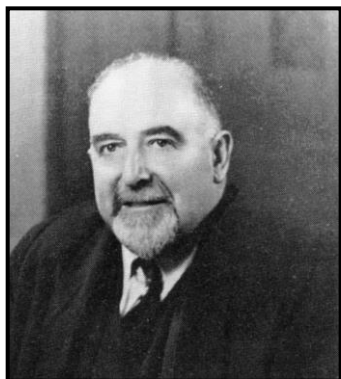




MARITIME VOLUNTEER SERVICE
POOLE UNIT

TOM SHERRIN



The Man and the Boat

Introduction

The name Tom Sherrin has been synonymous with the Poole and Bournemouth area since the 1930's.

Thomas William (Tom) Sherrin was a well known and much loved local character, who lived life to the full and dedicated much of his time to serving young people in the area, and the community as a whole. He was a large burly man, who had a distinguished war service record as a naval officer before serving the town of Poole as a councillor, Sheriff and then Mayor and Admiral of the Port as well as a Poole Harbour Commissioner.

In recognition of this, a Poole pilot vessel was named in his honour and continued Tom's legacy of service in Poole Harbour for twenty years. During which time she became a regular sight in local waters, delivering pilots to hundreds of ships and sailors navigating a safe passage through the harbour.

After service as a pilot boat she spent ten years working as a general purpose vessel in the waters of Alderney Harbour before returning to Poole.

She is now in the care of the Maritime Volunteer Service, a national registered charity providing low cost maritime training and experience to all and voluntary support to a variety of organisations in accordance with the charity's aims. The Poole Branch of the MVS also provides support for the Harbour Master in the ongoing safety management of harbour activities and environmental protection of harbour waters.

MVS Poole are dedicated to preserving the seafaring history of their town, and are committed to restoring this particular vessel which has played such an important role in the harbour for so many years to her former glory.

Tom Sherrin – A Man of the Sea

Thomas William Sherrin was born in 1907, and grew up to be one of Poole's best known and loved characters.

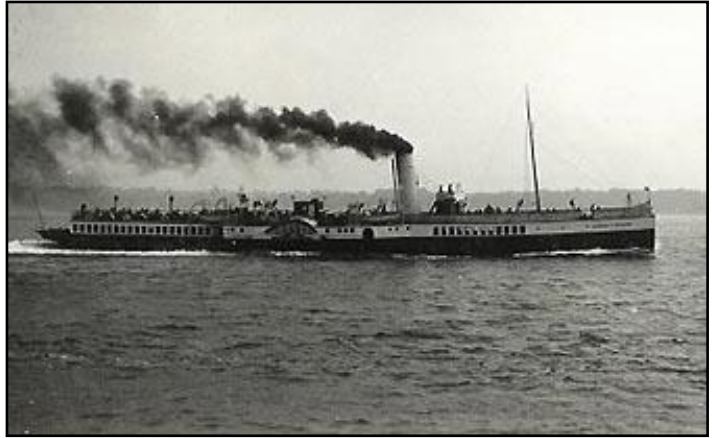
From an early age his life revolved around the water. He was a powerful swimmer, and president of Dorset and Bournemouth swimming clubs. In 1933 he won the pier-to-pier swimming race in Poole Bay and the Poole Harbour men's long distance swim. He also captained both the Hampshire and Dorset water polo teams.

Tom was a keen yachtsman, married the daughter of the commodore of Parkstone Yacht Club and sailed regularly on his father-in-law's cruiser.

Wartime Duties

At the start of the Second World War, Tom was called up as a Naval Reservist, and commanded the Red Funnel paddle steamer Lorna Doone on mine-sweeping and anti aircraft duties in the English Channel.

In April 1941, the Lorna Doone was attacked by three German Dornier bombers. She opened fire, and hit one of the planes which caught fire and lost height. Two of Lorna Doone's crew were wounded during the attack, and the bridge and deck



house were hit by machine gun fire, but careful manoeuvring by the captain ensured that the vessel avoided four large bombs which were dropped in the vicinity.

In 1945, Tom Sherrin participated in the interrogation of the German Vice-Admiral in command of the North Sea Fleet.

