

Topmasts

February 2012 No. 1

The Quarterly Newsletter of
The Society for Nautical Research

Chairman's Column

Members will notice that the Newsletter has now metamorphosed into electronic form with a new title, *Topmasts*. With this new beginning the editor, Barry Coombs, is hoping to encourage members to participate more and provide up-to-date news and the very latest details of events. Additionally, the editor will not be constrained by space considerations and will be able to enhance and expand coverage. As I have said before, there is so much happening in the field of maritime history which goes unreported and which members would undoubtedly find of considerable interest.

Lighter articles and anecdotal items will be able to be included and members are encouraged to contribute stories and items which might be of wider interest.

While cost saving is a consideration and Council recognizes that at the moment not every member has access to online facilities, it is believed that the advantages which come with the new enhanced service will bring considerable benefits to members in general and result in a much more interesting and stimulating publication.

Admiral Sir Kenneth Eaton

PDF links

The PDF format allows hyperlinks to email addresses and websites to be accessed immediately from the file: simply run your cursor over the blue text and click. The SNR website can be accessed thus

[The Society for Nautical Research](#)

Editorial

Welcome to this edition of *Topmasts*, the very first digital SNR Newsletter. The Publications Committee has been discussing the advantages of using modern media methods for some time. This newsletter is the first part of the process of finding a new and effective method of bringing you up to date information quickly and in a very accessible form. With virtually all the members of the Society being avid Internet and email users, it was felt that the material in the newsletter would be fresher and clearer using this form of distribution.

It enables us to make much more information available as we are not limited to a format of 16 pages of A5. We can also use colour illustrations and provide instant links to the websites of those members and organizations promoting lectures, exhibitions, museums books and degree courses.

Very importantly we can update information almost instantly should changes be needed. Copy deadlines can now be more flexible and we can insert new material at will if things crop up at the last minute. Last but not least, we can control our costs much more effectively. The cost of postage and print material has risen considerably in the last few years so digital publishing will help keep down the cost of annual subscriptions.

Your editor welcomes comments on the new format – and looks forward to receiving news, notices of events and more from all members at newslettereditor@snr.org.uk

Barry Coombs

News

Annual General Meeting of The Society

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Saturday 16 June 2012. The agenda and papers will be included, as usual, with the May issue of *The Mariner's Mirror*. After the AGM it will be possible for members and their guests to tour HMS *Victory* until about 6.45 p.m. and then for a limited number to dine on board.

Planning the events for this day had just started as this Newsletter went to the website and fuller details are included within the February *Mariner's Mirror*.

Update on the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum

The move of the collections into the new stores is completed so the full Library service and access to the collections started in January 2012. Please see the latest update at [the update on the Caird Library, December 2011](#)

From Monday 30 January 2012 the library will be open six days a week, Monday to Friday 10.00–16.45, late night Thursday until 19.45 and Saturdays 10.00–13.00 and 14.00–16.45. Please note that to use the library and access the collections, you must register online for a new-style three-year reader's ticket at www.nmm.ac.uk/aeon. Guidance on how to request items using Aeon will be posted on the National Maritime Museum website shortly.

From January this year the National Maritime Museum, the Queen's House and the Royal Observatory, although retaining their individual names, will become collectively known as Royal Museums Greenwich to mark royal status being conferred on the Borough of Greenwich from 2012. To mark this honour, there will be a special major exhibition at the National Maritime Museum from 27 April to 9 September 2012 entitled *Royal River: Power, Pageantry and the Thames*. Visit www.rmg.ac.uk for more information.

Additional note from Andy Bodle Director of Operations & Human Resources: he has written to say that he is responsible for a project to dismantle the joinery from the now redundant Caird Library. Some of it may be used elsewhere

on site under the auspices of English Heritage and the Local Authority with contributory legacy funding from LOCOG, but he needs to find a good home for the rest. If any SNR members have any suggestions for this they can contact Andy at ANBodle@rmg.co.uk

Captain Matthew Flinders Bicentenary 2014

Peter Ashley is leading an initiative together with descendants of the Flinders family and the Britain Australia Society to have a commemorative stone/plaque erected in St James's Gardens adjacent to Euston Station. He has the support of Sir Christopher Benson and the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency John Dauth, and is working with Camden Council and the Diocese of London regarding planning permission. Peter would welcome any comments, questions or suggestions and any help that members can give. You can contact him on picamar87@hotmail.com

Fuller details of this excellent initiative can be found on the website www.snr.org.uk.

