



Felixstowe Master Mariners Club

Lat. 51°59'N Long. 01°23E
www.mastermariners.uk



Some time ago, a potted career history was requested from committee members:-

This from Leonard Fenner:

Can't remember when I didn't want to go to sea. It was always there, sometimes at the back of my mind, but always there. The only other thing I ever wanted was to be an ice cream man because I thought he could eat all the ice cream.

1938

At the age of eight I found he couldn't, right! I'm going to sea, and to sea I went. First, the Nautical College 'Worcester', Captain Gordon Steele, V.C. There was something to look up to already.

1948

My first trip to sea, Cadet in the Royal Mail Lines. Then many more; to The West Indies, South America, Rio and Buenos Aires; through the Canal and South to Valparaiso; or North to Vancouver and San Francisco and the Golden Gate.....golden years. One trip eastward with many hundreds of 'ten pounders', single young men and women to Australia and New Zealand.

1950

Homeward bound, a stop off the coast of Java to embark the Dutch army retreating from the advance of General Sukarno. Wives as well, women and children first, pregnant women first of all. Forty-eight babies born in forty-eight days homeward bound to Amsterdam.

I had a parallel career with the Royal Navy, having been commissioned into the Reserve. I was accepted into the submarine service; memorable in many ways, more particularly for having sailed with Lt.Cdr. 'Sandy' Woodward and having done, as part of training procedure, 'escape from a sunken submarine'. Something we all hoped we had done for the first and last time!

1965

Left Royal Mail Lines to take up appointment as a Trinity House Pilot. Another succession of happy years.

I piloted three thousand nine hundred and twelve ships.

A 999-ton coaster into Felixstowe dock basin on a spring ebb tide, you had to go in fast or you would fall down on the southern arm; you couldn't go in fast because you had to stop before you hit the harbour wall: an absolute nightmare. A 280,000-ton supertanker a quarter of a mile long, drawing 45ft in 48ft of water, twin screw, variable pitch propellers, four tugs – more if I wanted them – an absolute piece of cake.

1995

It couldn't last. Sadly, retirement came, but with it a third helping of happy years, not least being the better able to enjoy my membership of the Felixstowe Master Mariners' Club, as well as the Honourable Company.

Quite a lot of travelling, this time with my wife: Europe, India, South Africa, Egypt, Cuba, Peru, Etna, Vesuvius, Stromboli, Cotopaxi, Niagara, Everest, The Grand Canyon, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands and, perhaps, deo volente, more to come.

A happy, lucky life; much more, I always think, than I deserve.