

Diverse issues

After last month's Annual Report-dominated issue, which nevertheless showed the diversity of the work of the Institute, it is good to have a rich variety of articles to interest the broad spectrum of the membership this month. Yet, despite this variety, there are recurring themes and connectivity between the articles, all of which provide good advice covering navigation, liferafts, potable water, piracy and much else.

Ice navigation is a subject that we have covered recently, through articles from experienced ice pilots and seminars attended in Sweden and Canada. With the effects of climate change increasingly being felt in the Arctic region, there is no doubt that ice navigation techniques will continue to grow in importance. Similarly, there is little doubt that there are a limited number of experienced ice navigators; training standards and courses are not subject to international agreement and are few in number; and the volume of shipping trading into ice-bound regions is increasing. A Captain's Column from an experienced Canadian Coast Guard officer, Captain Ron Gallant, is therefore particularly valuable. In it he examines the development and use of technology in ice navigation, supports the importance of seafarer input to the design of e-navigation systems, but cautions against the lure of the display. Situational

awareness based on physical marks and signs remain crucial in the art and practice of safe navigation.

Continuing the navigation theme, David Patraiko, who is at the forefront of ensuring that end-user needs are taken into account in the evolution of e-navigation, provides a thought-provoking piece on ship/shore coastal relationships. How far should vessel traffic services (VTS) extend and what role should they undertake in the movement of shipping in their area? Where extensive monitoring is set up, will that be enough or will the desire to give advice or take control develop? As the expectations of society and the capability of technology and the VTS professionals ashore develop, so questions of control and responsibility will become ever more important. They must be debated rationally and if, in due course, the master's role changes, so must the law.

Human heart

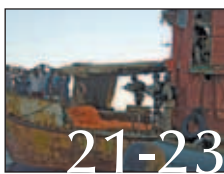
With so much technology around, it is as well to remember the very human watchkeeper who is still at the heart of our navigation systems. To many at sea it might appear that there are already unmanned ships plying the trade routes of the world, as they fail to carry out the simplest of collision avoidance manoeuvres in a timely manner. However, despite the prevalence of small crew sizes,

watchkeepers and look-outs as real people are still a requirement – and Captain Saujanya Sinha makes a strong case for investment in these crucial professionals. In past recessions in shipping, the training budget has been the first to be cut and the downsizing of crews was unremitting. The result was increased casualty rates which have taken years of hard work by many parts of the industry to reverse.

The latest world recession is already hard and nobody can predict how long it will last, however this time the shipping industry is facing a severe shortage of qualified seafarers. Responsible leaders of the industry are saying publicly that this is not the time to cut back on training, indeed we must all continue our efforts to attract and retain capable people.

Finally, piracy – a negative factor in the campaign to attract people to seafaring, at least as far as commercial shipping is concerned. It is clearly attractive to young men in Somalia as well as other countries, and it may actually be positive in terms of naval recruitment. Professor Edgar Gold provides a useful summary of the Somalia situation and some pointers to addressing the legal aspects, while we also feature a view from New Zealand and the report of a recent conference that took a very realistic look at the situation in this part of the world. A land-based solution must be found.

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■ Cover: David Patraiko's photograph of the Trinity House buoy tender THV Galatea, at work off the Norfolk Coast. Captain Wayne Durrans MNI and the crew hosted David during a voyage arranged to keep NI staff up to date with a wide variety of shipping operations. See his article about ship/shore coastal relationships, pp 5-7; see also p 26.