The Sea Cadets

Tom's connection with the Sea Cadet Corps commenced in 1939, and continued after the war. In 1949, he was selected to lead a party of British Sea Cadets on an official visit to Canada. The Canadian authorities were so impressed by the cadets that they presented them with the Canada Trophy, given to the best unit in the United Kingdom.

Tom was promoted to district officer in 1950, and in 1951 was awarded the M.B.E. for his services to the Sea Cadets. He continued serving the Cadets until he retired as district officer in 1970. He was taken ill the night before his retirement dinner, but insisted that this went ahead as planned. He was praised as 'a man with a heart of gold'.

Civil Duties

In 1952, Tom was elected as a Conservative member of Poole Council. He was elected Sheriff of the town in 1961, and then Mayor in 1964. During his term as Mayor, a local lass Ann Sidney was crowned Miss World and Tom led the town's celebrations for this achievement, as well as leading the Poole fleet as Admiral of the Port at the historic Beating of the Sea Bounds ceremony. He also served the community as a Justice of the Peace and the Port as a Harbour Commissioner and a Sub-commissioner of Poole Pilots.

Tributes

Lieutenant Commander Thomas Sherrin died in April 1970. The Mayor, Alderman Arthur Lloyd-Allan said: *'He was one of nature's gentlemen, and one of Poole's greatest characters. He will be greatly missed. Tom was always interested in doing anything he could to help his fellow men, and particularly in helping young people.'*

He was vice-chairman of the Committee for Education at the time of his death and had also been an active member of the Youth Committee. It is sad that he did not live to see the fulfilment of one of his greatest aims – the building of an indoor swimming bath for the town'.

Lt. Commander M.L.J. Christopher, commanding officer of Poole's Sea Cadet unit said: *'He was one of those people who were prepared to take off their coats and work with anyone. He was known by his Christian name by the man-in-the-street and the highest people in the town, and they all liked and respected him as a personality. He was a great stalwart of the Sea Cadet movement'.*

In recognition of Tom's links to the port of Poole, particularly as a Harbour Commissioner, six months after his death in 1970 Poole's new Trinity House pilot launch was named the "Tom Sherrin."

Tom Sherrin – The Boat The History of Pilotage in England

In 1514, a guild of shipmen had warned King Henry VIII of the dangers of leaving the pilotage of rivers in the hands of inexperienced young men. In response, the King granted a charter authorising *'our trewe and faithfull subjects, shipmen and mariners of this our Realm of England in honour of the most blessed trinitie and St Clement Confessor'* to create a guild. And so Trinity House was born, with the safety of shipping and the welfare of sailors as its objective.

In 1694, James I conferred upon Trinity House rights concerning compulsory pilotage of shipping and exclusive rights to license pilots on the River Thames. However, pilotage in

ports was much less satisfactory. There was no shortage of willing pilots, but they often lacked the reliability, sobriety and professionalism needed.

In 1803, Parliament attempted to rectify this situation by passing an act 'for the better regulation of pilotage'. Trinity House was charged with setting the national rules, but responsibility for selecting suitably skilled, experienced and sober pilots for each port was placed on a group of leading local citizens.

In Poole, these sub-commissioners of pilotage (mostly ex shipmasters who had become ship owners) met for the first time on 9th January 1803 in the Town House. They drew up a series of regulations to govern pilotage in the Port of Poole, including the fixed dues pilots could charge, and penalties for failing to respond to a request for pilotage. Suitable candidates were chosen and recommended to Trinity House for licensing.

From that day forth, generations of Poole families guided visiting ships safely into Poole. On receiving a request for pilotage, the pilot launch would leave Poole Quay, and head for the Havens and Bar Buoy, where the pilot would join the ship. He would take charge of the bridge, and guide the ship through the narrow deep water channel to a safe berth, avoiding the dozens of smaller craft enjoying the harbour.

The new launch

In the late 1960's, a new Pilot Launch was commissioned for Poole Pilots, to replace the now ageing launch Endeavour. The new launch cost £7,000 and an extract from 'A History of Trinity House 'Pilotage at Poole' noted:

'Midland Bank Limited was prepared to make the necessary loan on the basis of annual repayments of £1,500 to include interest and charges, and that Trinity House would guarantee the loan'.