The Victory Medal 2011

The Council Of The Society For Nautical Research Awarded the 2011 Victory Medal to Captain D. T. Smith OBE FNI RN in recognition of the exceptional contribution he made to the conservation and restoration of *Trincomalee*. Without David Smith's drive and perseverance she would not have been transformed from rotting hulk to the icon she is today".

Exceptionally, a second Victory Medal was awarded at the same to Mr Les Gilfoyle the senior shipwright involved with the project and commendations went to Keith Johnson expert researcher and draughtsman in charge of the drawing office and to the late Bill Stevenson who was the restoration manager. The presentations were made on board HMS *Trincomalee* on 6 August last year.

The Society for Nautical Research instituted its Victory Medal to recognize the individual contribution of deserving individuals and shipwrights whom in the judgement of the Society have served HMS *Victory* and assisted

her conservation. In the Society's Centenary Year the Council of the Society decided to widen the eligibility criteria for this award. From 2011 the Society's Victory Medal or Commendation can be awarded, when there is a suitable candidate, not only to those involved with HMS *Victory* but also those whom in the judgement of the Society have assisted in the conservation of other historic ships, however constructed, and whether on a statutory list or not.'

The Hattendorf Prize

In the last issue of the Newsletter, we congratulated NAM Rodger on being awarded the Hattendorf Prize from the US Naval War College. The following link contains a press release and photos of US Naval War College (NWC) presenting him with the Hattendorf Prize, for his contributions to maritime history, at the college on Oct. 20 last year. You can read more at <http://www.usnwc.edu/About/News/October-2011/Historian-Awarded-Hattendorf-Prize-during-Internat.aspx>. You may also wish to view the ceremony courtesy of YouTube video here: <http://youtu.be/OoeYiOALKyo>.

The Fenland Lighter Project

'Awkward Old Brute'

The River Nene was commonly known to old-time lightermen by the sobriquet above. Never so satisfactory for freight-work as its sister-channel, the Great Ouse; the Nene has nevertheless been greatly improved by systematic engineering. In recent times, parts of the Nene's riverside have acquired local government information-boards which, with acknowledgment to the Fenland Lighter Project, throw light on various aspects of the 'Awkward Old Brute's' history.

Further ideas, involving leaflets and several other means, are currently under consideration, the aim being to develop this riverside concept so as to promote increased public awareness. This would apply particularly to the Nene between Peterborough Town Bridge and Fitzwilliam Bridge, i.e. within comfortable walking distance of Greater Peterborough's centre. As part of this process, it is hoped to

draw particular attention to the important role of the Society for Nautical Research, and the Northamptonshire Record Society, in fostering the scholarly aspects of what is involved. Visit the [Fenland Lighter Project](#) website for more details.

H. J. K. Jenkins

Overseas News

From our correspondent in the Netherlands

After a long period of renovation and refurbishment the Netherlands Maritime Museum in Amsterdam will reopen to the public in the last week of September 2011.

The museum began an impressive project of renovation and re-organizing in 2007 and closed its doors in January of that year. Nearly five years later not only the museum building and its historical splendour have been restored; the renewing of the museum becomes also visible in the presentation of the collection in different exhibitions. The eleven exhibitions are representing a variety of maritime subjects in which visitors of multiple background may be interested. All exhibitions are presented in Dutch and English. Probably the most spectacular change of the more than 350 years old former Naval Depot will be the domed roof of the courtyard. The self supporting glass construction of the roof has a frame of steel elements arranged like the lines of the compass rose on a historical nautical chart. The courtyard provides an excellent opportunity to host visitors and guests at the start of their exploration of the exhibition or at symposia and other meetings and events.

Being the museum with the largest and in many aspects richest historical maritime collection in the Netherlands and an important collection worldwide, the museum decided to change its name from Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum Amsterdam into Het Scheepvaartmuseum (The Maritime Museum).

Gerard M. W. Acda

My apologies to Dr Acda who originally sent me this information for the May 2011 newsletter but due to an error on my part, it was misfiled and overlooked.

