.org/hawilaproject/ for 3 months continuing to develop my shipwright and marine carpentry skills. I made and installed planks on the 35 metre gaff-rigged Ketch built in 1935 in Norway.

This spring I was on rotation with mv *Solidaire*, a civilian Search & Rescue (SAR) vessel that aids asylum seekers on boats in distress in the Central Mediterranean, one of the world's deadliest migration routes. We encountered numerous overcrowded and unseaworthy boats attempting to cross the sea in order to flee horrific situations, some with broken engines that had been adrift for several days. During my time onboard, in total we prevented 594 people from possibly drowning or being pulled back to Libya where they would again be detained, tortured and enslaved.
https://maltashipphotos.com/migrant-rescue-ship-thebacklash-leaving-malta-fresh-from-refit-drydocking-january-2024/

Currently I am volunteering with Sea-Eye, another civilian SAR organisation. The *Sea-Eye 5* is a smaller vessel with an 8-person crew, so everyone has multiple roles. My position is RHIB communicator (the person who speaks and manages the crowd in order to shuttle people from an unseaworthy vessel to the *Sea-Eye 5*), Bridge Watch (responsible for navigating the vessel during my watch), and Post Rescue Assistant (helping with care for survivors while onboard). https://united4rescue.org/en/the-fleet/sea-eye-5/

Thank you so much for the financial support in order to help me continue to develop my nautical skills and progress in the field. Fair winds.

Sincerely,

Jannel Robertson. July 22nd 2025

Jannel Robertson was a student at Camosun College and a "Spring 2024" NPESC Bursary recipient.

I added the links to this letter. David

Earlier, reference was made to the Union Castle Line, a company which some readers will not know. Union Castle did advertise a ship sailing from Southampton for South Africa at 4pm every Thursday. You may find the following article interesting, particularly if you are Rugby enthusiast.

HISTORY SHORTIE: SIR DONALD CURRIE KCMG

Donald Currie, who died in 1909, was the son of a Glasgow barber, one of ten children. He went to work as a clerk for Cunard and did jolly well, opening offices for them in Le Havre, Paris, Antwerp & Bremen. In 1862 aged 37, he struck out on his own and formed the Castle Line operating Liverpool to Calcutta. Evolving to serve Cape Town with fixed schedules this was, after nearly 30 years of competition, to merge with the Union Steamship Company to form the Union-Castle Line, sometime later nicknamed the "Lavender Hull Mob" due to the colour of the ships' hulls.


The Currie Cup

The rugby fans amongst you will be familiar with the Currie Cup which is South Africa's premier rugby trophy donated by Currie in 1891.

The discerning travellers amongst you – which must surely mean all - will be familiar with the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town, aka 'The Nellie', aka 'The Pink Lady'. Commissioned by Currie and opened in 1899, it was the first hotel in South Africa to offer its guests hot and cold running water. During the Second Anglo-Boer war, the hotel served as the unofficial British Army HQ.


The Mount Nelson Hotel

Further back in 1879, the first news of the Battle of Isandlwana arrived courtesy of a Castle liner diverted to St Vincent in the Cape Verde islands, the closest place with a telegraph station connected to Britain – news did NOT travel fast in those days!

In 1892, the *Drummond Castle*, fitted with cold storage spaces, carried the first 'Cape Peaches' to England – the beginning of the South African fruit trade that still blossoms today.


The Edinburgh Castle

As a Member of Parliament, Currie came up with the idea of converting fast merchant ships into armed merchant cruisers and as a major shipping magnate, he was on familiar terms with the likes of Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain and President Kruger. Currie was one of the original directors of De Beers Consolidated Mines, so a man with fingers in many pies.

I think one would have to agree that the boy done well!

The writer, back in his youth - had the privilege of sailing with Union-Castle (then British & Commonwealth Shipping) for almost a decade and, amongst others, served as navigator on the *Edinburgh Castle*.

Sean Gay. Hon. Historian
The Worshipful Company of Shipwrights. Ironmongers' Hall, Shaftesbury Place, LONDON EC2Y 8AA.

Letters from NIBC-VTF 2024 Scholarship Winners

I'm having a blast as a deckhand. No regret in my career shift decision. I work for Bridgemans Services out at the big LNG project.

