

Mike Stammers

Michael K. Stammers died on 30 January 2013, aged 69 after a battle with cancer. His museum career began as Curator of Folk Life at Warwick County Museum, but in January 1969 he arrived in Merseyside where he was to spend the rest of his long and distinguished career. He began as a curator in the maritime history department of Liverpool Museum, and played a key role in the development of the renowned Merseyside Maritime Museum, established in 1980. He became its first keeper, a post which he held until his retirement in 2003.

He was the author of many books and articles. His research interests and scholarship ranged as widely as his insatiable curiosity.

He had a strong public service ethos, continuing to answer a steady stream of enquiries from both colleagues and the public. In return, colleagues would receive emails with gems he had unearthed in libraries and archives, passing on his discoveries with a generosity of spirit.

His expertise and experience were sought by numerous distinguished bodies, and he served on committees for the International Congress of Maritime Museums, the Council of the Society for Nautical Research, the International Commission for Maritime History and National Historic Ships Committee, as well as more locally to Merseyside a director of the Wincham Preservation Society. He was honorary curator of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club, and was on the editorial board of *Maritime Wales*, as well as deputy editor of the *Falkland Islands Journal*.

David Fleming, Director of National Museums Liverpool said: "Mike Stammers was a terrific maritime historian of true international stature. Even after his retirement he stayed close to National Museums Liverpool, not least as our Emeritus Keeper of Maritime History, an honour held by only a handful of people. He will be much missed by his friends and colleagues at NML.

His long and distinguished association with the Falkland Islands grew through his interest in the *Jhelum*, a ship as important to Liverpool's history as to that of the Islands. Detailed recording and stabilising of the hulk took several seasons, resulting in a classic study of meticulous scholarship with John Kearon, *The Jhelum. A Victorian Merchant Ship (1992)*. The land archaeology also caught his attention. In a brief visit with John Smith, former Curator of the Falkland Islands Museum, lasting no more than a couple of hours he had identified, and accurately sketch-planned the key elements of the first British garrison at Port Egmont on Saunders Island. He also gave unstinting support, help and advice to John and Joan Spruce when they were trying to establish what is now Stanley Museum in Britannia House.

A former colleague at NML, Paul Browne who visited the Falkland Islands with a somewhat accident-prone Mike in 1987 on the *Jhelum* project, recalled a lighter side. On the last day of recording the *Jhelum*, Mike managed to drop

his meticulous and beautifully detailed survey drawings into the freezing waters of Port Stanley. Another day, Mike and colleagues miscalculated the tide tables in visiting a distant wreck, to find the tide in, so they built a raft out of flotsam, using two oil drums and timber and rope from a Landrover. Accomplishing the outward journey without mishap, on the return he missed his step and the raft pitched him into the shallow but freezing Falklands waters. A stiff drink restored his circulation and humour.

He was Deputy Editor of the Falkland Islands Journal since 1991 and the unstinting help he gave and friendship he bestowed to the editor over those years were invaluable. As recently as the week before he died he was checking and commenting on articles for this year's Journal.

In September 2012, when he learnt that his illness had returned and his time was limited, he reluctantly relinquished the deputy editorship of the Falkland Islands Journal with the comment, 'a bit of a bummer'. It summed him up – modest, self deprecating - with a cheerful and approachable manner which belied the depth and breadth of his learning. He was universally respected and liked. With his passing the world of maritime studies is considerably the poorer. A great friend of the Falklands, he will be sorely missed.

Rob Philpott and Jim McAdam