Editor

Events

The Riverside Museum Glasgow

March 2012

Two maritime history events are taking place at the Riverside Museum in Glasgow in March 2012. On **9 March** there is a one-day seminar on 'Innovation and Diffusion of Shipbuilding Technology' to celebrate the bicentenary of the Comet. This has been organized jointly by Glasgow Museums and the University of Glasgow's Centre for Business History in Scotland. The programme and booking details can be found at http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_220498_en.pdf

The British Commission for Maritime History's 'New Researchers in Maritime History' conference will take place on 9–10 March. This provides an important opportunity for researchers new to maritime history to present their findings in a supportive and friendly environment. The programme and booking details can be found at <http://maritimehistory.org.uk/new-researchers.htm>

For further details please contact Martin Bellamy at martin.bellamy@glasgowlife.org.uk

World Ship Society 34th Annual Naval Meeting

2 June 2012

To be held in the Hawthorns, Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1UQ

Programme

- 10.30 Coffee
10.40 Welcome from Dr Richard Osborne
10.45 Fifth D. K. Brown Lecture
Dr Marcus Faulkner *The Royal Navy and the Battle of Britain – History Lost and Found*
followed by panel discussion
13.00 Lunch
13.45 Professor Andrew Lambert *Scott Russell: Ships, Science and Scandal in the Age of Transition*
14.45 Dr Jon Wise *The RN and the Group Deployment Policy: Origins and Development 1962–97*
15.45 Afternoon tea
16.00 Ben Newton *The Attack on the French*

Fleet at Mers el Kebir, July 1940
17.00 Meeting ends

All welcome. Entrance fee (includes morning coffee & afternoon tea) £16. Buffet lunch (must be paid for 7 days in advance) £10.

Please make cheques payable to Dr R. H. Osborne and send them to 11 Beechwood Road, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 2AF.

Additional information at drosborne@blueyonder or the website worldshipsociety.org

Ships' Bells from Shipwrecks around the UK Coast

17 March 2012

Hazel Grove Sub Aqua Group is holding a one-day event when a collection of over 40 ships' bells recovered by local divers from UK shipwreck sites will be on display. Each bell will carry a short history of the ship. These include *Princess Victoria*, *Altona*, *Slieve Bloom*, *Connstance* and *Ballater*. Many other recovered artefacts will be on show including telegraphs, helmets, lamps and other shipping memorabilia.

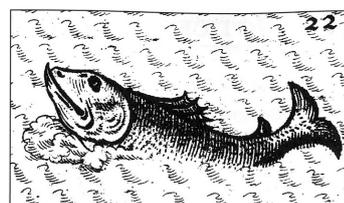
The venue is The Brookdale, Bridge Lane, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 3AB and the exhibition is open from 12.00 noon until 8 p.m.

Admission is just £2 per person.

For further information contact Hazel Grove SAC on 07791 023612.

Snippet

The *Berge Everest* is the first of a fleet of giant ships to be commissioned by Valemax. It recently completed its maiden voyage from Brazil to China carrying 350,000 tonnes of iron ore. She boasts a dead weight tonnage of 400,000 overtaking the previous record of 364,000 dwt. The hold can accommodate 11,000 trucks and the vessel is longer than the Eiffel Tower and wider than a football pitch.



SNR (South) Programme

The Society for Naval Research (South) was founded in 1962 to promote the historical study of ships, seafaring and other maritime subjects with particular reference to the south of England. There are meetings on the second Saturday of each month from October to May. Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are held in the Royal Naval Club & Royal Albert Yacht Club, 17 Pembroke Road, Old Portsmouth, PO1 2NT, and commence at 2.00 p.m. Persons wishing to lunch with the Society in the Club beforehand should contact Roy Inkersole, tel. +44 (0)2392 831387 at least 72 hours in advance. New members are very welcome: email [David Baynes](mailto:David.Baynes@snrsouth.org.uk) or tel. +44 (0)2392 831461.

For up-to-the-minute news of SNR (South) activities visit their new website www.snrsouth.org.uk. New material or queries should be addressed to the webmaster [Vicki Woodman](mailto:Vicki.Woodman@ntlworld.com) at v.woodman@ntlworld.com

King's Seminar Series

This seminar programme can be found at the [British Commission for Maritime History](http://www.britishcommissionfor maritime history.org.uk) website. Meetings usually take place at 5.15 p.m. on Thursdays at King's College For details, contact [Barbara Jones](mailto:Barbara.Jones@lr.org) on jones@lr.org

British Maritime History Seminars 2011-12

All seminars begin at 17.15 at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Senate House, London WC1E 7HU. Each paper lasts approximately 45 minutes, followed by 15-30 minutes of questions. There is no attendance charge and no need to book.

