

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

# Galley Radio



Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

WINTER 2025/2026

A warm welcome and a Happy New Year to all, with another edition of **Galley Radio**, where we cover some of the events that have happened during the Winter session.

As always, we still need assistance with providing material for the bulletins and look to our members to offer stories, ditties, anecdotes, or any up and coming news and events for including in the newsletter.

### NORMANDY VISIT

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 marked the largest amphibious invasion in history. The Normandy landings were a combined Allied invasion by sea and air in what was known as Operation Overlord. The invasion fleet comprised of nearly seven thousand vessels of various types, 864 of which were Merchant vessels manned by approximately 25,000 crew. On D-Day alone, nearly 160,000 men crossed the Channel that day.

Back in September last year our member, Graham Johnston and his wife, Liz, visited some of the beaches and sites where the D-Day invasion took place in Normandy. Their tour started in the town of Bayeux – famous for its Bayeux Tapestry – visiting the Battle of Normandy Museum with exhibits from both the Allied and German forces.

From Bayeux, the pair travelled to the British Normandy Memorial at Gold Beach in Ver Sur Mer. Officially opened by King Charles in 2021, the memorial stones originated from Northern Ireland, inscribed with the names of 22,442 servicemen and women under British command who fell on D-Day and during the Battle of Normandy in the summer of 1944, this included people from more than 30 different countries. Graham has a family member's name on the memorial, he was part of the first wave of paratroopers who were parachuted in to Normandy on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, however, he sadly passed away from his wounds on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

The Merchant Navy Flag – the Red Ensign – proudly flies alongside the Army, Navy and Air Force flags, recognising the importance of the contributions made by the Merchant Navy in the landings.



Next stop was Arromanches, where the first of two Mulberry Harbours are located. Due to the absence of proper ports on this stretch of the Normandy coastline the Mulberry Harbours were temporary ports prefabricated in secret at various locations throughout the UK and towed to France to be assembled to form breakwaters, pontoons, piers, berths and floating roadways required to facilitate the rapid movement of cargo and personnel required to support the invasion. During the 10 month the Mulberry Harbours were in operation, over two million soldiers, four million tons of cargo and half a million vehicles were landed. There are still sections of the original breakwater visible at Arromanches.

### TITANIC EXPERIENCE

A major Titanic exhibition is setting sail for Aberdeen in 2026. Taking place at P&J Live from 26th March to 12th April next year, this event will give visitors a chance to get up-close and personal with the story of the RMS Titanic.

On display will be a rare and internationally important collection of artefacts from the ship, including fragments of metalwork, ornate wooden carving as well as passenger and crew belongings. Alongside these will be displays that bring the Titanic to life in vivid colour, helping visitors to step back in time.

The exhibition also examines the ship's legacy and the massive cultural impact it's had for decades. This of course includes the 1997 movie. Visitors will have the chance to see movie costumes and props usually only seen on screen!

Prices : £21.99

28<sup>th</sup> March – 12<sup>th</sup> April

[www.titanicaberdeen.com](http://www.titanicaberdeen.com)

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### SCOTTISH SKIPPER EXPO

Held every two years, the show is already shaping up to be another outstanding event, with over 130 stands sold and six vessels confirmed for display.

Established in 2011, the Scottish Skipper Expo has become one of the most respected commercial fishing exhibitions in the UK and Ireland. It provides companies with a unique opportunity to connect directly with vessel owners, skippers, and key decision-makers from across the industry.

With free entry for visitors, the show is strategically located at P&J Live, next to Aberdeen Airport and on the doorstep of the North East's main fishing ports of Peterhead and Fraserburgh. You can pre-register as a visitor or just turn up on the day.

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May  
10.00am – 5.00pm

Free entry

[www.theskipper.ie/registration/aberdeen/](http://www.theskipper.ie/registration/aberdeen/)



From Arromanches, the next stop was at Omaha Beach, followed by the American Omaha Beach Cemetery where there are memorials to the large number of American casualties. Thousands of men lost their lives and many are interred at the Omaha Beach American Cemetery. After Omaha Beach, the next stop was Pont Du Hoc – a significant site where US Rangers scaled the cliffs to neutralise German gun emplacements.