The new launch was designed by the well known naval architect John Askham of Bembridge, Isle of Wight, and built by James & Caddy of Weymouth. Their brief was to build a launch of contemporary design from traditional materials of oak, elm and teak. This traditionally method of construction is now superseded by the use of fibreglass and its derivatives. The engine was a marine Lister TS3 opposed piston, air cooled diesel driving a four bladed propeller. This engine was fraught with problems and replaced with a more reliable Ford Sabre 6 cylinder water cooled diesel.

The new vessel was launched in October 1970, and in a simple ceremony alongside Poole quay, was named Tom Sherrin. Mr Alasdair Ferguson, chairman of the Sub-Commissioners of Pilotage for Poole said they had decided upon the name as a spontaneous tribute to the late Alderman Sherrin.

The naming ceremony was performed by Tom's widow, Mrs Connie Sherrin. At the proceedings, the Mayor told Mrs Sherrin: *It will, I hope, bring you constant comfort to know with what affection Tom was held, and the very high regard many in the community had for his life and work'.*

When christening the pilot cutter, Mrs Sherrin had the misfortune to miss the boat and to see the bottle of champagne sink in the murky depths. Afterwards, the assembled company were amused, and somewhat mortified, to see two divers appear with the missing bottle who then proceeded to toast the health of those present!



Tom Sherrin then went on to give almost twenty years of service to the Poole Pilots. One of these, the late Captain Martin Rowsell as senior pilot took personal responsibility for her. As one coxswain put it “she was his baby”. This relationship has been commemorated by an etching of Tom Sherrin scribed on a stone memorial plaque mounted in the wall of the Pilot Office on Poole Quay.

The end of an era



In 1988, the government decided to severely curtail the responsibilities of Trinity House, and Poole Harbour Commissioners took over the navigational management of the harbour, licensing of Pilots and established a new port control system.

The controversial changes led to the redundancy of three of the seven pilots working in the port. The role of the

pilots had been significantly reduced as more ships' Masters were issued with pilotage exemption licences that allowed them to sail into the port without a pilot, once they had proved their knowledge of the area.

As a result, Tom Sherrin was sold to the Harbourmaster in Alderney, Channel Islands, for use as pilot boat, workboat and occasional push tug having been fitted with a fender on the bows.

In 2000, Tom Sherrin with her single engine no longer complied with Pilot Boat Coding requirements and the



Alderney Harbourmaster was obliged to acquire a twin screw replacement vessel. Tom Sherrin was put up for sale by tender and Richard Rees, Head of the Poole Unit of the Maritime Volunteer Service, heard of the sale and flew to Alderney to inspect the vessel.



Here was a safe, stable craft, with wide decks and grab rails, and a good sized wheelhouse with chart table, radar and GPS. She would be ideal for teaching nautical skills one of the main aims of the Maritime Volunteer Service. In addition, Richard would be returning the vessel to her home port, where she meant so much to so many people. His bid was accepted and the boat returned to Poole.

Serving the Poole Community

Tom Sherrin is now berthed by Poole lifting bridge, close to where she was originally named, and from where she set off on so many of her pilotage duties.

Since returning to Poole, Tom Sherrin has continued Alderman Sherrin's legacy of service to the community. Throughout the summer months, the MVS assist the Poole Harbourmaster by carrying out weekend patrols around the harbour, ensuring that water-skiers and jet-skiers stay in the designated areas for their activities, have the appropriate permits, and behave in a safe manner. In addition to this, and her role in training MVS members in all manner of nautical skills, she has carried out numerous other official duties.

The year 2000 saw Tom Sherrin fly the MVS ensign for the first time. In October of that year, she was dismasted in storm force winds, and the mast was subsequently shortened.

In early 2001, she was used to conduct a survey of fresh water aquifers in Studland Bay on behalf of Bournemouth University. At the Poole Fishermen's Regatta in July, she provided valuable assistance, including escorting the wartime patrol boat HDML Medusa through the harbour. October and November of that year saw a major refit, during which time she was repainted from the Pilot Boat livery of black and orange to the navy blue and white colours of the Maritime Volunteer Service.