Please note that the rooms used vary this year and are specifically listed on the programme for each date.

Further information is available from the Research Administrator, Centre for Imperial and Maritime Studies, National Maritime Museum, London SE10 9NF, tel. 020 8312 6716. fax 020 8312 6592, email research@nmm.ac.uk, website www.nmm.ac.uk

Abstracts available at nmm.ac.uk/researchers/conferences-and-seminars

Books by Members

Lawrie Phillips (ed.) *The Royal Navy Day by Day*, Spellmount, Stroud, 2011. Fourth edn £50 hardback, 864 pages, illustrated ISBN 978 0 7524 6177 9.

This is a new, expanded edition of the Royal Navy's unofficial BR (Book of Reference) on British naval history comprises brief entries on naval events from the Armada to Afghanistan. It is set out in a diary format with two pages to the day and records what the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines have done for the nation down the centuries.

Professor Sebastian I. Sobecki *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages*, Boydell & Brewer, 2011, £50, 274 pages ISBN 978-1-843-842-767 Order online at trading@boydell.co.uk or tel (44) (0)1394 610600.

This volume traces the many literary origins of insular identity from local communities to the entire archipelago, laying open the continuities and disruptions in the sea's relationship with English identity in a British context. Ranging from the beginnings of insular literature to Victorian medievalisms, the subjects treated range from King Arthur's struggle with muddy banks to post-Conquest cartography and the making of an Anglo-British identity in Victorian Britain.

Sebastian Sobecki is Professor of Medieval English Literature and Culture at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

James McCarthy *That Curious Fellow: Captain Basil Hall, RN*, Whittles Publishing, Caithness, Scotland 2011, 208 pages, 40 b/w illustrations ISBN 978-184995-033-6 Order online at www.whittlespublishing.com.

Basil Hall joined the Royal Navy at the age of 13 in 1802. His first naval engagements in America and Spain during the Peninsular War are described, as are his travels in India and the Far East. He interviewed Napoleon on St Helena and was a confidant of Sir Walter Scott, Dickens and many other distinguished authors of his

day. Renowned for his curiosity and energy, he became a popular writer basing his work on his world-wide travels and adventures. The book is full of characters, such as Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, Lord Byron and the eccentric Countess Purgstall, and his support in Edinburgh to the great American bird painter, John James Audubon, greatly appreciated by the artist.

The inclusion of previously unpublished and often revealing correspondence has contributed to the first full biography of a very colourful individual and his times.

Fabio López Lázaro, *The Misfortunes of Alonso Ramírez: The true adventures of a Spanish American with 17th century Pirates*, University of Texas Press, 2011
ISBN 978-0-292-72631-4
Available in the UK for £41.00

In 1690 a dramatic account of piracy was published in Mexico City. *The Misfortunes of Alonso Ramírez* described the incredible adventures of a poor Spanish American carpenter who said he was taken captive by English pirates near the Philippines and forced to work for them for two years. Although *Misfortunes* has long been regarded as a work of fiction, López Lázaro uses archival evidence from around the world to prove that Ramírez's narrative is historical. An annotated translation of the complete original text is accompanied by an extensive introduction describing *Misfortunes'* historicity and its place within the worldwide maritime alliance of Spain, England, and Holland against Louis XIV of France, considered by some historians to be the First World War.

Dr Wolfgang Koberer, *Bibliographie zur Gesichte der Navigation in Deutscher Sprache Bremerhaven und Wiefelstede*, 2011, 300 pages, 23 illustrations, €49.80
ISBN 978-3-86927-007-4

Published by the German National Maritime Museum (Deutsches Schiffartsmuseum) in Bremerhaven, this book attempts a comprehensive bibliography of books and articles pertaining to the history of navigation in the German language and or

published in German speaking countries. It lists more than 3,000 items dealing with the history of navigation. In addition it gives detailed descriptions of all known German navigation manuals published between 1578 and 1800. For information contact koeberer@navigationsgeschichte.de.

