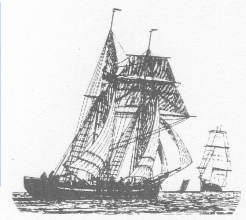


Mariners International



MI ANNUAL DINNER 2011 - Saturday 29th October By Jenni Atkinson

Nearly fifty MIC members and their guests gathered in Central London for the 2011 Annual Dinner. The event was a great success, but tinged with a little sadness as – given the proposed closure of Mariners International Club – it was seen by many as “The Last Supper”.

Several people had travelled long distances to attend the dinner and meet up again with their former shipmates. MI’s Vice President, Captain Martin Smith, travelled from Canada, and – astonishingly – Tim Readman flew all the way from South Australia just for the weekend. Edwin Dunlop came over from Northern Ireland and Eleanor Sharpston from Luxemburg.

The reunions began in the bar at least an hour before everybody sat down to a three-course dinner in the Dining Room of the Civil Service Club. Before the meal was served the Chairman, Tim Dodwell, welcomed everybody and spoke about the uncertainty of MI’s future and the difficulties the committee faced with falling membership numbers and a shortage of volunteers willing to take on committee work. Captain Martin Smith then thanked the committee in general and Tim Dodwell in particular for all their hard work in keeping the club going for so long.

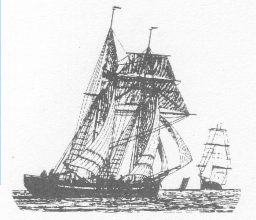


Photo: Elizabeth Rice

After the meal an illustrated talk was given by Captain John Fisher, who described his long career in sail training. It started when, as a teenager, he sailed as third hand on the spritsail barge **Cambria**, under the command of Bob Roberts, and carrying a cargo of grain. He

recalls that, at first, he was strictly forbidden to steer or climb aloft but there was plenty of pully-hauling work and he soon learned to scull the punt. He then made several voyages in the STA’s topsail schooners **Sir Winston Churchill** and **Malcolm Miller**, first as a trainee and later as a Watch Leader. In 1971 he became bosun/2nd Mate on the training ship **Captain Scott**, also a topsail schooner, operating round the Scottish coast. Whilst on board, he met his future wife, Elspeth Lowe, who was the cook. He and Elspeth both sailed on the brigantine **Phoenix** during

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MI's transatlantic charter – he as mate and Elspeth as cook – under the command of Martin Smith.

Many people at the dinner – myself included - had also sailed on that same memorable **Phoenix** voyage 35 years ago.

John's time on sailing vessels was interspersed with his voyages in cargo ships on the Far East run and then in offshore oil vessels of various kinds. He recalled his first command, a specialist vessel employed in the Persian Gulf for extracting and analysing oil from the many oil wells there. This entailed burning off unwanted gas from a long flare-boom which projected forward from the bow like a long metal bowsprit. The ignition mechanism never worked, so John had to send an unfortunate crewman to the end of the pipe with a box of matches!

In 1987 John took command of the Jubilee Sailing Trust's barque **Lord Nelson** for 12 years. Since then he has commanded both the JST barques – the **Tenacious** made her maiden voyage in 2000 – until his retirement from the JST in 2005. Along the way, he had found time to sail as Mate on various other sailing vessels, including the barquentine **Regina Maris** and, in semi-retirement, as relief Master on the main-mast barquentine **Pelican** before retiring fully in 2010.

Thanking John for sharing his amazing career story with us, Martin Smith expressed the hope that Mariners International Club would find a way to continue in some form in the future – possibly by way of an internet forum – and that there would be many more dinners to come.



Jenni Atkinson signs a copy of her book for Howard Measham

Photo: John O'Sullivan

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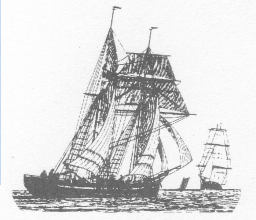


Photo: Elizabeth Rice

From the left - Rick Hogben, Leo Sharpston, Clive Robinson, Sue Robinson, Tim Dodwell, Liz Dodwell, John Fisher, Elspeth Fisher



Photo: Brian Rice

From the left - Francis "Tops" Noel-Hudson, Tim Readman, Richard Price, Mick Price, Elizabeth Rice and Dave Hood