

**BLUFF SIGNAL**  
**WSS Port Natal Branch**  
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**PORTS O'CALL**

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS & BEST WISHES FOR 2017 FOR A HAPPY NEW  
YEAR TO ALL MEMBERS & FRIENDS.....**

**ENJOY THIS END-YEAR NEWSLETTER AND NOTE WE WILL BE HAVING  
A MEETING IN JANUARY (more details, next newsletter).**

**BRANCH MONTHLY MEETING: NOVEMBER 2016**

**DATE:** Tuesday 22 November 2016

**TIME:** 17h00 for 17h30

**VENUE:** THE FOREDECK ROOM, LOWER DECK, THE ROYAL NATAL YACHT CLUB,  
Yacht Mole, Durban Harbour.

**FEATURE:** "A HARBOUR HISTORY" - We look at a compact version of Durban's Harbour History, from our Guest Speaker, Durbanite STUART FREEDMAN, who wrote a book on the subject some while back. His book is lavishly illustrated and is something more of a Photographic history of the port. Our own TREVOR JONES has a number of his own photographs beautifully lining some of the pages of STUART's work. Come over and check it out. Copies will be available for sale.

**WHALING DAYS TO BE RECALLED**

Durban's famous (or infamous) Whaling History of the past comes to the fore again this month, as the Whaling Exhibit at the Port Natal Maritime Museum is to be extended – due to recent donations of whaling memorabilia. The Museums Departments is holding a handing over ceremony and function to mark this occasion. Details are:

**DATE:** Friday 25 November 2016

**TIME:** 17h00-21h00

**VENUE:** Port Natal Maritime Museum, Marine Boulevard, Durban

**FEATURE:** Presentations on the Durban Whaling Era, showcasing the improved whaling exhibit and footage from Durban's Whaling History. Presenters will include Terry Hutson, Emil Unger, David Asgeir-Nielsen & Dave Karlsen (all of the last three having strong family links with the Whaling Industry), and Professor Trevor Jones.

**OTHER DETAILS:** Cost is R50 per person, strictly cash, and please RSVP by 23 November to [fulloutputcc@telkomsa.net](mailto:fulloutputcc@telkomsa.net). There will also be a wine tasting, snacks will be served and soft drinks will available for sale.

**“ALL AT SEA”** – Just so that you know half the committee (well.almost!) will be at sea for a week’s cruise aboard MSC SINFONIA, sailing up to Mozambique Island this November. Chairman MALCOLM WILSON and his wife GLORIA will be aboard, and so will BUDDY ROSS and your scribe, DAVID (away 11 November, returning on 18 November).

## **DECEMBER EVENTS**

### **MEMBERS END-YEAR FUNCTION ABOARD THE TNPA LEISURE VESSEL “ISIPONONO”**

**DATE:** MONDAY 5 December 2016.

**TIME:** 12h30 for a departure from the quay at Small Craft Basin, at 13h00. We will return to the same quay an hour later.  
Please note the difference this year – that this is a daytime event and not a sundowner party!

**FURTHER NEWS:** Please bring along a drinking glass, and a plate of snacks to share on the Buffet Table. **Parking:** Suggest the public area to the immediate right hand side (on the grass), next to the Port Natal Maritime Museum. This is a pay-to-enter parking area. The usual parking area we use may be full with business people who park there during the day.....but you can try (to left of the Museum). **Dress:** Smart Casual, please. Kindly also note this is a MEMBERS ONLY function. The committee will be serving complimentary wine, beer and fruit juice. If you wish to bring a guest (viz. non-member) you will be asked to pay a cover charge on board of R90-00 for your guest.

We look forward to welcoming our members aboard ISIPONONO. It will make a nice change to view the shipping from on-deck in daylight conditions!

### **NSRI LIFEBOAT CIRCLE END-YEAR FUNCTION:**

Happy to know we now boast an ever growing number of Branch members who are supporters of the Lifeboat Circle. NSRI are hosting a Breakfast for Lifeboat Circle members, at the Benjamin Hotel in Florida Road at 9.30am for 10am on WEDNESDAY 07 DECEMBER. RSVP: Natasha, email: [Natasha@searescue.org.za](mailto:Natasha@searescue.org.za) or telephone 021-4344011. Do not delay – these events fill up quickly and are popular. Non-Lifeboat Circle members may attend, but there will be a cover charge suitably.

### **CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT THE SEAFARERS MISSION, BAYHEAD:**

The date will be FRIDAY 09 DECEMBER, commencing at 18h00. There will be carol singing, choirs performing, seafarers present, to be followed by a “Bring and Share Supper” so please do support, and provide a plate of food for the supper. All welcome.....no admission charge.....just roll up! What a wonderful way to celebrate the Festive Season! Let’s do it this year.

