

New Horizons after 45 Years at Sea!

Captain Martin Smith, Master of the RMS **St. Helena**, retired in June 2007, after 30 years aboard the same ship, but a rather special one at that - the only remaining working Royal Mail Ship in the world. The **St. Helena** is a unique 128-berth passenger cargo vessel and serves the remote island of St Helena in the South Atlantic, which can only be reached by sea as it is one of the few remaining British Territories without an airport.



From the UK, the voyage takes around 20 days, a journey that she does twice a year, during the remaining months she sails between Cape Town via Walvis Bay to St Helena and Ascension Island. Captain Smith retires after 45 years at sea and, fittingly, after the **St. Helena's** 100th voyage earlier in May. During his time in command of the **St. Helena**, he has carried a mix of passengers from various livestock to royalty, ambassadors and saints! He served in the Falklands' conflict in 1982, and was responsible for a volunteer crew of 33. Voyages aboard the **St. Helena** are reminiscent of the majestic Union Castle Liners from the early 1950s and into 1970s, and attract a few hundred passengers to this remote destination each year.

Captain Smith will miss the diverse characters of the crew and passengers, as well as the remoteness and stunning beauty of St Helena Island: "It seems a long time since I first went to sea, in 1963 as a Cadet with Elder Dempster Lines of Liverpool and afterwards joining Curnow Shipping and, subsequently, Andrew Weir Shipping Ltd. It has been a delight to be part of a unique service to the island of St Helena, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the freedom of the limitless ocean and sky; the sunsets in the tropics and the company of many passengers, all with a story to tell."

Captain Smith will not be leaving the sea behind altogether; he will still have part-time interests in the sea. With a move to a new house in Nova Scotia and more time to enjoy his hobbies of sailing, skiing and walking, he is looking forward to not having his life governed by shipping schedules any more!

Acknowledgement to the Nautical Magazine



At anchor off St. Helena Island