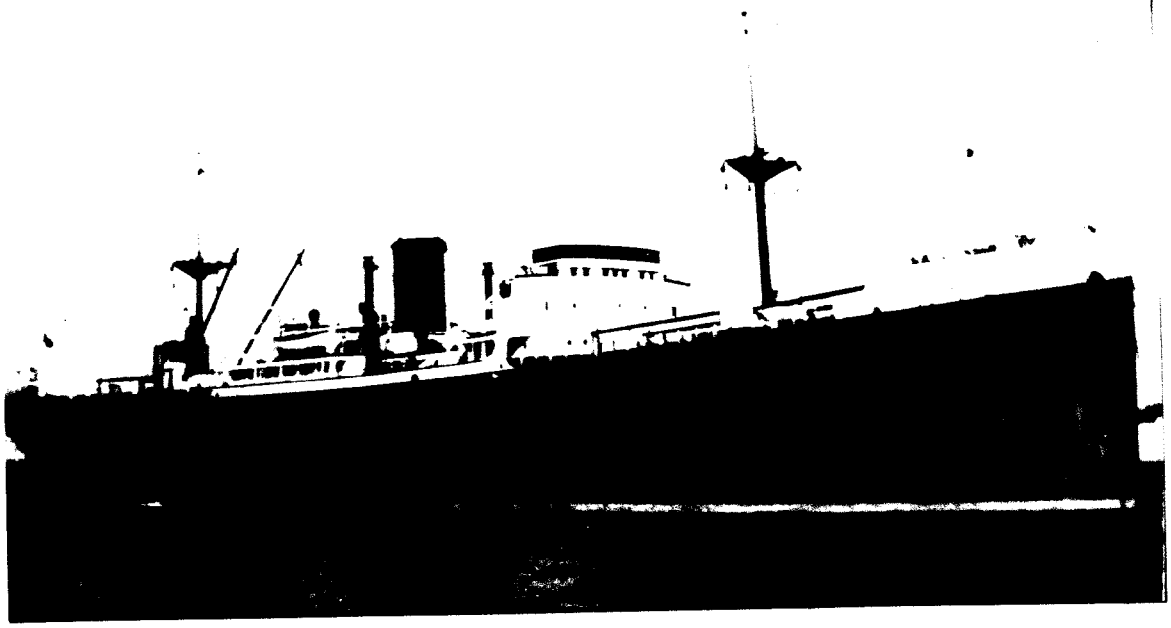
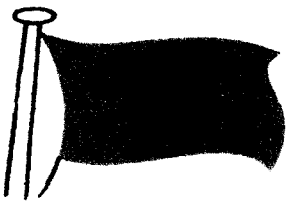


m.v. Atlantic City (3)

The last voyage after 21 years under Reardon Smith ownership

By Alec Osborne



M.V. "ATLANTIC CITY (3)"

The officers on the voyage were:-

Captain:	Harry Lloyd Evans from Newcastle Emlyn.
Chief Officer:Eric	Tickner from Sussex
2nd Officer:	Mr Radford from Bargod Wales.
Radio Officer:	Mr Bull from Liverpool
Chief Engineer:	Alec Osborne from Pendeen, Cornwall
2nd Engineer:	Willy Sheers from Hull
3rd Engineer:	Mr Johnson from Sunderland
4th Engineer:	Phil Curtis from Cardiff
Junior Engineer (1)	George from Germany.

The voyage:-

From	To	Cargo	Miles
Dover	Falmouth	Light Ship	369
Falmouth	Norfolk (Virginia U.S.A.)	Light Ship	3,690
Norfolk	Chiba (Tokyo Bay)	Grain Cargo	10,639
Chiba	Yokohama (to re-erect shifting boards)	Light Ship	23
Yokohama	Geraldton (Australia)	Light Ship	4,376
Geraldton	Malta (via Aden for bunkers & Suez Canal)	Grain Cargo	7,242
Malta	Port Said	Light Ship	936
Port Said	Tokyo (via Aden for oil fuel bunkers)	Salt Cargo	7,359
Tokyo	Yokohama (to erect grain shifting boards)	Light Ship	18
Yokohama	Walloroo	Light Ship	5,470
Walloroo	London (via Aden for bunkers & Suez Canal)	Grain Cargo	10,876
London	Hull	Part Grain Cargo	220
Hull	Cardiff	Light Ship	617

It was September 1961 and I had been home on leave for about 4 months when I had an urgent telegram to join the "Atlantic City" at Dover. It was a long telegram saying that the vessel was discharging cargo at Rotterdam and the sailing Chief Engineer Steve Willis had fallen down the stairs in the steering gear (room) flat and broken his ankle and had to be paid off. Mr. Tom Major was the company Engineer Superintendent attending the vessel at Rotterdam and because of the accident would act as Chief Engineer and sail with the ship to Dover. The Second Engineer was Mr Sheers and he didn't have any Engineer's Certificates, only a permit to sail on the "Atlantic City" for that voyage as Second Engineer.

