



Tall Ships Youth Trust — *Stavros S Niarchos*

Stavros S Niarchos was completed in 2000 as a training ship under direction of the Tall Ships Youth Trust. She is a brig by classification, having a German built hull fitted out in Appledore to TSYT requirements. She is professionally maintained by Northern Marine Management Ltd. and coded to sail anywhere in the world.

Around 48 youngsters, mainly disabled or disadvantaged, sail not only on the high seas but also into experiences likely to build character in so many different ways. They join ship at one of the frequented ports in the British Isles where they will be met by permanent and volunteer crew and introduced to an unfamiliar world soon to become home. Permanent crew comprise Captain, Chief and Second Mates, Chief

plus muscular exertion as there are no sail winches. The TSYT prides itself on developing social skills and self-esteem while enhancing aspiration, motivation and self-reliance among their young sailors. In addition to sail handling, duties when on watch include cleaning all areas, though these too fall into a rotational system so everyone gains wide expertise.

Exciting new experiences like sleeping in pipe cots in communal cabins, star-filled night watches, dolphin and whale watching, seeing the occasional aircraft diverting course to have a look at a brig in full sail — such thrills make a striking impact on young lives. By the end of a voyage they are fitter, more active and communicative with stories aplenty to take home along with a track chart of the whole voyage compiled from contributions by everyone: a collage of memories, jokes, weather records, crew list and anecdotes unique to each particular ship's company.



Engineer, Bosun and Cook while the volunteers — all qualified members — are Third Mate, Assistant Engineer, Second and Assistant Cooks, Purser, three Watchleaders and two Deckhands. Two Youth Mentors, usually qualified teachers or youth workers, are responsible for dealing with personal problems as well as organising entertainment activities and competitions.

Powered by a total of eighteen sails — five yards on each of the two masts support square sails — course, lower topsail, upper topsail, topgallant and royal. Sail training on *Stavros S Niarchos* demands discipline and team commitment on a unique scale

The first voyage of *Stavros S Niarchos* was from Avonmouth to Weymouth during which, when rounding Land's End, she encountered a south westerly gale and achieved a speed of fourteen knots under just lower topsails and fore topmast stay sails. She is registered as an auxiliary Coastguard vessel proving her SAR capabilities in 2006 by answering an emergency call, as the nearest vessel, and diverting some distance off course to rescue two women competing in an Atlantic rowing race, they were taken on board and served as working crew until landing in port.

One of the regular qualified volunteers (who together donate over one hundred thousand hours per year), is Guy O'Malley who kindly recounted experiences from twelve voyages he enjoyed on *Stavros S Niarchos*

during the last ten years. His first might have been sufficient to deter anyone else from ever joining her again! They set off from Southampton at new year bound for Cherbourg but were soon reduced to bare poles in hurricane force winds, proceeding backwards with both engines full ahead. Order came to turn and run for shelter in Weymouth Bay and seek a berth in Portland. In such conditions, Guy felt assured by her seaworthiness and the safety procedures used on board such as the fixing of nets at the base of companionways to receive anyone falling and safety lines secured on deck to which harnesses can be coupled.

Regular emergency exercises, such as man overboard, demand each appointed crew member to take up designated positions. Two ribs in cradles are made ready for action and a rescue inflatable lowered to the water. Coming into port requires the combined services of every permanent crew member — Captain and Watch Officer on the bridge, plus a Port Pilot if needed, one officer on each



of the fore and aft mooring stations, one officer dedicated to supervising those aloft, one in the rib afloat ready, if necessary, to act as thruster additional to the integral bow thruster and, of course, the Engineer on engine controls. The spectacle of *Stavros S Niarchos* passing under Tower Bridge justifies the rather exceptional manning of the yards.

When asked for top memories, Guy recalls the Captain asking for permission, from the local pilot, to leave berth in Cherbourg under sail. Preparation was paramount, line and sail handling skills suitably synchronised and this special departure was recorded with time lapse photography by a camera mounted on the bowsprit. Among many other great moments, he includes lying on the deck at night identifying constellations, the moments when engines are switched off and the might of sail power takes over, dolphins in warmer climes, whale watching around the Azores and Tenerife and dramatic sailing around the Western Isles of Scotland.

