

SHEEMAUN IS INVITED TO LONDON FOR THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE GRAND THAMES PAGEANT JUNE 2012

Skipper - Dr Rodney Pell. Crew - Maura Pell, Tim Hunt, Dr Charles Philips, Steve Parish. Special Guests - Polly Coburn, Mike Green Wolf Raymer. Guests – Geoff Pell, Nicola Guest, Martyn & Evelyn Heighton and Charlie Hunt

Sheemaun's invitation from the Jubilee Pageant Committee had been processed and all the complex security hurdles finally cleared. Crewed by your Skipper, Exec Officer Tim Hunt, Master Chef Dr Charles Philips and Master Shipwright Steve Parish we departed Ramsgate early on May 24th bound for the Swale where in very difficult conditions with wind over a Spring Tide we moored overnight. Casting off the following day bound for St Katharine's Dock with a deceptive blue sky we passed under the QEII Dartford Bridge glad that we were not having to queue up like the vehicles above us!



The cruise up river was navigationally unremarkable save for a depressing build-up of dark cloud and plummeting temperatures. The forecast however was awful, we arrived at Tower Bridge in the last of the sunshine it made a dramatic sight set against a background of malignant gathering dark clouds.

After jilling around by Tower Bridge, while doing our best to avoid the fast ferries and general river traffic we were at last radio'ed to lock in.

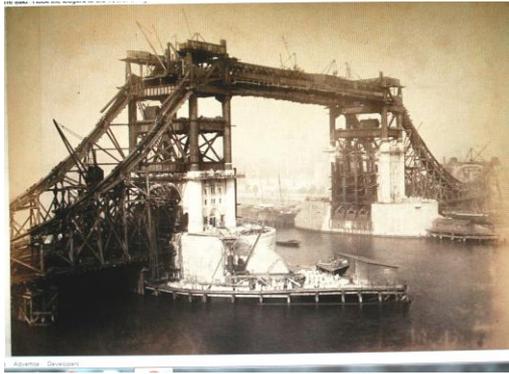


Duly locked into St Katharine's by Tower Bridge next to the Tower of London we made secure with a week in hand to prepare ship for our guests and to take our part in the Grand Pageant 'Avenue of Sail'.

Reminiscences.....

Here, your Skipper begs forgiveness for some reminiscing. For him all this has a deeply familiar feel. The ancestral Pells were in the 15th Century Warders of the Royal Fortress - the Tower of London. Charged with keeping secure the life of the Monarch they were privileged to eat as much beef as they desired, yes they were 'Beafeaters' and the Pells lived a mile East of the Tower at Pell's Farm, which one day would be mapped for posterity as the dingy, narrow cobbled **PELL STREET E1**. Familiar enough to your Skipper when a medical student at The London Hospital in the 1950s. It has long since been bulldozed and now lies fragmented and forgotten under grand modern buildings.

It was in 1886 that your Skipper's Grt. Grandfather William Mather Swanson, engineer and iron shipbuilder put down the caissons for the foundations of Tower Bridge.



Seventy three long years ago your Skipper began an interest in things nautical.



Sixty one years ago (see below right) he met HRH Princess Elizabeth when she visited Cheltenham College.



Thirty five years ago in July 1977 at her Silver Jubilee as Queen Elizabeth 2nd your Skipper with his white hulled motor cruiser *'Debrett'* proudly took part in that pageant and passing under Tower Bridge processed alongside the Royal Yacht *Britannia*.



(Front Cover of Port of London Authority Magazine August 1977)

And so both as a former Consultant Surgeon to The City & East London Area Health Authority and as owner of the historic *Sheemaun*, your Skipper was very proud, 35 years later, to be once again on the Thames in the Pool of London celebrating the Diamond Jubilee Pageant of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's sixty year reign.

Now, forward to the Diamond Jubilee Pageant! The weather was wet, wet, wet and cold. Some crew departed as planned and 1st Mate Maura sensibly decided to watch it all on TV in the warm and dry back at home in Kent!

As Pageant Flagship of the Little Ship Club *Sheemaun* was proud for the Club to have auctioned three guest places and almost £1000 was raised for charity by generous LSC members. We took on plenty of victuals, wines and 'fizz', set our square yard and dressed overall with fine bunting. We were also proud to fly a number of special burgees including of course that of the Royal Temple Yacht Club (Senior Flag), the Little Ship Club colours, the burgee of the Young Freemen of London, the burgee of the City Livery Club, a very senior 33rd degree Masonic burgee..... and the Hollowshore Cruising Club burgee.

Thus adorned we took up our 'Avenue of Sail' position in the Pool of London on June 2nd in readiness for the Grand Diamond Jubilee Pageant on Sunday 3rd June.

In torrential rain on the Great Day our eight guests arrived by water-taxi, it was cold and grey but *Sheemaun* has good heating, generates her own 230v electricity and soon all were warmed up and dried out the better to partake in the celebrations.



The rains eased slightly and those who wished to be on deck made themselves as snug as possible ...



