

**The Biennial 2008 Maritime Conference of the Franco-British
Lawyers' Society**



Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth

Ward Room - Dinner 20th June 2008

*Speech of Mr Simon John Horsington, Vice-President, Founder, Director – Association
des Jurists Franco-Britanniques.*

Lord Phillips, vice-amiral Tainguy, *attaché de défense*, Commodore Martin Alabaster, Commodore Neil Brown, President Hascher, and to you all, may I first and foremost thank you all, whether from France or from within the UK, for making this event such a resounding success.

Thank you Lord Phillips for such an entertaining speech not only giving us an insight into serving in the Royal Navy in Cyprus but also the vagaries of the shipping and commercial bar prior to your distinguished judicial career. It is rare for us in the Society to hear you at an event in English. We much appreciate your longstanding support to the society and its events. May I particularly thank you for your material support to Consultations Gratuites, a free French law advice centre in Islington, London which I mentioned at our annual reception in January in the House of Lords. We wish it every success.

On a personal note I saw the name Nichols Phillips QC in 1978 when I was in pupillage – my first read of a leading counsel’s exchange opinion – maritime of course. Then in 1994 Sir Nicholas had the ... I leave him to insert the noun - to have me in his team for 2 mock trials for the open day in the Court of Appeal Paris organised by President Myriam Ezratty (later to be the Society’s President. Lord Phillips had the great advantage of a wig to take of to differentiate between the trial proper “on” & his explanation of what was happening “off”. Incidentally his was the only “foreign” team to hit French TV News – more colour, than the teams of the other 8 countries present. Since that time Lord Phillips has been critically present and participated on key Society occasions – Commodore Martin Alabaster may I say that this is QED to-day thanks to your kind invitation.

To-day this Second Biennial Maritime Colloquium would not have been possible without the kind permission of Commodore Martin Alabaster, and, Sir, we must give a special thanks to you for your hospitality and generosity of spirit. We must also state that those officer cadets at the reception were most impressive and their French was impeccable. Not only in 2006 at the Inaugural colloquium at the French Naval College with his excellent presentation in French, but also on-site for organising this event our gratitude goes particularly to Commander Joe Turner. It also goes to Lt Harriet Morris and all those involved at the college, particularly our guides on visiting the college. Any cross border event requires great skill and patience and we have all benefitted from their excellence.

This excellence extends from the reception and visit of the college last night with thanks to the archivists, to organising the speakers, whether legal or scientific (including the remarkably lucid analysis on climate change) who made the substance of the day and whose thought provoking contributions will enhance our website www.fbls.org. This is so important for us as we are building our base for educational access and eminence of speakers such as yourselves is critical. Might I say we have along association with the University of London and for the 30th anniversary at the Sorbonne of the double Maitrise in Law the FBLs helped fund individual participants.

On a personal note you may wonder why born in Worcestershire as far from the sea as possible I should be interested in things maritime – other than canoeing in the River Severn – after you have made your canoe. I did sea canoe off Wormshead Gower Peninsula and realised that the sea is unforgiving particularly the pull into the Irish sea.

Perhaps in the genes – after all the family originally came to England in 3 small boats to Ebbsfleet – now known as the first train stop on the Eurostar after Kings Cross – then an arrival point in 449 for 2 brothers – Hengist & Horsa and their followers. The Horsingtons then drift from Kent to Wessex (Somerset, Dorset, Devon) and farm I like numbers and such things If you add a 1 at the end you get 4491 and invert it you get 1944 and the next trip but this time to the continent, 6th June, Normandy and this was my father in Special Service 46 Commando under Lt Col Campbell HARDY – later to head up the Royal Marines – friend of the Captain General, the Duke of Edinburgh. I am not sure which were the larger – the Anglo-Saxon boats of 449 or the landing craft of 1944.