The following year she assisted a Cardiff University project water sampling in the harbour In 2003 assisted with the Poole Fishermen's Regatta, and took part in the Beating of the Sea Bounds ceremony. In July 2004 she escorted the Royal National Lifeboat Institutions lifeboat carrying Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Philip and the Duke of Kent from the new RNLI College to the Royal Marines depot at Hamworthy.

2005 marked the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and Tom Sherrin became one of the marshall boats at the International Fleet Review in the Solent, and the International Festival of the Sea in Portsmouth Harbour. Here, in company with MVS Poole's other launch Avocet, she was escort boat for MVS craft Londinium 1 carrying the Prince Michael of Kent, President of the service.

2007 saw her first attendance at the Bournemouth Air Festival, laying marker buoys and patrolling the exclusion zone between Bournemouth and Boscombe piers during the Red Arrows air display. Later that year, she participated in the POOLSPILL oil spill response exercise, towing, deploying and tending inflatable booms.

In April 2008, she took part in the Safety of Life at Sea joint exercise in the Solent. Later that year she was used to for two Committal of Ashes services and again assisted with the Bournemouth Air Festival. December saw her participation in the first Flotilla of Lights event alongside Poole Quay.

In 2009 a two month refit saw the overhaul of the engine, and replacement of after deck timbers. In August she was once again participating at the Bournemouth Air Festival and won second prize in the Flotilla of Lights at the quay.

In May 2010, the 'Arripaye' gig was rowed from Penzance to Poole for charity, and Tom Sherrin proudly escorted her to the quay. October saw the Poole Harbour Commissioner's twin exercises FIRE SCOUT and POOLSPILL, in which she participated.

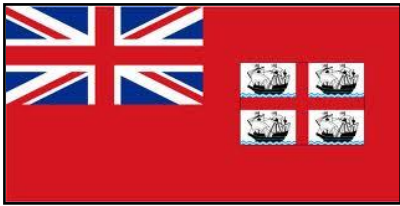
2011 saw the building of the Twin Sails Bridge in Poole which provided several opportunities to act as a safety and patrol boat. She also took part in a moving 70th anniversary commemorative service in May, taking participants to lay a memorial wreath at the spot in Poole Harbour where the flying boat Maia was bombed and sunk during the Second World War. Later that year she again took part in both the Bournemouth Air Festival and the Flotilla of Lights.

March 2012 saw the opening ceremony of the Twin Sails Bridge, and as a boat with a long history of service to Poole and the surrounding waters, Tom Sherrin was invited to join the flotilla of craft taking part in the ceremony.



The Defaced Ensign

Vessels registered in British Protectorates and dependencies, and some Commonwealth realms, as well as a limited few organisations, are granted the privilege of flying a Red Ensign defaced with the badge of their organisation or territory. Trinity House is one such organisation, and Tom Sherrin proudly flew the Trinity House ensign during her days of service in Poole Harbour.



Trinity House



MVS

When she departed for Alderney, the actual flag that had been flown on Tom Sherrin was saved and can now be seen on the wall of Storm Restaurant in Poole High Street. The restaurant is owned and run by a previous Tom Sherrin coxswain, who now fishes in Poole waters to provide the fresh seafood served to his customers.

When she returned to Poole, and was chartered to the MVS, Tom Sherrin became eligible to fly the MVS Defaced Ensign. It is not known how many vessels have qualified to sail under two different Defaced Ensigns, but undoubtedly there are very few if any other boats to have enjoyed such a rare privilege.



Tom Sherrin – The future

Although a much loved vessel, Tom Sherrin is showing her age and requires considerable attention to maintain her in a seaworthy condition. An ongoing work program repairs any damage, wear and tear and rot in the wooden structure as required. Members of the MVS donate their time and effort to assist with her upkeep but National Lottery funding is vital to complete the more major tasks.

Amongst important tasks to be undertaken is the replacement or refurbishment of the wheelhouse roof, toe rail and sections of the hull woodwork. The save-all which collects oil and water leakages from the engine requires replacing. A chain locker for the anchor chain should also be fitted and the engine requires a major overhaul.

The MVS is committed to ensuring that this vessel, which means so much to so many people, is restored to her former glory and continues to be a frequent sight in the waters of Poole. Together with the support of the National Lottery, we hope to achieve this aim.