On the 16th September I got the train to Dover arriving there about 13.00 hours, I reported to the Agents Office for information on the ships arrival in the anchor, where I was told she was running late and to call back at 16.00 hours.

I went to the main street to look for a place to have lunch and met Gerald Olds, a school pal from Pendeen. He was working for Richard Henry Matthews of Pendeen at the time and was in Dover to meet one of Richard Henry's coaches which had been on a trip to France with school children. The coach was being driven by Jack Osborne who had been driving for most of the day in France and Gerald was going to relieve him and drive the coach to Pendeen. Gerald and myself went for lunch and spent most of the afternoon together, the last I saw of Gerald was of him driving the coach through Dover heading for Pendeen with him and the children, on board, waving good bye.

I went to the Agents Office and the ship was getting later and later and at 20.00 hours he arranged a launch to take me to the ship which was in the middle of the English Channel. When I got aboard Mr. Major was in a bit of a mess, the main engine lubricating oil press was only 17 P.S.I where it should be 25 P.S.I. and the No.2 generator had blown a cylinder head gasket and they could not get the Petter diesel generator started. Mr. Major told Captain Harry Lloyds Evans (Dai) that the ship could not sail with only one generator and to go to Dover anchorage to fix the No.2 generator. The Engineers set to and fitted a new gasket, by this time, it was morning. Not being very happy about the lubricating oil pressure Mr. Major said the ship should go to Falmouth and he was coming with the ship to try to sort it out.

I signed on the Atlantic City in the Straits of Dover on the 16th September 1961.

We arrived at Falmouth Dry Dock and the ship tied alongside a quay. Shore fitters started adjusting the bearings in the main engine, taking out the main top and bottom bearing shims to reduce the flow of oil out of them. I overhauled the engine driven main engine lubricating oil pump and adjusted the pump valves to the makers clearances. This work took seven days. At the weekend I went home to Pendeen to see Gladys, my sister, and Jack Ellis, her husband. Jack drove me back to Falmouth along with my sister and their sons, John and David, to visit and see the ship. They spent about two hours aboard.

Mr. Major was highly annoyed that this lub oil problem was not reported by John Dutton, the last sailing engineer, and no engine log book had been kept for months so we could not look back in the records to see what went on during the last voyage nor no signs of when the lub oil pump problem started. Tom Major was so angry that he told head office to send John Dutton to Falmouth to write up and sort out the log books. John spent four days at Falmouth sorting this lot out with no explanation of when the oil dropped to this pressure. Being September the weather, at Falmouth was really nice and it was pleasant to walk ashore and have a couple of pints.

After bearing adjustments the pressure rose to above 20 P.S.I. and I agreed that I would take the ship away and investigate into the Lubricating pressure problem while on the voyage. We were bound for Norfolk, Virginia to load a cargo of grain for Japan. The passage across the Atlantic Ocean was not bad but The Engineers were having problems purifying the engine heavy fuel oil due to a considerable amount of water in the oil. The "Atlantic City", being an old ship, had double bottom tanks which were used for ballast water and fuel oil and ballast water had been left in the tanks and fuel oil mixed with it. I was getting concerned about the amount of fuel onboard because there was a large amount of water coming out of the purifiers, also the purifiers were working overtime and had to be overhauled quite often, because of the sludge mixture of oil and water. By the

time we got to the U.S.A. this problem had sorted itself out. Another problem I had was that there was a heavy loss of lubricating oil from the main engine system. I had to run down 100 gallons to the ME sump every three days. Because of no past log books and with all the Engineers new to the ship I had no idea what the lubricating should be, but I knew things were not right with the oil system.