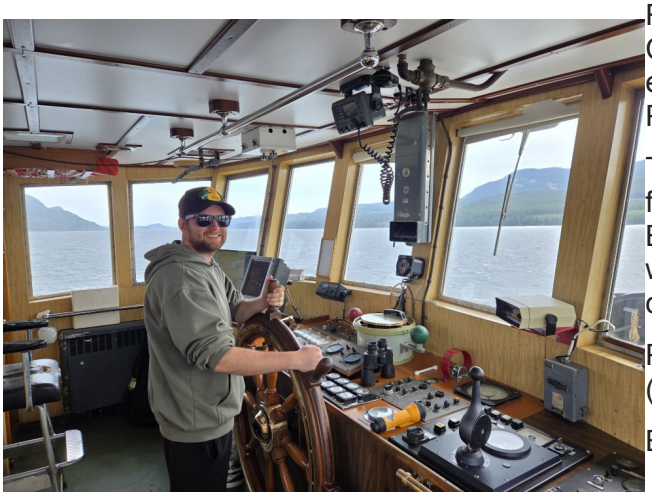
My delay in getting back to you was getting permission to get pictures of myself on the job. The site has policies.... Lots of them.

I registered for the 3rd time to take the Bridgewatch Rating Course..... Sept to October in Ladysmith. Hopefully nothing will go amiss.

Future Goals after Bridgewatch: SVMO & SVOP

Thanks for everything! **Serena Anderson** WMI Student

Since receiving the scholarship I finished year 4 at BCIT and passed my Master 150-D. Since finishing school I began working as a Mate for Gowlland Towing doing log towing from Seymour Inlet (North end of Vancouver Island) to North Arm and Crofton.



Recently I was offered a position as Mate with Coast Island Marine, towing Log barges and experiencing the whole Coast from Victoria to Prince Rupert and Haida Gwaii.

The scholarship allowed me to afford to live and focus on my studies in my last year of school. Between the scholarship and part time working i was able to keep myself from sinking more into debt.

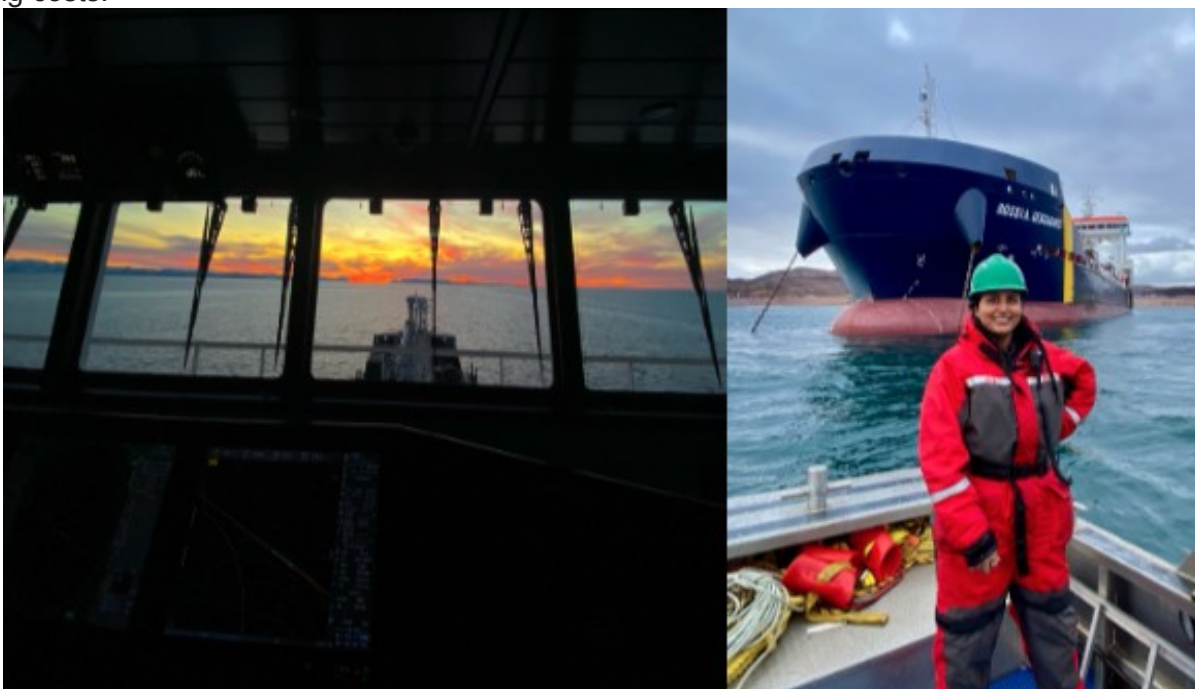
Picture is on the bridge of the *Ocean Clipper* (Coast Island Marine)