## **AROUND DURBAN HARBOUR**

### **A VETERAN FIRST-TIME CALLER**

It’s not often that a medium-sized cruise ship in international trade would operate for 32 years before making a first visit to South African waters, but this was the case in mid-November with the smart *Artania* (1984/44,656 grt), now operating under the banner of Germany’s Phoenix Reisen, but perhaps better known in her original guise as P&O’s *Royal Princess*. A product of the Wärtsilä shipyard in Helsinki, she was christened by Princess Anne (the “Royal Princess”), and started her cruising career in mid-November 1984 with a trans-Atlantic positioning cruise from Southampton to Miami. It was a cruise that her passengers and crew were likely to have remembered for the rest of

their lives, as the vessel was caught in a major mid-Atlantic low-pressure system and protracted storm, which she rode out with considerable difficulty, with substantial damage to on-board fittings and equipment, and with injuries to several passengers. Because the vessel lacked the reserve power of genuine “blue water” vessels, she could not make up the time lost in riding out the tumultuous weather, and arrived in Miami several days late. Her later cruising career seems to have been rosier, both in her Princess days, and later as **Artemis** under the traditional (but now sadly defunct) buff P&O stack. She was sold to Artania Shipping (part of the large V-Ships family) in 2009, but only assumed the name **Artania** in 2011. She now caters largely for a German cruising clientele, and she looked very fine when docking in Durban in exceedingly rare late-spring sunshine on 16 November. It’s ironic how one’s tastes and perceptions in respect of ship design change; at the time the vessel emerged over thirty years ago, I thought she was angular and ugly, but in comparison with many modern cruise-ships designs, she now looks like elegance personified!



**Artania approaching the T-Jetty on the morning of 16 November 2016**

#### **A RARE RO-RO PASSENGER VISITOR**

There were two first-time passenger callers in the port of Durban on the second day of **Artania's** stopover. The second vessel was considerably less impressive and appealing, but a rarer vessel in these parts, and indeed a very “un-Durbanlike” visitor. Some days earlier, the well-known Cape Town ship photographer Ian Shiffman had tipped me off by email that a passenger ferry was heading up the coast, bound for Durban, and thereafter I watched the vessel’s snail-like progress (generally between 3.8 and 5.5 knots) up the Transkei and southern KwaZulu-Natal coast on ais with increasing interest.

The ship’s name was reported as **Warrior Spirit** (1980/11,457 grt), a name that was completely unfamiliar to me. A little research soon revealed her provenance, as she was built in Le Havre, France, by the Atelier & Chantier du Havre as **Porto Cardo** for the Cie. Méridionale de Navigation of Marseille for this company’s freight and passenger service from the French mainland to Corsica. She served on these routes for nearly 20 years before she became **Malta Express**, and then in 2006 she acquired her present name of **Warrior Spirit** and has run for the last ten years on local routes in Trinidad & Tobago in the West Indies, registered under the flag of St Kitts. My immediate thought on seeing a vessel like this in South African waters, and particularly pattering along at little more than walking pace, was that the ship was on her final voyage and very probably headed for



### **Warrior Spirit entering Durban harbour on 17 November 2016**

breakers in the Indian sub-continent. This view was reinforced by her flag and registry, which was shown on Marinetraffic.com as “Niue” and port of registry as Alofi. I had heard of neither, but after a further web search, all was revealed. Niue is a tiny island nation in the South Pacific (population just shy of 2,000 persons) and a former Dependency of New Zealand. I had never encountered its flag (of convenience or otherwise) previously in the shipping industry, but a spectacular flag it is.



What seemed clear was that **Warrior Spirit** could have little economic link to this tiny country, so a scrapping beach destination seemed close to a betting certainty, although to my surprise the Durban port records show her next port as Cebu, in the Philippines archipelago, so perhaps she still has some life left in her in the dense and quite hazardous inter-island services in those waters. It may perhaps be pushing the envelope to classify this boxy ro-ro as a passenger ship, but her accommodation for 96 passengers in cabins does qualify her in this category, and she was a highly unusual and interesting vessel to see slipping into Durban port. It will be instructive to track her further progress on ais, to see whether her destination is indeed a beach and blowtorch, or a further lease of life.

**(Trevor Jones)**

## **AROUND AND ABOUT**

### **MARITIME MEMORIES**

**ONCE A COASTER** – The coastal tanker PERICLES, of 1,077 gross tons, is seen sailing from Durban in an undated image, around presumably mid-1970s. She had quite a chequered career. Built in France in 1951 as HAUT-BRION, she later carried the names LOEX and VOLTA, operating as a mini-freighter. In 1958 she was converted into an LPG carrier and initially served Gazocean as PERICLES in Southern African waters, being placed on charter to Rennies Green R Line. She

served on their Indian Ocean Islands service, as from October 1976. In 1978 Unicorn Lines took control of the Gazocean service, and acquired the vessel. Operations commenced on a coastal run from Durban to Port Elizabeth. On 24 December 1978, PERICLES suffered an explosion in the pump room and as repairs were deemed costly she was sold for scrapping in Durban in early 1979.



Photo ack: David Hughes Collection

#### A READER'S RESPONSE

An interesting response to the coverage of Trevor Jones's visit to Corsica in the September SIGNAL came from the well-known US maritime writer, commentator and overall shipping authority Ted Scull, who wrote: "I thoroughly enjoyed your article on visiting Bastia and the Sampiero Hotel. My brother and I sailed in the *Sampiero Corso* in March 1964 when I was then living in Paris. Marseille to Bastia and Bastia to Nice. It was a miniature CGT experience with a nice cabin looking forward to the bow, cluttered with British school children camped the deck and a lovely restaurant with an included dinner with wine and breakfast. I made many night boat trips in Europe and this was the nicest." Ted also provided a wonderful photograph of the *Sampiero Corso*, in Nice on 28 March 1964. .