There are several memorials and museums highlighting the sacrifices made by many men and women during the invasion. Whilst this is a sad reminder of the numbers of people who lost their lives, it is also a recognition of the importance of commercial shipping in the success of the operation. The contribution by the Merchant Navy at the Landings cannot be over emphasised.

**Utah Beach** : The westernmost landing site, primarily used by American forces. It was known for its relatively lighter resistance compared to other beaches.

**Omaha Beach** : Notorious for its high casualties, this beach saw intense fighting and is home to the American Cemetery which honours the fallen soldiers.

**Gold Beach** : A key landing site for British forces, where significant fighting occurred to secure the area.

**Juno Beach** : The landing site for Canadian troops, who faced strong German defences but successfully captured their objectives.

**Sword Beach** : The easternmost beach, where British forces landed and aimed to link up with airborne troops.

Article and images courtesy of Graham Johnston.

### THE STOWAWAY....



A young Ayrshire lass, pining away in her village of Cumnock, was filled with a romantic desire to escape to Australia. But how to do it from Ayrshire? Buoyed with hope she sets out to the Gateway to the World and there in Greenock she met a sailor, plied him with drink and got him to promise to take her to Australia by hiding her away in his cabin. But there was a snag. She had to share his bunk. Reluctantly she agreed and that night she was smuggled aboard the ship. He made her swear that she wouldn't leave the cabin. Next day the voyage began and with it the unrelenting sexual attentions of the voracious sailor. Day and night, night and day, until she could stand no more. There was no turning back. She would have to face discovery. It couldn't be as bad as what she was having to face already. Distraught, dishevelled and exhausted, she staggered out of the cabin on to the deck to bump straight in to the captain. "Forgive me," she cried, "I'm a stowaway. How far away from Australia are we now?" she sobbed. "Australia?" said

the captain. "Why lass, this is the Gourrock to Dunoon ferry."

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At the January meeting several topics were discussed for future events in 2026

### GOLF OUTING

Another possible golf outing was suggested and April seemed a safe bet. Whether it will be West Linton again, or an alternative course, we have no preference as it is the taking part that counts....

As long as the weather is dry and we don't need to include mask snorkel and flippers with our 3 wood!!

Date, time and location to be confirmed.

### LADS AT LUNCH

As with 2025, we will have the occasional lunch outing after our branch meetings. The consensus was that Bertie's Fish & Chip Shop was a good venue, so we may try that one again in the near future.

It was also suggested that, due to the success of the Christmas lunch gathering, we should have something similar for the summer, so we'll look in to that possibility.

## THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

The Branch had its Christmas lunch at Howies in Edinburgh back in December, where a fine meal was had by all. Our thanks to Joe and Sandy for the wine at the table. The holiday spirit continued in the Waterloo Bar afterwards where we made a spectacle" of ourselves!!



## WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE

Samuel Plimsoll was born in Bristol in 1824. By 1867 he had been elected as the Liberal Member of Parliament for Derby and one of his main endeavours was to try and pass a bill dealing with the safe loading of ships. His efforts were directed especially against what were known as "Coffin Ships", unseaworthy and overloaded vessels, often heavily insured, in which unscrupulous owners risked the lives of their crews. His main problem was the number of powerful ship-owning MPs in Parliament.

By 1875 a government bill was introduced, which Plimsoll thought was inadequate. Although the load lines were made compulsory on all British vessels and foreign vessels using British ports, the flaw in the implementation was that it was left up to the shipowner to decide where it was to be painted. Later that year, the then Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli announced the bill would be dropped, to which Plimsoll lost his self-control, called the members of the house "villains" and shook his fist in the Speaker's face. Many people shared the view that the bill had been stifled by the pressure of the shipowners. This popular feeling forced the government to pass the bill in 1876 and it was amended in to the Merchant Shipping Act.



The Board of Trade were given stringent powers to inspect the new load marks, which became known as the Plimsoll mark or line. The improvements in safety resulted in less ship sinkings and seafarer deaths, with Plimsoll's reforms credited for having "saved the lives of countless seamen". These reforms would go on to have a significant effect, eventually resulting in the 1930 International Convention on Load Lines. Amended in 1966 and modified in 1988, there is no doubt that due to the campaigning of Samuel Plimsoll, countless lives and ships have been saved over the past 150 years.