While others found tempting comforts below



...in plenty.....



... and with tasty morsels abundant....



Polly Coburn generously produced a Jereboam of Champagne



Your Skipper thanked everyone for their generous help and did 'bottle duty'!



We saluted and cheered the Grande Parade of a thousand or so vessels and noted also from Royal Harbour Ramsgate, the 'Sundowner' as she passed by ...



and the 'New Brittanic' ...



There was yet more good food and wine to despatch.....



and our Queen and Prince Philip to Salute....



(Courtesy Press Release)

An amazing and very special day ticked its way around the clock face. Dried out and warmed, enthused, proud to be British and privileged to be involved the intrepid seafarers on 'Sheemaun' joined together in a happy comradeship..

There were amazing fireworks...



(Courtesy Press Release)



..... finally exhausted but happy, our guests returned shorewards via (long awaited) water-taxi services and we crew tidied ship and prepared for putting to sea....

The next day brought decisions. The forecast was grim and so your Skipper decided not to return to the comfortable berth at St Katharines, but instead to take the 'morrow's tide and voyage to Ramsgate in one hit.



Bidding farewell to Tower Bridge and the darkly clouded 'Shard' we headed seaward....

The voyage seaward as far as the Four Fathom Channel was un-remarkable.... and ... it became dark as expected but not as expected a heavy WNW wind and swell developed which as we ran east through the Princes Channel against a foul tide, heaped 2 meter waves against our port side and with hissing froths. It was heavy going with much pitching and rolling. Then as we were only some 100 meters North of the dangerous Margate Sands on which we could hear the seas breaking menacingly..... we lost steering!!!

It was pitch dark, the wind and seas were pushing us towards the sands where large waves were breaking with crashing force. Panic has no place in such a situation, it merely distracts, but thought was given to making a Mayday call. Tearing into the aft lazarette, heaving out six deck chairs, a vacuum cleaner, tool boxes, electric drills, spare chain, bolt cutters, emergency pumps etc, etc. your Skipper could find no problem with the stern gear there.

Still the wheelhouse wheel was 'locked' and refused to allow the desperately needed port turns to get us away from the dreaded sands. Outside was a howling wind, heaving seas and cold, cold darkness. How trivial the lifejacket seemed in this black turmoil! Clipping on, your Skipper heaved himself through the wheelhouse door and made his way precariously to the bridge-deck and after wheel. There he found a large refuse box jammed under the after wheel!!! Pulling this away immediately restored full steering control and we powered away from those awful surf-pounding sands, eventually making Ramsgate 3 hours later, cold, exhausted but triumphant.

At the Grand Pageant there had been no facilities offered by the Authorities for the collection of 'trash' from the 200 or so vessels in the 'Avenue of Sail' and we had been obliged to return to Ramsgate with seven big bags of 'trash' and bottles for re-cycling. That such 'trash' might create a risk at sea had not been considered. In the event we were lucky not only to have made it back to Ramsgate but to have survived that last part of the voyage.

So however 'pretty' however 'historic' and however 'media worthy' a little vessel may be; at the end of the day, if she is to make the 150 odd mile return voyage from Ramsgate to Tower Bridge, she has to be fully seaworthy, safety checked, competently skippered and crewed. If not, all the bunting in the world and all the cheering crowds and fireworks will count as nothing. Yes, we were proud and privileged to take part in our Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant and proud that in so doing real grit and real seamanship was called for – Yes, we feel we are New Elizabethans

Yours Aye, Rodney Pell

HATFIELD HOUSE
HATFIELD
HERTFORDSHIRE
AL9 5NF

Dr Rodney Pell
National Historic Ships
Minster Court
23 Tothill Street
Minster
Kent.
CT12 4AG
United Kingdom

25th June 2012

Dear Dr Pell

I wanted to write and thank you for taking part in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant – a spectacle which I imagine was the most remarkable the Thames has ever seen.

I have no doubt that the Pageant will go down in history. Not only was it a remarkable spectacle, it was the central event in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and only the second time such celebrations have taken place in this country.

In spite of the weather, the team which organised the Pageant were, I hope you will agree, an enthusiastic and highly skilled group. Even with all their experience, they had never been presented with a project of this scale and complexity. I hope you feel that they deserved all our gratitude, but I especially wanted to thank you for taking part in such a happy and constructive spirit. I so much enjoyed meeting some of the participants in the days preceding the Pageant and witnessing that spirit myself.

The Queen has already told me how much she enjoyed the day and appreciated the efforts of everyone who took part and I hope that you will remember the event with as much pleasure as all of us in the team. Who organised it.

Everyone on the Pageant Team is immensely grateful to you and your crew for joining in and being part of it all.

Yours very sincerely,

Salisbury

The Marquess of Salisbury

Chairman of the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant

(I have copied the letter verbatim but the signature posed a problem. Therefore the signature shown is not that of the Marquess himself but was created from the best approximate font I could find. I retain the original – RP)