Best regards, **Chris Volkers**

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the NIBC/VTF Scholarship. This generous award has significantly supported my educational journey and allowed me to focus on my academic and personal growth without the added burden of financial stress.

The scholarship funds were applied to cover essential academic and living expenses:

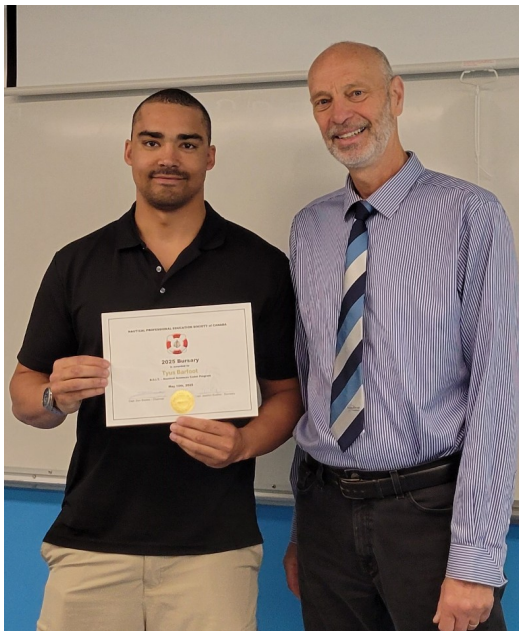
- Tuition and Fees: A portion of the award was used to offset the cost of tuition.
- Books and Supplies: I purchased required textbooks and course materials.
- Housing and Living Expenses: The scholarship helped cover part of my rent and daily living costs.



I had an opportunity to work on the Chemical Oil Product Carrier (*Rossi A. Desgagnés*) during my first-year sea term. I was involved in various operations ranging from daily maintenance tasks to understanding the complexities of cargo handling, mooring operations and safety procedures.
I sailed for about 6 months from April 2024 till October 2024 in the Great Lakes, East Coast and the Arctic (Hudson Bay and Nunavut). Overall, my time on the tanker was both challenging and rewarding. I have included a selection of photographs documenting my time on board.
Thanks to this scholarship, I was able to dedicate more time and energy to my studies, resulting in strong academic performance during the year.

Harmanpreet Sandhu. Nautical Sciences Cadet BCIT

On June 6th Captain Joachim Rüther attended the Marine Campus of BCIT where he presented Certificates to two of this year's Bursary recipients, both being Nautical Science Cadets.



Above: Bhupinder Singh Dhesi

Left: Tyus Barfoot

Sailors looking at smartphones blamed for surge in ship collisions

An increase in collisions at sea has been blamed on seafarers spending hours scrolling on their mobile phones and falling asleep when they should be keeping watch.

Captain Andrew Moll, Britain's chief inspector of marine accidents, said the increased automation of shipping had rendered watch-keeping mind-numbingly dull and led crews to view the shifts as time for rest and relaxation, rather than a vital element of safety.

To make matters worse, a requirement to appoint additional lookouts to aid watch-keepers is often ignored, while some sailors are even deactivating alarms that sound on a regular basis to ensure they are paying attention to computer screens.

Work by the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch (Maib), which scrutinises accidents involving British vessels worldwide and all incidents in UK territorial waters, said waning attention spans on the bridge have been linked with numerous recent disasters.

Those include the collision between the container ship *Solong* and the oil tanker *Stena Immaculate* off the mouth of the Humber on March 10.

Capt Moll said the So*long*, bound for Rotterdam from Grangemouth in Scotland, had been travelling in a straight line on autopilot for around 11 hours in poor visibility when it hit the tanker, killing one seaman and igniting a fire that took two days to extinguish.

The Maib's interim report found that neither ship had a dedicated lookout and said further scrutiny will be given to their watch-keeping practices and "fatigue management".

