



National Coastwatch Institution
www.nci.org.uk

Ahoy!

**The bi-monthly newsletter for Friends of
Hengistbury Head Lookout and its Watchkeepers**

Issue 8 February 2021

Yesterday I heard the first lawn mower of the season; as I type the sun is shining brightly and it feels positively tropical in a sheltered spot – long may it continue ☺ . For any “On This Day” fans, on 3rd March 2018, the Beach Office at Southbourne saw an invasion of keen Watchkeepers as the Station opened for the first time. The rest, they say, is history....

Just as the last edition of *Ahoy!* was distributed, we found ourselves at the start of the current lockdown. Watchkeepers had by then been deemed to be an essential service so our valuable work has fortunately continued and there have been several occasions over the past two months where we have made significant contributions to the safety of people and their craft. Single manned Watches have been ably supported by a phone buddy for regular contact throughout the Watch, with additional procedures observed in order to ensure an efficient, enjoyable and, most critically, safe practice for all. One of the disadvantages of single-manning has been the absence of opportunity for training and assessment; our Trainees and qualified Watchkeepers have been keeping their skills ticking over with regular exercises but there is nothing like putting into practice all that knowledge so we patiently await a return to our usual procedures.

In this issue:

- **In Focus** – a regular feature about our volunteers: this month, we are delighted to introduce our fifth and most recent Duty Station Officer (DSO)

- **A poignant addition to our environment** – remembering one of our earliest recruits
- **Been there, done that...** – a summary of recent Station events
- **Looking forward** – planned events
- **Stay in touch** – essential contact details



In Focus



Name: Paul Hebden

Roles within Station:
Watchkeeper, Duty Station Officer (DSO)

What's involved in your role as DSO?

The primary function of the Duty Station Officer is to provide practical help and support for the on-duty Watchkeepers, should they need it. In the case of an Incident, the DSO would normally be the next person they call, after the Coastguard. Although qualified Watchkeepers are fully capable of dealing with most

situations, should something arise where they were not 100% sure what to do, they would contact the DSO who can assist and has a number of resources on which to call.

You've had a very interesting seafaring career; tell us a little of what that entailed.

I went to sea straight from school aged 17, joining the BP Tanker company (as it was then) as a deck cadet in 1973. Progression through the ranks in the Merchant Navy is via a series of Certificates of Competency. Before you could sit the next set of exams, you had to have sufficient hands-on experience – “Seatime” - in each rank. From entry to passing my Masters Ticket took 59 exams over 11 years, plus an additional seven years as Chief Officer (Mate) before actually sailing as Captain. I left my last ship in January 2016 after 25 years as Master.

We pretty much traded worldwide, so I have criss-crossed the oceans, apart from Polar regions. This included rounding Cape Horn several times, but I never transited the Panama Canal. It sounds glamorous, but rather than seeing the world, with BP you saw the refineries of the world! Sailing into piracy or war zones meant life could get pretty stressful and there were times when we had armed security teams on board.

Several BP ships were “taken into service” during the Falklands War. I did one tour on MoD charter. We completed numerous Ship to Ship (STS) operations at anchor in Ascension, San Carlos Water and Port Stanley. We also did a “round robin” of the more remote settlements, where cargo was discharged via Chinook helicopter.

The last Op I was involved in before heading back towards the UK, was a Replenishment At Sea (RAS) with RFA Tidespring. This involved steaming side by side at 12 knots, 90 - 120 yards apart, the only “connection” between us being four hoses on a jackstay, through which three grades (about 16,000 M.T.) of cargo and 200 M.T. of fresh water were pumped across.

There were some pertinent highs and lows during my career in the Merchant Navy. On occasion I had to convey harrowing news to crew members from Sierra Leone about events occurring in that country's civil war at the time, but on the positive side I was fortunate in 2002, at Negishi LNG terminal in Tokyo Bay, to meet Mr. Hiro-Nomiya Naruhito, who is now Emperor of Japan!

What other sailing experience do you have?

My parents have always had a boat of some sort, and in my teens, I got involved in local yacht racing, crewing in events such as Poole or Cowes week. Most summer holidays were spent cruising along the Brittany / Biscay coasts with my parents. I have also sailed twice

across the Atlantic, both times West to East. The first occasion was to redeliver a 40 foot monohull, from Newport, Rhode Island to Lymington, after the first Twostar Race. My second crossing was taking part in the first transatlantic Tall Ships Race. BP had chartered STY Halcyon and our crew consisted of 12 company cadets. We joined in Quebec and cruised down the St. Lawrence to Sydney, Nova Scotia. We then raced to Liverpool, before returning Halcyon to her moorings at Warsash College in the Hamble. My last proper sailing adventure was about 12 years ago, when I helped some old school friends to deliver their Arcona 460 from the builders in Kungshamn, Sweden, via Kiel Canal, to Haslar Marina in Gosport.

So what inspired you to join HH NCI?

After 3 years of retirement, I was looking around for more things to occupy my time. I guess primarily I wanted to somehow keep in touch with the sea, give something back and share life experiences with others. According to the Visitors Book, it was mid-January 2019 when I first walked past the Lookout, and saw it had re-opened. I had a most informative chat with the on duty Watchkeepers and my name was added to the waiting list to join. I was awarded my epaulettes on passing my final assessment on 14 November 2019.

How else do you occupy your time?