We sailed from Norfolk and the Third Engineer Alderson had dismantled the No.2 Mirrles diesel generator before arrival in the USA to fit new piston rings and grind in the valves and I told him the engine must be ready to use for the Panama Canal passage because I didn't have much faith in the Petter (No.3) generator even if it was more powerful than the Mirrles engines it was difficult to start, and it was noisy. On the day of arrival at Panama the No.2 generator was run on test and it was found that it would not produce no more than half power, it was too late to do work on the engine so we went through the Canal using the Nos 1 and 3 generators. When we got clear of the Canal I went over the No.2 generator with the 3rd Engineer and found that he had set the engine timing incorrectly so once the timing was reset the engine produced full power with no problems. Things were getting sorted out now and I started to look for the reason of the lubricating pressure and the heavy lose of main engine lubricating oil. One morning three days out from the canal I went on the engine room tank tops examining the pipe work which are all tightly nested together with small flow of water to the port aft engine room bilge and I could see a light film of oil on the water, tracing it back to its source I found a steady drip of oil from one of the pipe flanges in the suction line to the ME driven lubricating oil pump. So it was planned, with Captain Evans, that the next day we stop the ship, this would require running the stand by ME jacket and lubricating pumps, while the joint was being renewed in the leaking flange. All went well and when we restarted the engine and changed over to the ME lub oil pump the oil pressure was so high that the relief valve on the pump was adjusted to bring the pressure down to 26 p.s.i., it was better than a new engine. The lubricating oil consumption was the normal loss for that engine, so this lot was sorted out.

About a week out from Japan the ship was in a storm and was not making much progress, heavy seas were pounding the starboard side and into the boiler room water tight door. The locking lugs to this door were not securely locked and a small amount of sea water was passing the door joint and leaking into the boiler room. The scupper pipe for this room ran down to the engine room bilges and through the years had become choked with dirt etc. it was not taking the water away from the boiler room floor. There was a 15 inch step to the engine room and the water built up and at 3 o'clock in the morning the water overflowed out of the Boiler room door, which was closed but was not water tight, and the sea water came pouring down onto the main electric switchboard which was directly below. Luckily there was a canopy over the switch board and the Electrician and some Engineers got some shower curtains to cover the switch board and protect it. The water was sloshing about and landed on the No.2 generator which was running and this blacked out, and blacked out the ship. The No.1 generator was started and after getting things running Captain Evans turned the ship to get the starboard side to leeward to enable the boiler room door to be fixed and get the boiler room bailed out. So we were down to two generators again. After examining and testing the No.2 generator sea water had got into the armature and it had burnt out. Nothing could be done about this onboard the ship and this had to be rewound ashore.

This accident was party due to the engineers sailing on the ship in the past there was so much exhaust gas entering the boiler room from leaking joints in the main engine exhaust pipes and boiler tube cover doors that it was almost un-enterable and was not inspected the way it should have been. If this problem had been reported to the Cardiff Office these joints would have been renewed, even if not at one time but over a period of time and also the scupper pipe should have been cleaned and cleared.