Stavros S Niarchos frequently passes Prawle Point and her next voyage through the area is in late May so, if she is not giving too wide a berth to the southernmost point of Devon, watchkeepers may be lucky enough to follow her progress.



Images of *Stavros S Niarchos* © Guy O'Malley

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Brittany Ferries — a glimpse behind the scenes

Passages, to and from the port of Millbay in Plymouth, by ships of the Brittany Ferries fleet are regularly observed from Prawle Point by duty watchkeepers. Those on the Roscoff and Santander routes appear on the horizon west of the lookout, while those plying between Plymouth and St. Malo pass well south. Being beyond our visual range, they are not officially logged yet their progress, both on radar and Vessel Tracker, is usually noted. Port Operations Manager, Steve Lawrie, kindly afforded this glimpse behind the scenes.

Steve is an inspiring ambassador for the company, having been happily employed for 27 years, based in Millbay but liaising with colleagues in France and Spain. Responsible for all operational aspects of the ferry when alongside, Steve's duties include checking technical and store requirements, medical emergencies, fuelling, cleaning and passenger problems. He co-operates with Port Authorities, the UK Border Force, Police, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and with Defra coordinating the pet travel scheme.

Brittany Ferries is a French company, based in Roscoff, with 2,500 employees, mostly of French origin. Each year they transport 2,500,000 passengers, 200,000 freight vehicles and 800,000 tourist cars. It all began in 1973 with the *Kerisnel*, a freight vessel conveying lorries full of cauliflowers and artichokes from Brittany farms to British markets. The familiar onion sellers of the time probably brought their laden bicycles on the same craft or maybe they favoured *Poseidon*. By 1973, the deep water port to the east of Roscoff, Port de Bloscon was established and larger *Penn Ar Bed* took over as the vehicle and passenger ferry in 1974. Success led to further expansion afforded by *Cornouailles* with her greater capacity and the adoption of routes to St. Malo, Santander and Cork operated by *Armorique* and

the construction of a futuristic, addition to the fleet due for launching in 2019.

The latest generation of vessels, while faster and more powerful, have been developed to comply with Clean Sea standards and produce at least ten per cent less carbon dioxide than earlier craft. Conservation issues are taken seriously, £60 million being spent in the last eighteen months installing emission-reducing "scrubber" systems on six of the ferries, visible atop the funnel. Along with the maintenance of maximum engine efficiency, fuel economy practices include taking advantage of winds, tides and currents. In case you have ever wondered why a daytime crossing from Plymouth to Roscoff takes six hours while a night voyage may be twice as long — it's not just consideration for passenger sleep habits — the slower speed saves on fuel and emissions.

Brittany Ferries work closely with several international research projects investigating the marine environment, *Armorique* and *Pont-Aven*, are fitted with sophisticated sensors collecting data on seawater quality and plankton trapping trawl devices have been gathering specimens since 1974 for research on the ecological health of our seas and changes attributable to global warming. Oceanopolis, the amazing marine aquarium in Brest, the Roscoff Biological Station and Orca, Europe's leading whale and dolphin conservation charity, all have close ties with Brittany Ferries since the route to Spain passes through one of the world's five best areas for spotting diverse mammalian and avian marine life. Special two day cruises for wildlife enthusiasts are arranged to the Bay of Biscay as the shallow continental shelf provides excellent feeding and breeding grounds for the many species. Zoologists Mark Carwardine, Nigel Marvin

or Chris Packham provide lectures and workshops for children while wildlife officers watch and report to conservation authorities. Blue, sperm, fin, humpback and pilot whales, orcas, harbour porpoises, Risso's, bottle-nosed, common and striped dolphins and the scarce Cuvier's beaked whale have been spotted. On a more somber note, location of "ghost gear" (abandoned fishing debris) is reported for retrieval.