Acknowledgements

Bournemouth Daily Echo
Poole Harbour Commissioners
Poole Pilots
Poole Museum
Poole Maritime Trust

Update January 2017

Tom Sherrin was taken to the International Boat College in Boathouse No.4 at Portsmouth's Historic Dockyards in December 2015, where she was surveyed whilst awaiting the outcome of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a comprehensive re-fit.

The IBTC is itself Lottery Funded and trains volunteers and students in traditional carpentry skills to work on wooden boats. There are a number of boats in various stages of renovation, including Alec Rose's Lively Lady, Graham Knott's Dolly Varden, St Ayles skiffs and a Motor Gun Boat.

Good news came in September when the HLF granted MVS Poole nearly £47,000. Firstly, work has taken place stripping out most of the moveable items prior to painting the interior of the hull. The old wiring has been removed and the engine prepared for lifting. The next stage will be the repair of the deck substructure, involving several new beams and section of carlines and beams-helves and start rebuilding the cockpit.

Later work includes: a new deck sheathed in glass twill cloth and epoxy and the hull painted; renewing Samson posts; replacing old plywood in the wheelhouse and making a few modifications to the exterior.

If you think you could help and would like to volunteer for some of the work please contact Nigel Barrow (Poole MVS) on 07780 112548 or nigel.barrow@mvs.org.uk

We are hoping Tom Sherrin will be as good as new by 2017/18 when once more she will return to Poole MVS and recommence her duties as a training vessel, patrolling Poole Harbour and helping with local and community events such as Harry Paye Day and the Bournemouth Air Festival.

Any member of the public can visit the IBTC in Boathouse 4 for free, just ask at the normal entrance desk to the Historic Dockyards. A tour of the various works in progress occurs twice a day and upstairs there are numerous interesting displays and activities plus a restaurant and coffee bar.

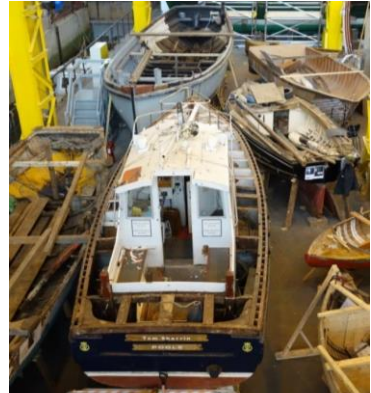
For more information about MVS Poole and IBTC activities go to:

www.mvspoole.org.uk

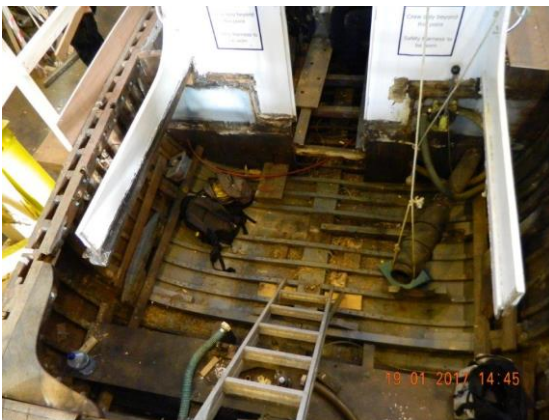
www.ibtcportsmouth.co.uk



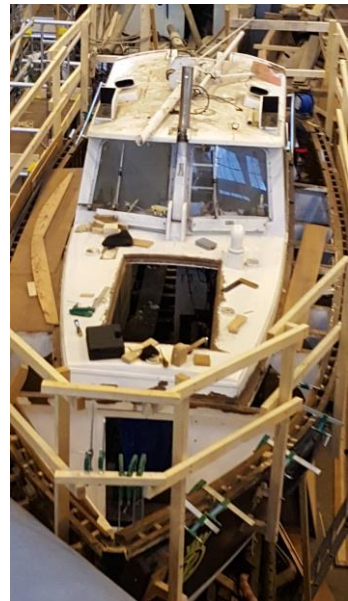
**Boathouse 4, International
Boatbuilding College, Portsmouth
historic Dockyard**



**Tom Sherrin awaiting
restoration**



Cockpit stripped out



**Engine hatch removed to
facilitate engine lifting**

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