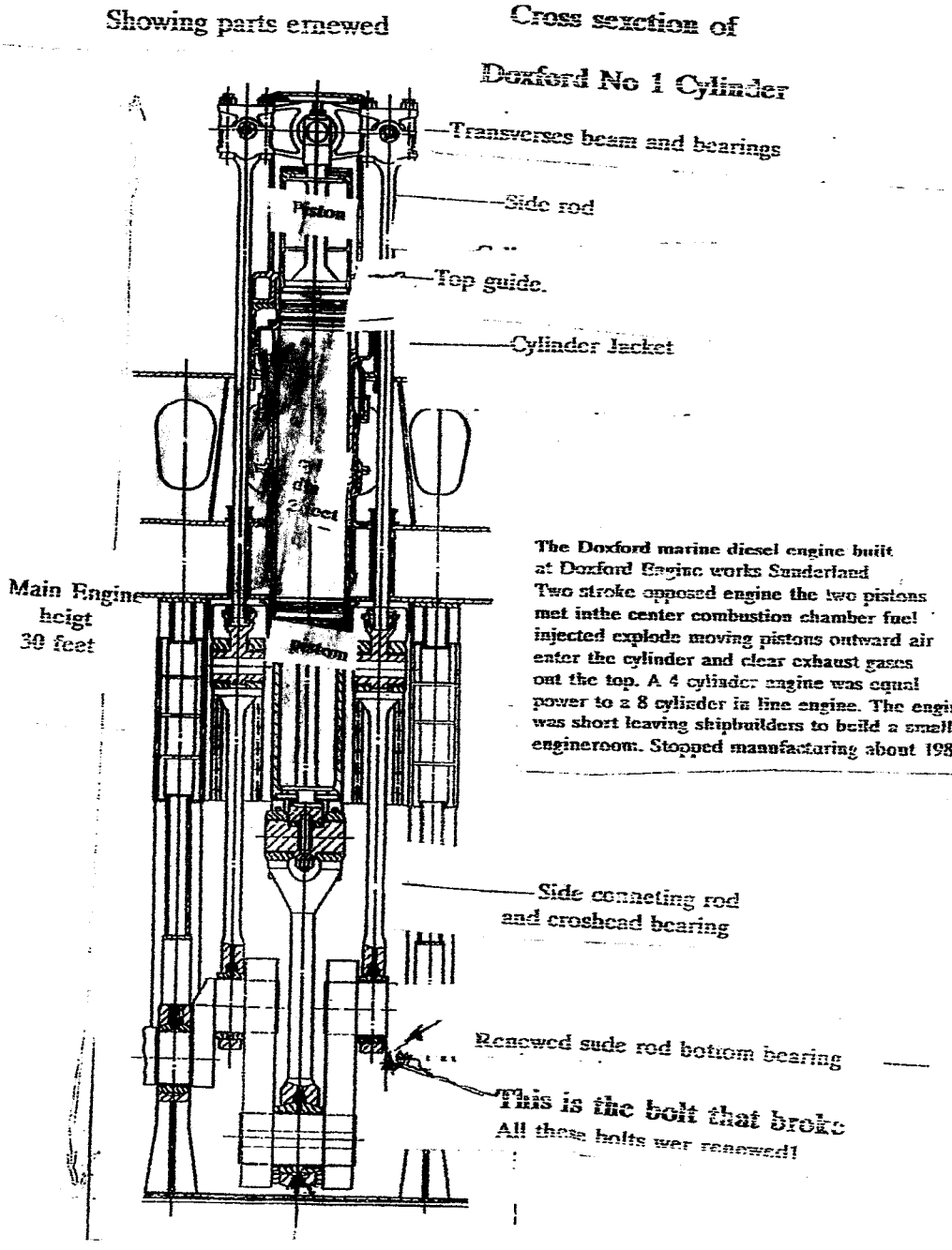
Nearing Japan I was called out of bed to look at the exhaust boiler which was not producing steam and loosing pressure. The engine was changed over to run on diesel oil because there was not sufficient heat in the boiler pressure to heat the heavy oil. I then went to see what the problem was and inspecting the tubes through the inspection I could see some boiler tubes leaking around the tube plate. I checked the boiler water gauge glass in the engine room and there was water in it but when the gauge glass was blown through no water entered the glass. This gauge was connected to extended pipes from the boiler so I assumed the pipes were chocked. The gauge glass attached to the boiler in the boiler room was tested and no water was in the glass so the boiler had run low with water and the tubes had over heated. The ships engineers removed the boiler inspection doors in Japan and expanded the boiler tubes but there was no sign of water leakage and no damage done.

The vessel sailed to Geraldton Western Australia to load a cargo of grain for Malta. When the ship got to Malta, Reardon Smith Superintendent Tom Major was on the quay with a full set of new boiler tubes, my report to head office caused a stir because the ship and boilers were 22 years old the assumed the tubes were corroded. Mr Major went into the boiler and sounded each tube with a test hammer, all were very sound and no further action was taken.

Whilst in Malta I went to visit my sisters neighbour Mrs Rendalle's daughter, Julie Stelfox and her husband Leslie. He was retired from the Royal Marines and was working for the British Embassy and stationed at Malta. Christine and Sandra, their daughters, were with them and they had a nice home situated near a yacht marina.

Our next orders were to sail from Malta to Port Said to load a cargo of salt for Japan. A day and a half out of Malta the main engine broke down whereas No.1 cylinder side rod bottom end bolt broke and smashed that cylinder up. Luckily enough the second Engineer was just drinking his morning tea, which the second steward had brought to him, at seven o'clock at the main engine station and when he heard a noise from the engine he brought the controls to stop which prevented real serious damage. The engineers stripped out the running gear i.e. bearings and connecting rods and blanked off the fuel to that cylinder. Some sailors came and helped to lash the heavy parts from rolling around and damaging the ships structure and machinery if the ship should meet bad weather. All the running gear in the main engine was checked and found to be in good order. The work was completed by eleven o'clock that evening, so the main engine was now running on three cylinders and reduced power to prevent any main engine damage. On arrival at Port Said Tom Major came aboard to arrange new parts to be ordered from Doxford Sunderland the engine's builder which was about 9 tons in weight and flown to Cairo Airport and transported to the ship by truck. The Second Engineer Willy Sheers was in charge of this, he went to Cairo with a pile of Egyptian Pounds in his pocket for bribes (back handers) to those in charge of customs and airport officials to