## KEEPING THE PASSENGERS INFORMED

The elderly lady passenger approached the Third Officer of the cargo liner and asked 'What do those peculiar lines on the side of the ship mean?

The Third Officer known for his dry wit and patience with passengers, decided to have a bit of fun. He replied to the lady, "Ah, those are very important, madam. When ships are loading cargo, it's a warning system. Starting from the bottom:

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### BONNIE DUNDEE

Our trip to Dundee back in 2024 was curtailed due to inclement weather, so it was suggested that we look at another possible date to visit the Discovery and/or HMS Unicorn.

### ALL AT SEA

Similarly, a trip on the Forth was another possible outing which has never been realised, so it was suggested that a sail under the bridges, a trip to Inchcolm or even a trip to the Isle of May might be considered again.

**WNA** means 'Wonderful New Adventure', We are about to sail off on a wonderful new adventure.

**W** means 'Watch out' - we're getting close to capacity for loading cargo.

**S** means 'Slow' - We will soon reach our limit for cargo.

**T** means 'Top Up a little more' - we're not quite there yet.

**F** means 'Full' - we're packed to the gills.

**TF** means 'Too Full, take some out', or as we like to call it 'Titanic Flashbacks'

### BRITAIN'S OLDEST OFFSHORE LIGHTHOUSE

The oldest offshore lighthouse in the UK was originally the Eddystone Lighthouse, completed in 1698, but was washed away by a storm in 1703. The second version unfortunately burned down in 1755 and the third iteration lasted until 1882 when the upper section was removed to Plymouth. In 2003 the BBC made a series called Seven Wonders of the Industrial World, which included the Panama Canal, the Brooklyn Bridge, the London sewer system and the Bell Rock Lighthouse. Originally called the Inchcape Rock, legend says it was supposed to have got its name from a bell placed on the rock by the Abbot of Arbroath in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to warn ships away, which was unfortunately stolen by a Dutch pirate known as Ralph the Rover, who later came a cropper on the same reef he had stolen the bell from. The reef itself had claimed thousands of lives over the years, but it wasn't until the 64 gun warship, HMS York was wrecked with a total loss in 1804 that the decision to build a lighthouse was granted.



Robert Stevenson (grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson) sent his design to John Rennie for approval and costing and in 1806 building of the lighthouse commenced. It was to be based on the then Eddystone Lighthouse, off Cornwall, designed by John Smeaton. Up to 60 men worked on site for nearly four years, living nearby on a ship built specially for this purpose. Two men unfortunately died during the construction. The light was lit on

1<sup>st</sup> February 1811, originally powered by an Argand lamp and was the first lighthouse to have rotating optics in Scotland, flashing red and white. Apart from a new light room fitted in 1902, various upgrades to the light and optics in the 1960s and in October 1988 the lighthouse became unmanned, the building survives unaltered to this day.

### DO YOU WANT FRIES WITH THAT?

Everyone is used to hearing about the devastating news of the wrecking of a vessel, however, recent stormy weather caused the loss of 24 containers from two vessels in January of this year. Whilst it is believed that some of these containers were sunk, others washed up at Selsey, Newhaven, Eastbourne, Rottingham and Beachy Head. The loss of the containers is suspected to be due to incomplete or improper lashing procedures due to the pressures of time constraints and the need to meet a tight schedule.

The broaching of cargo from one of these containers resulted in an unusual sight on a beach at Eastbourne, with one resident suggesting it made the beach look like the golden sands of the Caribbean. Thousands of chips and plastic bags had been washed ashore and reported to be up to two feet deep in places.

Resources, expertise and assets were deployed on behalf of the owners and insurers.



Volunteers also worked to remove the thousands of bags of chips. One suspects the deep fat fries might be working overtime in Eastbourne for the next wee while, after all, it's not often ready salted chips wash up on your doorstep. Just wondering if this could be classed as the first "chipwreck" of 2026!!