Prince of Brittany. Successive ships, too numerous to name but once familiar, served freight and passenger traffic under the Brittany Ferries colours from ports including Portsmouth, Caen, Cherbourg, Le Havre, Santander, Bilbao and Poole as well as those already mentioned. The fleet now totals eleven: *Armorique* and *Pont-Aven* being the two most often seen from the Prawle Point NCI station. In January the company signed a letter of intent with Flensburger Schiffbau in Germany, for

Safety being paramount, all Captains and Chief Officers are qualified in harbour pilotage, enabling them to enter and leave port unaided in most conditions. Annually, all Captains visit the Queen's Harbourmaster at the Plymouth Longroom to be updated and review any new technology.

Image © Brittany Ferries

Recent Incidents

31.10.16

Informed Solent CG of unattended sports boat on rocks in Starehole Bay. Recovered by Salcombe LB.

01.11.16

Mayday heard from *Ma Petite Folie*, taking on water and intending to beach on Slapton Sands. Casualty not visible from Prawle Point but report to Solent CG of 2 vessels in the area. *HMS Ranger* proceeded to casualty and Salcombe LB also launched. Later *Ma Petite Folie* reports water ingress under control and proceeding to Dartmouth.

02.11.16

Tug *Vigilant* passed PQ towing an exceptionally long platform. Ball, Diamond, Ball showing on tug only. As the vessel was on its way to Tunis, we informed CG that the towed craft had no correct display and were thanked for this information.

17.11.16

Salcombe LB rang to ascertain whether yacht *Voyager* leaving Salcombe was visible. When confirmed we were asked to

monitor it westwards past Bolt Head. It was heading to Plymouth before dark and possibly single handed. Its position on radar later disappeared. Salcombe LB launched, talked to *Voyager* and escorted her across Bigbury Bay, thence returning to station.

26.11.16

30 foot rope between 2 water carriers, ashore on the tide line at Langerstone Point, reported to CG. This would cause a hazard when afloat and could foul props. Prawle Point Coastguard Rescue Team tasked to remove.

08.12.16

Two walkers called in to report a life ring connected to a buoy off Elender Cove. This was reported to Solent CG; Prawle Point Coastguard Rescue Team tasked to investigate.

Dolphins were sighted and reported on 8 occasions.

Watchkeeper Training

Training for watchkeepers doesn't end when they qualify, it is an on-going process and as training officer, part of Patricia Beauchamp's job is to ensure that everyone is trained in, and able to use, our procedures and technology effectively. We use a combination of six quizzes during the winter and two annual training evenings to maintain competency.

The March training meeting is likely to include radio procedures with the Coastguard, an introduction to our new radar system and a refresher session on keeping the log during busy summer watches.

A review of the schedule and procedures for training of new watchkeepers will also be completed before the summer season begins.

Upcoming Events & Fundraising

Sarah Procyk, our PR Officer, reminds us that fundraising is an essential part of keeping the Station operational (see next item). Please come and see us at:

April 8th	Ashby's Easy Stores, East Charleton
April 15th	Wills Marine Boat Show, Kingsbridge
April 30th	Salcombe Crabfest
May 28th	Prawle Fair
June 3rd	Stokeley Farm Shop Stall and car boot sale

How Your Donations are Used

Although our watchkeepers are all volunteers, we need to raise around £10,000 each year to keep the Prawle Point NCI Station running. Located 200 feet above sea level, on the southernmost promontory of Devon, exposure to the elements — sun, wind, salt and often driving rain — demands constant upkeep.

Repainting of the exterior is regularly required and cables, windows, fences, even signage frequently need replacing. Where possible jobs are undertaken by skilled volunteers within our ranks, while other tasks require qualified professionals; suitably durable materials are costly.



Lesley Suddes, Chair of the NCI Board of Trustees, presented Long Service Awards at our last AGM.

From left: Chester Wallace, 15 years service; Nigel Taylor, 10; Bob Payne, 10; Lesley Suddes, Andy Thomson (Station Manager), Nevill Higgins, 15; Roger Hardiman, 15; Marcus Cook, 10; and Alan Davey, 10.

Image © Sarah Procyk

We are sincerely grateful for all donations placed in collecting buckets at our fund-raising events, given via the website donate button or by direct debit.

Thank you.