enable a quick release of the spare parts or else they might not have been released for weeks. Tom also arranged for an engineering firm from Port Said to attend the ship to repair the damaged steelwork and weld the new plate work on the engine. All the repair work went well, we even renewed all of the side rods bottom end bearing bolts that came from the U.K. After repairs the next thing was an engine trial we should have asked the Dock Master but being tied up stern on in the Suez Canal it could disturb the canal side with the wake from the propeller, so with no officials around at two o'clock in the morning we held a slow speed trail which went off very well.



Center bottom End Bearing was knocking readjusted at Suez.

I only went ashore on one occasion which was with Tom Major, Jack Wright and Captain Evans. We went to a restaurant for a meal, which was all right, and then we went to a bar where a guy outside saying the belly dancers were just starting in the club. We thought we would have a look at this. After drinking beer for one and a half hours there was still no sign of the belly dancers and we had to go and get the launch to the ship so that was my only time ashore. The usual two bumboat men came on board, Sandy McNab and George Robie selling their wares, men's underwear in the best Egyptian cotton. Both these guys could speak the Welsh language and spoke to Captain Evans in Welsh as he was a Welsh speaker. Jack Wright, the Doxford Engineer, left the vessel for the UK.

Sailing through the Suez Canal a knocking noise was coming from the main engine No.1 cylinder. When the ship got to the Bitter Lakes in the canal where ships had to anchor to let the convoy of ships north bound to pass - since 1962 the canal has been widen to allow ships to pass each other which saves time and money to do the passage- we took the pistons out of the No.1 cylinder but could find no fault in that direction. When the ship got to Suez we had to go to anchorage so we sorted the fault which was the bottom end bearing of the centre rod crank. The Doxford Engineer had adjusted the bearing too tight not letting it to move in its shell. He had left the ship at Port Said.

Mr Major left the ship and we set sail for Tokyo calling at Aden for fuel oil bunkers. The main engine ran well.

Port Said
Lake Menzaleh
Railway to Jerusalem
Qantara
Ismailia
Railway to Cairo
8 Turks attacking Canal during Great War
9 The Biblical Land of Goshen
9a Moses camp before crossing Red Sea
10 Bitter Lakes
11 Track of Israelites crossing Red Sea
12 Sweet Water Canal
13 Railway from Suez to Cairo
14 Suez
15 Port Tewfik

The salt cargo was discharged at a berth in Tokyo. Captain Lemon Reardon Smith, Deck Superintendent, who was on a business trip to Japan visited the Atlantic City while the vessel was discharging the cargo. I had sailed with Captain Lemon, we did a 14 month voyage on the Indian City, when he was Chief Officer and I was Junior Engineer and a 4 month voyage on the same ship when he was master and I was 4th Engineer. He kindly invited Captain Evans, Ernie Tickner the mate and myself to a variety water show in one of Tokyo's famous theatres, on the stage there were spouts and shoots of water of different colours and many beautiful ladies dancing around the flowing water. It was an excellent display. The ship was booked to go to Australia to load a cargo of grain and after discharging the salt cargo the vessel went to Yokohama anchorage where a gang of men came to erect grain shifting boards in the cargo holds. These were rules from Australian stevedores that this work had to be carried out by shore labour not by the ships crew. Shifting boards are to prevent the grain from moving from port to starboard in heavy weather. These boards are built in the holds from the centre line running fore and aft and right to the top of the hold dividing the hold into two tanks. Grain moves similar to water and oil and in heavy weather it could shift and capsize the vessel..

The ship sailed for Australia and the orders were to go to Wallaroo, which is situated in the Spencer Gulf, South Australia the nearest major place is Adelaide. It was a small town, I had been there once before on the Houston City in 1953. In those days it never had a cinema, pictures were shown in the town hall with the projector in the room On the night the ship arrived a dance was arranged which was also held in the town hall. While I was there, at the same berth was a ship belonging to Watts Watts of London and the Chief Officer was Cedric Thomas's son Harvey from St Just. Harvey's father used to own the garage at the top of Nancherrow Hill in St Just. It was nice to see someone from home and have a chat.

