

newsletter



No. 101 — JUNE, 1978

s.s. "VICTORIA CITY" Built 1929.



s.s. "VICTORIA CITY"
Torpedoed North Atlantic, 2nd
December, 1940. 43 lives lost,
including Captain Longstaff. No
survivors.



m.s. "VICTORIA CITY"
Proceeding on maiden voyage
March 1955. Sunk in collision
Italian steamer 14.12.55.



Bird Life on the Cliffs

A WALK ALONG the sea cliffs in late June and early July always provides something of interest in the way of bird life. By that time the gulls and other sea-birds have well matured young, which are daily growing stronger and better feathered. The ledges on which the majority of these youngsters are reared often provide little scope for movement, and for the greater part of the day they are under the full glare of the sun. While the mentality of birds is a matter beyond our ken, we have often wondered why some gulls select much better nesting sites than others.

Within a few hundred yards of where these lines are being written, certain young gulls are confined to precarious stances high up the cliff face, while beneath them, not much above high-water mark, others have any amount of room at their disposal. Those on the lower strata are hatched amongst the big boulders, where, although not perhaps as safe from their natural enemies as the nestlings on the ledges, they command ample space, shade, and protection from the elements. Nature has her own way of doing things, but the sight of some of these immature gulls standing on tiny ledges with scarcely room to move, proves that she can be a hard mistress.

The more precarious sites often contain but one youngster, whereas on the lower and safer stances, families of two and three are common. In the case of buzzards, which are also cliff-nesting birds, I have known two youngsters to oust a third from the eyrie, so the young gulls possibly do the same, which may account for the number of solitary birds occupying small ledges.

During a heat wave the sun beats fiercely down on many of the young gulls, yet they get no water to drink. They are well fed, however, for their parents catch many small fish which they disgorge for them. Such fate seems an appalling hot-weather

diet from our point of view, yet the young gulls thrive on it. Fish-fry and sand-eels often appear in large shoals near the coast, and the gulls take heavy toll of them.

Young gulls which have arrived at the flying stage, indulge in wing practice before finally launching themselves into the air. After their initial flight they seem perfectly at home, swimming and capturing their own food like adults. In spring when the ploughs are at work inland, the gulls follow them in large flocks. They also fly to the grain fields in autumn.

Except in the case of the black-backed species, the predominating colours of adult gulls are white and pearl grey. Young gulls are brownish speckled, which makes them inconspicuous on the nesting ledges. For the first year of their lives they wear this plumage, which is then gradually displaced by that of the adult.

Nesting amongst the gulls one sees cormorants and shags. Many of these choose precipitous sites where their young have very confined spaces to rest on. The cormorants are industrious fishers, remaining under water for long periods in pursuit of their finny prey.

Other birds which inhabit the cliffs are the puffins and guillemots. They are uneasy creatures, never still for long. Puffins fly with quick wing-strokes, rather reminding one of grouse. They have a habit, however, of changing the speed of their wing-beats. A bird will fly out from the cliff for some distance, its wings going at about the pace of a blackcock's, then suddenly the beats quicken, and it flickers along with rapid strokes.

On some of the rocky islands where the gulls nest, you find oyster-catchers, and hear their piping notes. When flying inshore they glide on curved wings before alighting. Kestrels are usually in evidence

(continued overleaf)

Bird Life on the Cliffs continued

near the cliffs, for there are plenty of field voles and beetles on the grassy slopes. The cliff foxes feed on the beetles, being particularly fond of them. It is no unusual thing to find a fox's billet composed of nothing but the hard parts of beetles. Rabbits are ubiquitous, being found everywhere above high-water mark. They get thinned out by the foxes, and both ravens and jackdaws are not averse to a feed of young rabbit.

All day and every day, house-martins and swifts fly about the cliffs. The former, at any rate on those parts of the Cornish cliffs with which I am acquainted, build their mud nests beneath overhangs of rock, instead of under the eaves of houses. The swifts nest in the rock-crannies and chimneys, as they often do in the crag faces of the North country. Another small bird, the rock pipit, flits about the cliffs, where it secures plenty of insect food.