A collision between the British cargo vessel *Scot Carrier* and the barge *Karin Høj*, which killed two in 2024, happened after an officer on the former ship was distracted by the continual use of a tablet computer during his watch after earlier consuming alcohol, the Maib found.

Waning attention spans have been linked to collisions such as one between cargo vessel *Solong* and an oil tanker this year – Getty.

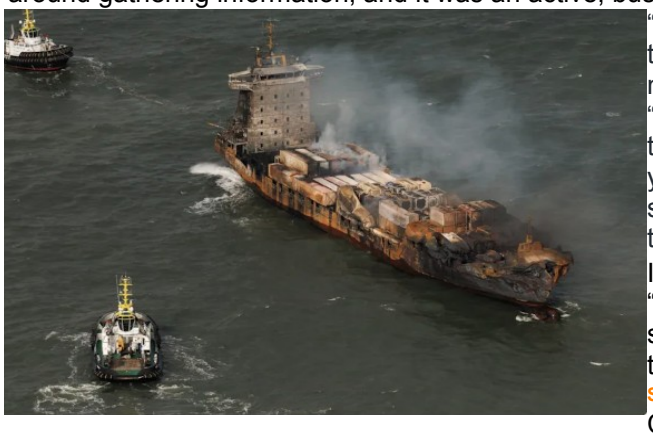
Capt Moll said: "We're seeing more and more cases where a vessel has set off and a watch-keeper has turned up on the bridge, but they are not looking where the ship is going, and as a consequence it runs into something."

He said there was particular concern about the hundreds of coastal vessels plying crowded UK waters with only two watch-keepers on alternate six-hour shifts.

Under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, each can work for 14 hours a day, five days a week. However, the Maib's research indicates that examples of crew falling asleep are just as prevalent on larger vessels with more officers to share watch-keeping duties. Capt Moll said that indicated a problem intrinsic to the changing nature of the role.

'Chronic boredom'

He said: "The job itself is not very exciting. If you went back 20 or 30 years, the watch-keeper had to rush around gathering information, and it was an active, busy thing.



"In the engine room they were looking at gauges and temperatures and on the bridge they were taking navigation fixes and plotting them on charts.

"That's now all being done by machines, which has taken away the engagement. Technically speaking, you're talking about chronic boredom and a job that suffers from qualitative and quantitative underload with the result that it lacks meaning and purpose."

In its annual report on marine safety the Maib said that "humans do not make good monitors and if under-stimulated they will find other things to occupy themselves".

Smoke billows from the *Solong* after its collision – Dan Kitwood/Getty

Capt Moll said that included listening to music, browsing the internet and making video calls. Other seafarers are essentially flipping their day, spending their breaks gaming and leaving them so exhausted that they fall asleep on the job when they return to the bridge.

An early warning of the trend came in 2013 with a spectacular collision between the UK bulk carrier *Seagate* and the *Timor Stream*, a refrigerated cargo ship, off the Dominican Republic.

Both had been sailing through open water in good visibility yet crashed into each other, with the bow of the *Timor Stream* ploughing into the engine room and accommodation block of the *Seagate*, with sleeping crewmen miraculously escaping injury.

The report said that neither watch-keeper had realised that the ships were on a collision course until less than a minute before the accident, blaming poor standards "driven by complacency".

While vessels have multiple systems designed to maintain the attention of watch-keepers, those are often poorly understood or regarded as an irritation and deactivated, Capt Moll said.

A Maib report on the collision between the freighter *Scot Explorer* and gas carrier *Happy Falcon* in the North Sea in 2023 found that the cargo ship's navigation aids were not being monitored, with its electric chart display system set to silent.

Capt Moll said: "You can have the equivalent of a dead-man's handle which if you don't set it every 15 minutes it will alert the whole ship, but that's being turned off. Navigational and radar alarms that tell you of an impending danger are being turned off or muted.

"So the watch-keepers aren't engaging with the systems and neither are they using the things that should force them to engage with the systems. That is a significant problem."

The ultimate solution, he said, may be to require manufacturers to modify warning systems and alarms so that they can never be disabled.

Sat, July 26, 2025 The Telegraph

https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/sailors-looking-smartphones-blamed-surge-100000653.html?