Rosalin Barker *The Rise of an Early Modern Shipping Industry: Whitby's Golden Fleet, 1600–1750*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, £60

A reduced price is offered to SNR members ordering by 31 March. The author, making use of Whitby's large collection of surviving documents, outlines how Whitby's shipping industry, driven by commercial considerations, grew and developed from carrier of local products, to major whaling port and large-scale provider of shipping transport. Details at www.boydellandbrewer.com/store/viewitem.asp?idproduct=13616

Ian Johnston *Clydebank Battlecruisers: Forgotten photographs from John Brown's Shipyard*, Pen & Sword Books, Barnsley, hbk, illustrated, £30
ISBN 9781848321137

*Reduced to £24 for SNR members. Please quote 115413 when you order to receive discount. www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

Between 1906 and 1920 the Clydebank shipyard of John Brown & Sons built five battle cruisers, each one bigger than the last, culminating in the mighty *Hood*, the largest warship of her day. Clydebank employed professional photographers to record the whole process of construction, using large plate cameras that produced pictures of stunning clarity and detail; remarkably, Clydebank's collection has survived, although very few of the images have ever been published. For this book some 200 were carefully selected and scanned to the highest standards, depicting in unprecedented detail each aspect of the building and fitting out of *Inflexible*, *Australia*, *Tiger*, *Repulse* and *Hood*.

Ian Johnston was brought up in a shipbuilding family, although his own career was in graphic design.

David Creamer *Oriental Endeavour*, Whittles Publishing, Caithness, 2011, 192 pages, 8-page colour section, pbk, £18.99
ISBN 978-184995-034-3

This sequel to *Rots, Rust and Two Old Ladies* the story of *Oriental Endeavour* charts the progress of a tugboat delivery from West Africa to Singapore and the trials and tribulations of the voyage. This is a humorous and unforgettable story!

Mariner's Mirror – back issues

I wish to dispose of an almost unbroken run of MM from 1948 to date. The first 12 years have been professionally bound in six volumes and I would appreciate an offer for these; unbound issues available against a donation to a mutually agreed charity and any costs involved in transport.

Enquiries to: geoff.loram@btinternet.com.

New Members and Reported Deaths 3 September – 31 December 2011

New members – individual

Mr A. A. Bollom FdSc BSc (Hons), Lymington
Mr J. G. Buckton, Goole
Professor O. Chaline, Mont-Saint-Aignan,
France
Mr P. M. Donovan, Saint Louis, USA
Mr William S. Lind, Middleburg Heights, USA
Mr D. Mirkin, Tel Aviv, Israel
Mr M. Parnell, London
Mr I. Smith, Falmouth
Mr R. Smith, Wisbech

Reported deaths

Mr D. F. Lamb, London
Mr M. D. A. Lee, Southampton
Professor L. P. Le Quesne CBE DM FRCS,
London (see obituary in *The Mariner's
Mirror*, 98:1)

University Courses

*Cardiff University,
School of Earth and Ocean Science*

Dr Hance Smith and Dr David Jenkins are supervising a course for students – The Regional Development of Maritime Heritage in the United Kingdom. For further information contact [Dr Hance Smith](#) or visit the [Cardiff University website](#).

University of Exeter

The University of Exeter offers MA and PhD courses in maritime historical studies modern module explores European maritime expansion and the creation of commercial empires. See the website of the [Centre for Maritime Historical Studies](#) and the [PhD website](#).

*Greenwich Maritime Institute,
University of Greenwich*

Located in the historic setting of the Old Royal Naval College, the Greenwich Maritime Institute offers a unique environment for the study of maritime history, including an MA in Maritime History . For details email gmi@gre.ac.uk or visit the [Greenwich Maritime Institute website](#).

University of Hull

The University of Hull offers a BA course and MA and PhD programmes in maritime history. Contact [Dr Richard Gorski](#) or visit the website at the [Department of History, University of Hull](#).

There is also a Diploma in Maritime History provided on a part-time basis over four years, with learning and teaching taking place entirely online. For further information email [Michaela Barnard](#).

Swansea University

Swansea University Arts and Humanities department is offers an MA course in Maritime and Imperial History. For further details please visit the [Swansea University website](#) or contact [Dr Adam Mosley](#).

The Editor of *Topmasts* would like to hear from anyone with news or notices that may be of interest to SNR members. Copy for the next issue should be submitted by **1 April 2012** though urgent or timely items may be accommodated later if required.