More illustrious are the distaff/maternal genes the Brace side. Notably from Hereford, equally distant Rear-Admiral Sir Edward BRACE (portrait National Maritime Museum) in RN 1784 to 1843 almost 60 years dying in post as Commander-in-chief, Nore. Flag-captain to Admiral CORNWALLIS he held commands in the Mediterranean until the end of the war with France. Then involved in bombarding Algiers he gave to the citizens of Worcester a cannon from there which is still on exhibit in The Guildhall Worcester. For myself I was interviewed for his college in 1965 in Worcester by a young Commander who had drawn a short straw – BRNC 2 years, supply and secretariat and Bar. I confess envy, deepest envy meeting Commodore BROWN and hearing he has had command, recently been in Afghanistan and does legal work - barrister and all.

We must extend our thanks to Commodore Neil Brown, Director Naval Legal Services, To do so is to mention the key to this event. Without him this event would not have moved forward. He has had that extraordinary ability to achieve much appearing to do so with great facility and calm. I have had great good fortune to deal with him, an Ulsterman. We have been impressed before by those from Northern Ireland following our first colloquium supported by our patron Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Sir Brian Kerr in April 2007 as my French colleagues here can testify. They felt at ease with the welcome of the judiciary and lawyers in Belfast at the Inn of Court and Stormont dinner plus the beguiling countryside of County Antrim and Bushmills...

And as I draw to a close I must say how disappointed Contre-amiral LEPEU was not be here. He had to undergo urgent surgery & is now beginning to improve. He wished us all a successful day and you all well, He introduced me to Ier Commissaire Jean-Louis FILLON, who also wishes us well and regrets being unable to be present. To these important believers in Franco – British maritime relations and issues we owe the origins of this colloquium. To their impetus we must add for our origins our thanks to the hospitality of Commandant Jean-Loup VELUT, Director of the Ecole des Officiers de la Marine at Lanveoc-Brest and the support of Commodore Fraser RN (now retired but active as a judge) and Mme Françoise Odier, Présidente honoraire de l'Association Française du Droit Maritime for our inaugural colloquium. That first colloquium was held under the aegis of our patron M Guy Canivet and with a reception at the Citadelle of Brest by the Préfet Maritime de l'Atlantique. To both and all those who supported us, we owe our thanks.

For myself I have to thank all of my colleagues who have attended, each of whom has given me support and particularly President Dominique Hascher. I must reiterate our thanks to our sponsors and particularly Xavier Macdonald and also Andrew Grey (former alumni of this college) of Holmans in London, Paris and Rouen.

It would be unseemly to say I have kept the best to last. BUT it has been a pleasure and honour for the society to have the support of Vice-amiral TAINGUY both in the past and for this event. Commodore Neil Brown and he met for the first time at the Reform Club. Unfortunately I was not too mobile and unusually late as host. On my arrival I rapidly was made aware that they had already met and covered the major issues. That demonstrated

to me the reality of Franco-British maritime rapport between two committed and experienced mariners.

Recently with His Excellency Ambassador Maurice GORDAULT-MONTAGNE with vice-amiral TAINGUY was most kind to Lord Hope and myself at the residency. We extend our thanks to the Ambassador for hosting a dinner at the residence next year to support the society and its charitable educational aims in the Prix Universitaire: Entente Cordial et Jour-J Liberation fund – this assists individual young law students and lawyers – last year an exchange of 8 lawyers from Ecole des Avocats Lyon to Birmingham its twin city for practical experience. We wish to do more and with the help indicated we will.

The meeting between Vice-amiral TAINGUY and Commodore Neil BROWN showed me that in Franco-British Naval Relations a civilian is not always necessary. When I arrived, regrettably late not a usual personal characteristic I realised all had been done and was set fair. There was more meeting of minds in that 20 minutes than probably subsequently. AND so we are pleased to have the inestimable support of Vice-amiral TAINGUY as we plan the 3rd Biennial Maritime Colloquium for 2010 in France and both Vice-amiral TAINGUY and myself hope to see you there.

JE VOUS REMERCIE TOUS POUR VOTRE SOUTIEN A
L'ASSOCIATION ET SES OBJECTIFS. NOUS VOUS SOMMES
TOUJOURS TRES RECONNAISSANTS – ET BIEN SUR NOUS
ESPERONS DE VOUS REVOIR AU PROCHAIN COLLOQUE
MARITIME FRANCO-BRITANNIQUE A PARIS EN 2010.