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### A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

One suggestion made was the possibility of going for walks in and around Edinburgh. There are several possible walks around the town, such as the Water of Leith (or certain sections of it at a time), the Roseburn Path, which runs from Roseburn, by Murrayfield to Leith. The Union Canal is an option, as is a walk around Linlithgow Loch, and the Forth Bridge is always good for its outstanding views.

As with all these events, date, time and location to be advised at future meetings and will be highlighted on our WhatsApp and Facebook social media sites.

### A STAR IS BORN

The naming ceremony of the Northern Lighthouse Board's newest vessel took place on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 at the Forth Ports Cruise Terminal in Leith. The event was officiated by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal who broke a bottle of whisky from the nearby Port of Leith Distillery, to formally name it. The blessing of the vessel was carried out by none other than our member Iain May



Being the fifth vessel to bear the name, the "Pole Star" will play a key role in the management of lighthouses and navigational aids around Scotland and the Isle of Man. The Branch Standard was also given another airing at this event, with HRH enquiring as to the function and role of the Edinburgh Branch.

We would like to thank Mike Bullock, CEO of the Northern Lighthouse Board for allowing branch representatives to be present and for allowing us to have the branch standard on show at this very special event. Congratulations to all concerned from the NLB and the Gondan Shipyard in Spain for producing such a fine vessel.



### SHIP VISIT

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January saw our group once again visit the Pole Star, but a completely different ship from the previous vessel of the same name. A larger vessel at 70m length and 16m beam with a maximum speed of 14 knots (although sea trials proved she could exceed that).



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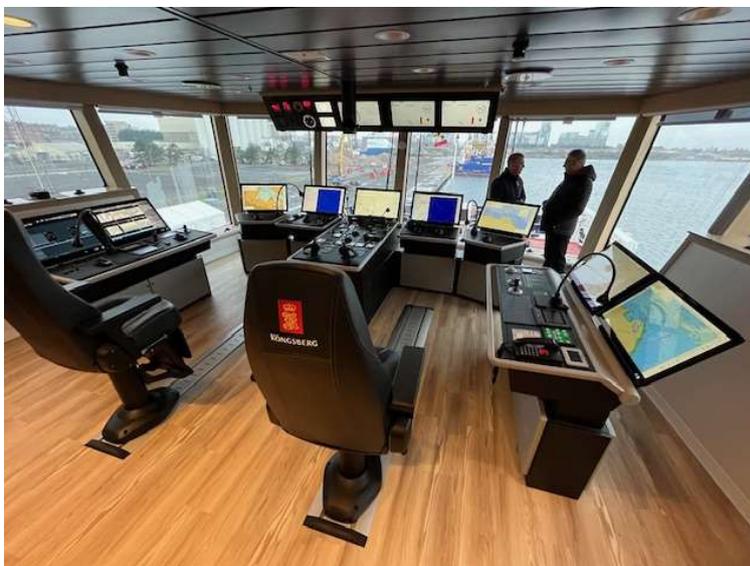
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Editor : S. Mitchell



Loaded with the latest technology such as electronic charts, dynamic positioning and advanced communication systems with the scope of carrying out hydrographic surveys. Powered by three 1860kW MAN generators driving a hybrid electric propulsion system, with battery capacity for alongside hotel loads and will have the facility for "cold ironing", essentially plugging to a shoreside supply once alongside. Not only has it been designed for enhanced working capabilities, but crew safety and comfort were high on the priorities during the design and build in the Gondan Shipyard in Spain. The greener and more energy efficient vessel will have a reduced environmental impact, something the crew and the Northern Lighthouse Board can be proud of for the next 2 to 3 decades.

Our thanks to our Chairman, Ned Kelly for organising the visit and to the proud captain, Alisdair Graham, for taking the time to show this fine vessel to our group. Happy (and safe) sailing.

Photos courtesy of GB Photography and by kind permission from the Northern Lighthouse Board.

### Whisky galore....

Some years ago one of the famous west coast 'puffers' was proceeding from Islay to the mainland fully loaded with barrels of whisky. The weather was a little rough and on board, as a passenger, there was a somewhat formidable old lady who complained to the captain in critical terms that the ship was rocking most uncomfortably. Needless to say, his pride was greatly hurt and his indignant response was, "Madam, if your belly was as full of whisky as my fine ship is, you would be rocking a bit yourself too."