Obituary
Captain David Smith OBE FNI RN

It is with regret that we report the passing of Captain David T Smith OBE FNI RN, Elder Brother of Trinity House, who died in Malta on 23rd March 2013, after a short illness at the age of 86. He was sworn as an Elder Brother in 1976 and retired from employment, in February 1992. However, he remained actively engaged with the Corporation’s work and aims as a member of the Court until his death.

David Smith first went to sea in 1942 when he joined the Cadet Training Ship HMS Conway and his first appointment in the Royal Navy was as a Midshipman RNR at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. His first sea appointment was to HMS Rodney. Most of his naval career, spanning some 32 years was spent afloat, in no fewer than 24 of His and Her Majesty’s ships. This was concluded in 1976 when as Commodore Amphibious Warfare to the Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships he took up his duties as an Elder Brother and member of the Board of Trinity House (which next year commemorates 500 years since its grant of a charter by Henry VIII).

He served for three and a half years with the Pilotage Committee before being re-assigned to the Lights Executive. In addition he was a member of the Department of Trade Working Group on Channel Routeing.

From 1978 to 1987 he was Managing Director of the Trinity House Marine Consulting Organisation, Dioptric Limited, concurrent with the post of Director of Aids to Navigation, assumed in 1979.

In January 1987 he became Chief Executive of the Trinity House Lighthouse Service Board and Director of Personnel a post later re-designated Managing Director, Operations. On termination of this appointment in November 1990 he assumed responsibility for International Liaison (including IALA), the Trinity House Cadet Training Scheme and for the Trinity House Deep Sea Pilotage function under the Pilotage Act, 1987.

He was made Vice Chairman of the Trinity House Lighthouse Board in May 1988 and on election to the office of Rental Warden in June 1991 he also became Vice Chairman of the Board of the Corporation.

From time to time David Smith sat as Trinity Master/Nautical Assessor to the Admiralty and Appeal Courts of the Royal Courts of Justice for the hearing of marine causes and wrote an informative monograph on these unique duties.
In addition he held a number of honorary appointments with maritime charities and was Chairman and Governor of The Foudroyant Trust, Deputy Chairman of the Seamen’s Hospital Society and was a Member of the Council of The Marine Society. Following retirement he was retained as a non-executive member of the Board of Trinity House and continued his charitable activities for the Corporation for a number of years.

Captain Smith was an active member of the Examiners (Navigational) Committee, the Committee within Trinity House which determines navigational policy and makes recommendations as appropriate to the Lighthouse Board. The Committee is also responsible for making decisions in respect of local aids to navigation in pursuance of the Corporation's responsibilities in this area. He regularly undertook inspections of both Trinity House and local aids to navigation, in particular he was keen to participate at a practical level in new developments. Many a day was spent in carrying out observations of buoys in the Cork Hole off Harwich and many a night in viewing changes to lights at lighthouses and major floating aids.

In 1985 Captain Smith succeeded Captain David Cloke as Chairman of the Examiners (Navigational) Committee. He served in this capacity until 1987. During his time as Chairman he undertook a number of critical reviews. Although completed by 1979 in the waters under Trinity House jurisdiction, the introduction of the IALA Buoyage System was continuing in some areas and the advice of Trinity House was being sought on a regular basis at international level.

He was closely involved in the revision of the buoyage in the Approaches to Harwich Harbour when the approach channel was dredged to allow deeper draught vessels into Felixstowe.

Throughout his time on the Examiners (Navigational) Committee David Smith was a regular representative at the United Kingdom Safety of Navigation Committee (UKSONC) and also the earlier Anglo French Safety of Navigation Group (AFSONG). The latter was established to review Ships’ Routeing in the English Channel following the Amoco Cadiz accident in 1978. One consequence of the incident was the establishment of the Casquets Traffic Separation Scheme where the Channel Light Vessel was established to mark the Western End, and the East Channel Light Float marked the Eastern End.

In 1976 he took on the Chairmanship of The Foudroyant Trust. Foudroyant then being used as a training ship in Portsmouth harbour. In 1987 it was decided to stop using the ship for training and start very necessary repair and renovation work.
After much research and discussion, he decided that the best place for this work to be carried out was Hartlepool. In July 1987 he took the risk of spending all the funds the Trust then had to hire a submersible barge to take the ship from Portsmouth to Hartlepool.

Repair and maintenance of this historic ship then became his main preoccupation and he was dedicated to the objective of restoring her to her former glory. Her original name of *Trincomalee* was restored in 1992; he remained chairman of the ‘new’ HMS Trincomalee Trust and personally oversaw all the very detailed work of restoring the ship ensuring that all the repair and replacement work was carried out correctly and that wherever possible her original timbers were retained. This meant frequent and lengthy visits from his home in Southsea to Hartlepool. The hours he gave to this project, all on a voluntary basis, are almost beyond counting. Under David Smith’s chairmanship, The Trust raised more than £10.5million for the work, it took eleven years, at least 750,000 man-hours of skilled work were needed, and over £8million was pumped into the local economy in wages and purchases. This restoration, which retained more than 60% of the original fabric of the ship, turned a rotting hulk into an award-winning maritime attraction of national importance which has subsequently been recognised by the inclusion of the Ship in the Core Collection of the National Register of Historic Vessels in the UK. Also in 2010, the ship became the first affiliate of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

David Smith retired as chairman in 2000, after 24 years in the post, by which time restoration was largely complete, and handed over to Colonel Michael Stewart who had been his vice-chairman. David was then advanced to the position of President of the Trust, so retaining an involvement in the ship for which he had done much.

*Trincomalee*, now fully restored, is a splendid testament to his long and dedicated work. This has been recognised by his appointment as OBE, by the World Ship Trust’s personal award to him in 2001 for the “*outstanding restoration and preservation of this historic ship*”, by the personal award of a Victory medal in 2011 by the Society for Nautical Research for “*the monumental achievement which is HMS Trincomalee*” and by the many hundreds of thousands of visitors who have flocked to Hartlepool since the ship opened as a visitor attraction.

*HMS Trincomalee, berthed afloat at Jackson Dock, within Hartlepool’s Maritime Experience.*

*Photograph © Christopher Armstrong.*