Leadership in Pilotage: Strategic Command, Navigational Mastery

Among the few marine professions that purse a man's technical skills and value very high, maritime piloting perhaps is in a class of its own. In this career, the pilot is entrusted to maneuver vessels through some of the most challenging and congested waterways while ensuring seamless integration between shipboard operations and port infrastructure. While technical proficiency might stand tall, it is, in fact, leadership acumen that separates a good pilot from simply an above-average navigator.

Decision Making under Pressure and Strategic Decision-Making

Pilotage is a high-consequence activity in decision-making where inaccuracy or loss of confidence cannot be afforded. The pilot must form quick judgments and take confident decisions instantaneously, based on dynamic variables such as hydrodynamic forces, vessel displacement, meteorological conditions, and traffic density. A mistake may lead to serious financial loss, environmental disaster, or even the loss of human life. In this context, effective leadership involves not just experience but a strategic mindset that allows the pilot to anticipate, mitigate, and manage risks proactively. A proficient pilot relies not only on data and instruments but also on intuition developed through years of hands-on experience.

The item above is the beginning of a long article that appeared in The Maritime Executive, in February 2025.
The full article can be found at: -

https://maritime-executive.com/editorials/leadership-in-pilotage-strategic-command-navigational-mastery

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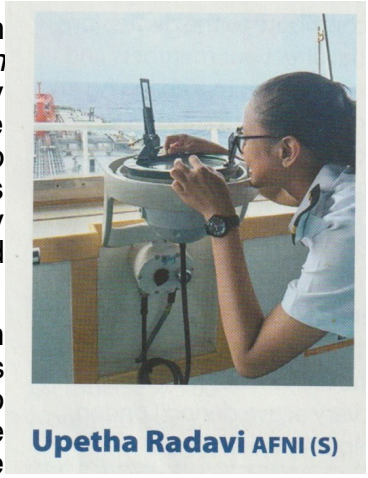
Cadet's Column

Learning to belong at sea – Stepping into the world of seafaring, it's the crew that makes the difference.

When I embarked on my first sea voyage as a Deck Cadet, I carried with me not only ambition and excitement, but also the weight of being the first female Cadet from Sri Lanka to join my company. It was a milestone I was proud of – and a responsibility I took seriously. My training at Southern Maritime Training Institute (SMTI) of Sri Lanka prepared me well in theory, but as I would quickly learn, life at sea is an entirely different world.


Upetha Radavi AFNI (S)

Though I was stepping into unfamiliar territory, I was welcomed with open arms. From the moment I stepped on board *MT Norddolphin* (after my first flight from my home country, and then making my way to a foreign port – alone and at the dead of night) everyone was supportive, respectful and helpful, from the senior officers to the crew. As the only female in the deck department, I was nervous about how I would be treated – but I was fortunate. They understood I was new, and they guided me with patience and encouragement.

Learning opportunities: My time on board was filled with learning opportunities. One of the most rewarding experiences was participating in cargo operations. I assisted in preparing the cargo tanks, monitoring loading and discharging sequences, taking ullage and temperature readings, and ensuring safety protocols were followed at every stage. It was incredible to see how precise, detailed and coordinated these operations had to be.

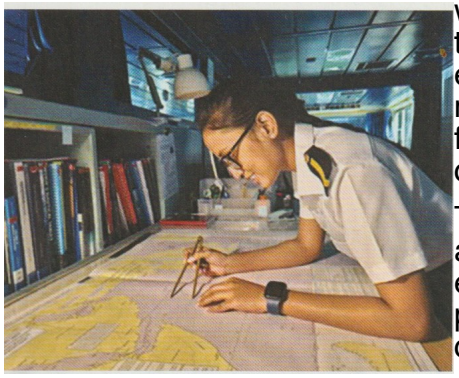
I also took part in tank cleaning operations, which gave me hands-on exposure to one of the more challenging aspects of the job. From setting up the tank cleaning line and monitoring pressure, to ensuring proper ventilation and safety compliance, the experience taught me a great deal about planning, teamwork and responsibility.

These tasks pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped build both my skills and confidence. Every small contribution I made – every checklist, every valve turned, every safety watch – mattered. And that gave me a deep sense of pride in my role.