I normally invigilate at Twynham School during the exam seasons, and I drive one day a week for the Dorset Blind Association, picking up donations of items to sell in their charity shops. Although closed at the moment, they expect to be busy when restrictions ease due to the latest lockdown clearing out opportunity; the Christchurch branch is always looking for clothes, by the way!

I am fortunate to have my 95 year-old Mother to look out for. She thrives on living alone in her bungalow near Wareham. I try to spend one night a week with her to sort out her shopping and any other odd jobs. At home I usually have a jigsaw on the go, and like to keep the brain active solving Sudoku puzzles. I enjoy reading, watching sports, dramas and films, Tom Hanks being my favourite actor.

What's your favourite tippie?

At the start of Lockdown, I had a fine collection of various single malt whiskies, mainly distilled by Glenmorangie. This was built up over many worldwide Duty Free shop visits when leaving ships. Sadly it is now somewhat depleted! As with so many of us, I much miss the social pint (or two) with friends, particularly the lads down at the Christchurch Conservative Club.

Thank you, Paul, for an interesting insight to your life past and present. We hope it's not too long before you can enjoy a pint (or two!) with friends again 😊

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A poignant addition to our environment

Earlier this month, one of our Watchkeepers was enjoying a leisurely walk on the Head when she came across two newly installed commemorative carved benches located at the top of the steps which lead from the end of the Head to the beach huts. One of the plaques is in memory of Marten White, one of our early recruits in 2018. Marten sadly passed away some 7 months ago after a short illness. Marten was not only a dedicated and competent Watchkeeper, he established and led the building maintenance crew who carried out many of the early improvements to The Lookout. A keen aviator and family man, he is sorely missed amongst our team. Please take a moment to reflect on Marten's service to HH NCI next time you enjoy the views across to the Isle of Wight.



Been there, done that...

Incidents since the last Friends Newsletter

An "Incident" in NCI terms is a situation concerning the safety of life or property, during which an NCI Station has observed, or had any involvement by supporting the Coastguard (CG) or other Search and Rescue (SAR) resource. In the 12 months to 30th September 2020, NCIHH was the second busiest Station in the country after Porthcawl (64 Incidents), having

been involved in 47 Incidents. This consolidates the importance of our presence on the Head. Most recent Incidents appear at the top of the list below.

CRT = Coastguard Rescue Team; MoP = Member of Public CG = Coastguard; ILB = Inshore Lifeboat; LB = Lifeboat; nfa = no further action; cas evac = casualty evacuation; FAWGI = False Alarm with Good Intent

Date of Incident	Incident Summary	Lifeboat Involved
30/01/2021	MoP called to report floating object off Southbourne beach. Reported to CG. Poor visibility proved no sighting achieved – assumed to be floating beach replenishment pipe. CG closed incident as no further information obtained. NFA	No
28/01/2021	Relayed to CG two MoP reports of kite surfer down and unable to recover. Mundeford ILB tasked but stood down when target now reported back on beach.	Yes
21/01/2021	Alerted CG of windsurfer in possible difficulty. MoPs also reported him. Target lost to sight but reported safe on beach. Mundeford ILB tasked but not launched.	Yes
02/01/2021	Reported to CG small boat aground on falling tide. Mundeford ILB launched and directed to casualties to bring it back safely to shore.	Yes
30/12/2020	VHF call re grounded yacht. Watchkeeper advised HMCG who had also received calls. Casualty spoke to HMCG via mobile phone and said they'd wait for high tide. NCI	No

requested to keep eyes on. Casualty still aground when Station closed for day. The next day HMCG advised that casualty refloated safely.

Looking ahead → → → →

2021 NCIHH Calendars

We still have some calendars ready for you to start filling up with events for 2021! Please contact our Friends Administrator, Adele, who will be happy to help you.

Adele.Orr@nci.org.uk

Knoticat Charity

We first ran this article in October 2018, but thought it a timely reminder as the sailing season approaches:

Knoticat Sailing is a charity based in Poole, which sails a 10m catamaran to provide sailing opportunities for people with disabilities. Their season is from April to September each year. Richard Monaghan, a representative of Knoticat, came to the Station recently, seeking experienced sailors to help with this initiative; some formal sailing certification would be an advantage. Whether you are a Watchkeeper or a Friend, this may be of interest to you.

For Watchkeepers, there is a leaflet on the noticeboard in The Lookout about this charity. If you are interested in finding out more information, please look at www.knoticatsailing.org.uk. Richard's contact number is 07889 970702.

Summer BBQ

Subject to whatever restrictions may be in place at the time, we hope to be able to hold our annual BBQ at 19:30 on Thursday 8th July on the beach in front of Southbourne Beach Office near Bistro on the Beach. Please write this event in your 2021 HHNCI calendar now! ;) . Further details and confirmation in due course.

The next edition of *Ahoy!* will be published at the end of April

Stay in touch

- Facebook Hengistbury Head NCI
- Twitter [@NCIHengistburyH](#)
- Instagram @hengistburyheadnci

Please let us know if any of your personal contact details change. Please address all correspondence to our Friends Administrator Adele Orr Adele.Orr@nci.org.uk, who will also be happy to provide details of how to become a Friend should you know of anyone interested.

You can keep up to date with our activities via various social media:

- Facebook Hengistbury Head NCI
- Twitter [@NCIHengistburyH](#)
- Instagram @hengistburyheadnci

NCI Hengistbury Head is one of 56 NCI Stations around the UK keeping “eyes along the coast”.

Current opening hours are 8am – 5pm

With effect from Monday, March 29th, Summer opening hours will be from 8am – 7pm