Wallaroo had one street with some shops, one being a men's outfitters which was excellent for purchasing mens underwear. The owner was called Ken Read and I had met him on my previous visit. He liked to chat to people and would invite you to sit and have a glass of beer with him. Ken kept wallabies in the garden at the back of the shop he also had some snakes in cages. The two wallabies Ken had were quite playful but they had a nasty trick when they had had enough playing they would put their front paws around your neck, spring their back feet off the ground, and punch you in your private parts with great force which was very painful. In 1950 Ken took the Wallabies to Buckingham Palace for the Queen to see for some reason, that's what he told me. The underwear I bought off the bumboat man Sandy McNab in Port Said shrank so much I couldn't get them on - they must have been the very best Egyptian cotton! Ken told me that his ancestors came from Cornwall. While in Walloroo one afternoon,when I was in my cabin, Captain Evans telephoned me on the internal telephone to say that the Harbour Master Captain Ridely was in his room and wanted to know if I would like to go to the Rotary Club dinner that evening it was being held at Kadina, a town about 15 miles away. Captain Evans did not feel up to it that day. I said yes, anything for a change.

At six o'clock Captain Ridley rolled up in his limousine it could have been a Bentley car, it had large nice shiny brass head lamps mounted on the front mud guards. We drove off and on the way passed the town of Moonta. Several Pendeen and St Just miners, including my grandfather Noy, worked in the copper mines around there. I can remember my Aunt Annie saying that when she was a young girl her mother would get

be about the year of 1908. Approaching Moonta was like nearing St Just. The houses were close to each other with streets and terraces. Towns built by Australians are detached with plenty of space around each house, plenty of land in Australia. We had a nice dinner at the Rotary Club, good food and drink and plenty of speeches. At that time the pubs in South Australia shut at six o'clock in the evening, but we got friendly with the landlady of a hotel and if you ordered some food, like a few sandwiches, one could drink beer until nine o'clock in the evening. We used to go to the hotel about seven thirty and chat with the landlady's family until nine.

After loading the grain cargo which took about 9 days we set sail bound for U.K., the next port of call was Aden for oil fuel bunkers. The ship was in the Gulf of Aden, which is a busy place for shipping, when about six o'clock in the morning when the Second Engineer was doing his watch in the engine room he telephoned me to say that the Chief Officer had telephoned to say that he could not steer the ship, the electric steering gear had failed. Calling the electrician we went to the steering flat (room) and changed the port electric breaker to starboard and regained power to the steering engine. The fuse had failed in the port breaker, The Chief Office told me that the rudder had stopped at 10 degrees to port and the Atlantic City was steaming towards a large passenger liner luckily enough the steering gear was started in time and got the ship out of trouble. The ship bunkered and proceeded through the Red Sea, the Suez canal and the Mediterranean Sea to London where I was paid off on the 6th June and went home on leave. The ship went onto Hull, the final discharge port for the cargo. The ship lay in the dock at Hull until the 19th July waiting for business, there was a recession at that time and the company decided to lay the ship up in Cardiff Docks.

I signed on the Atlantic City again on the 20th July 1962 and the ship sailed for Cardiff with Captain Exton in command, he was a senior master with plenty of experience. We arrived off Lands End after breakfast time and he took the ship between Lands End and the Longships light house. I could see the waves breaking against the rocks. I was saying a few prayers that the old engine would not break down, things were running Ok and we steamed past Pendeen light house arriving in the Queens Dock Cardiff on 23rd July where the ship was laid up. The ship lay in the middle of the Queens Docks dock moored to buoys, one forward and one aft, and there was only a skeleton crew left on the ship. One of the lifeboats was used to ferry people to and from ship to shore. This was kept on the main deck and lifted in the water when required. One Saturday evening in August a full gale from the west blew up it came from the direction the bow was facing. The four deck apprentices who were standing by had gone ashore in the afternoon having had Saturday afternoon off. The only persons onboard were the Chief Officer Alley Prosser, two Arab donkeymen and myself. The apprentices tried to come back at eleven o'clock but the wind was blowing so hard it was impossible to get the boat to the shore so the Chief Officer told them to go to the Merchant Navy Hotel for the night. At midnight the storm got strong and the mooring ropes at the forward buoy started breaking, we onboard were helpless and much to our relief the wind dropped about four o'clock. When daylight came and we went forward to see the damage there was only one rope mooring the ship forward. All Sunday was spent putting out mooring ropes. I stood by the ship until September 1962 when the ship was dry docked and sold to Greek owners.

THE END