That first voyage was filled with firsts – first mooring operation, first night watch, first drill and first tank entry. Each one was a building block in my growth as a Cadet and as a seafarer. From Fujairah to Rotterdam, Sikka, Mina Al Ahmadi, Mina Al Shuaiba, Mombassa, Chiba, Daesan, Jiayang and Botany Bay, the passages across the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans have given me confidence and also reminded me that there is much more there to learn.

Every small contribution I made – every checklist, every valve turned, every safety watch – mattered. And that gave me a deep sense of pride in my role

Part of a team: Despite being new, I never felt alone. The crew created a friendly working atmosphere where I was treated as a valuable team member. Senior officers were always available to explain procedures and answer my questions, while crew members shared practical tips that helped me adjust faster. Whether it was a toolbox talk or a coffee break on deck, I felt like I belonged.



Their guidance helped me not only learn the ropes but also feel empowered. I could see that respect at sea is earned through hard work, willingness to learn, and a positive attitude – and that is what I focussed on every day.

As the first Sri Lankan female in the company, I became aware that my journey was not just personal – it was symbolic. I was showing that women can take on deck duties, operate equipment, handle rough weather and perform with confidence and capability. If my presence on board helps inspire even one other young woman to pursue a maritime career, I will consider it a win.

There is still much to learn, but I now feel more prepared, more capable and more passionate about what lies ahead. As the maritime industry continues to evolve, it must also continue to support and uplift women at sea. Inclusion is not just about numbers – it is about creating environments where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive. I was lucky to find that on my first vessel, but I know it is not yet universal. Let us work together to make it so.

To all future female Cadets, step aboard with confidence. The ocean does not care who you are – only how well you sail through its challenges. There is a place for you on every deck, every bridge and every engine room. I feel accomplished in my journey so far, from my birthplace in Hambanthota to my schooling in Colombo, and now the ocean as the place for my career.

I would like to sincerely thank Reederei Nord for giving me the opportunity to begin my sea career. Sailing aboard *MT Norddolphin* (IMO97779977) was a truly formative experience; one that shaped me professionally and personally. I am grateful to the Company, the Master, senior officers and the entire crew for their guidance, support and kindness throughout my first voyage.

"Seaways" July 2025. The International Journal of The Nautical Institute.

WALMART SENIOR GREETER: Charley, a new retiree-greeter at Walmart, just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker, really tidy, clean-shaven, sharp-minded and a real credit to the company and obviously demonstrating their "Older Person Friendly" policies.
One day the boss called him into the office for a talk.
"Charley, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang-up job when you finally get here; but your being late so often is quite bothersome."
"Yes, I know boss, and I am working on it."
"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear".
"Yes sir, I understand your concern and I will try harder".
Seeming puzzled, the manager went on to comment, "I know you're retired from the Armed Forces. What did they say to you there if you showed up in the morning late so often?"
The old man looked down at the floor and smiled. He chuckled quietly, then said with a grin,

"They usually saluted and said,
Good morning, Admiral. Can I get your coffee, sir"?

Read the Summer 2025 edition of Maritime Magazine at
https://maritimemag.com/en/3d-flip-book/magazine-117/

Read the latest edition of "theSea", the Quarterly Magazine of The Mission to Seafarers (Published June 26th 2025)
https://www.missiontoseafarers.org/wp-content/uploads/theSea-issue-2-2025-High-res.pdf

Many seafaring phrases, particularly from the days of sail, have been adopted into everyday use.

For example: In the offing - This phrase is quite simple to understand once you know that 'the offing' is the part of the sea that can be seen from land, excluding those parts that are near the shore. Early texts also refer to it as 'offen' or 'offin'. A ship about to arrive was "in the offing", therefore imminent, which is how the phrase is used today.

And: Filibuster - Buccaneers were sometimes known in England as filibusters. From the Dutch for vrybuiter (freebooter) translated into French as flibustier. It is now used as a political term meaning to delay or obstruct the passage of legislation (as opposed to sailing vessels) by non-stop speech making.

Answer to Question on Page 4: That is the wheelhouse of the Royal Yacht, *Britannia.*

N P E S C

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Articles or comments for inclusion in future editions of Seatimes can be sent to me at whitknit@telus.net
David Whitaker FNI

The Nautical Institute
British Columbia Branch