Now and then a peregrine flickers past on rapidly-beating wings. While this long-winged hawk will take sea-birds such as puffins, it undoubtedly prefers rock pigeons or homing birds when it can get them. There is no finer sight in Nature than the stoop of a wild peregrine. Although the latter can catch any bird that flies, it does not mind taking prey on the ground. A young rabbit on the cliff is easily swept up by a peregrine, and many a grouse has been picked out of the heather on Northern moors. Gulls appear to show little concern on the approach of a falcon.

At night the gulls are often clamorous. All through the hours of darkness some of them utter their cat-like cries. No doubt at times the cliff foxes disturb them, and take toll of any young birds that are within reach.

It is pleasant to be about the cliffs when the sun dips towards the horizon. We have seen some glorious sunsets from the Cornish coast. One such comes to mind, when the west was a marvel of colour, and a half moon hung in the darkening sky. From inland came the cry of a curlew, and suddenly twelve of the long-billed birds were silhouetted against the sunset as they glided down towards the shore. An oyster-catcher piped somewhere in the dusk, and a kestrel hovered on quivering wings in search of field voles. Gradually the light faded, and the moon alone cast its rays over land and sea, a perfect ending to a perfect summer's day.

Towards sunset, and again at dawn, is a good time to fish from the rocks. Just as the sun dips below the horizon, pollack often take a fly or a spinner well.

A stroll along the cliffs on a quiet moonlight night is always interesting. There is night as well as day movement amongst the birds. Bats hawk backwards and forwards in search of insects, and on the banks and

scrub undergrowth many glow-worms keep their tiny lamps brightly burning. Glow-worms always remind me of New Zealand, where they are extraordinarily plentiful. In the North Island there is a cavern known as the "Waitomo Cave", where thousands of glow-worms cling to the walls and roof.

Foxes breed in the cliffs and so do badgers, and you may chance to get a fleeting glimpse of both under the moon. The latter casts its light across the sea, forming a silvery track where the ripples glisten. From the cliffs by day can often catch sight of fish in the clear water. In autumn, when large shoals of fry come in close to the rocks, they are often followed by pollack or mackerel, and then, if you are lucky, you will see a massacre of the innocents on a grand scale. Such a sight is not easily forgotten. The big fish are utterly ruthless, and drive the terrified fry right out of the water on to terra-firma. I once saw this happen, and the mackerel themselves frequently fell amongst the rocks and seaweed, so savagely did they pursue their prey.

Seals are fairly plentiful off certain portions of the Cornish coast, and they are not exactly beloved by the professional fishermen on account of the herrings and other fish which they destroy. Seals are interesting creatures, but they undoubtedly consume quantities of food fishes. While most animals have their young in spring or summer, the seals breed in the autumn.

A Legacy, A Treasure and a Responsibility

*Freedom is our cherished legacy
from the past, our greatest
treasure of the present, and our
sacred responsibility to the
future.*

HOW WONDERFUL

How wonderful to find the one
Who makes life worth the living,
The one who's sweet and thoughtful
Seldom taking, always giving.
How wonderful to learn the days
Are brighter when you're sharing.
That there's no greater joy in life
Than living—trusting—caring.
How wonderful to know the art.
Of living for each other,
When we share them with another.

—Anon.

Our Uninvited Guest

WALTER WAS FIRST seen creeping around the ship on the evening of 22nd March, his presence was somewhat unexpected since the ship had sailed from Moji anchorage four days before.

Our stowaway was eventually apprehended the following morning by the second mate and a couple of the crew. The struggle was brief since Walter was obviously suffering from lack of rest, food and water. On being caught he was taken firmly in hand to the bridge, there to state his case before the master. However it soon became obvious that Walter was not going to talk indeed, he probably could not understand English since his only means of identification was Japanese.

It was decided that before any further steps were taken, he should be fortified and rested. Dishes of dhal and water were given to him and were eagerly received and consumed. Since his personal habits left a lot to be desired, cabin accommodation was considered unwise. In consequence, a large cardboard box was found and Walter, showing some reluctance, firmly guided into it.

He rested there for several hours before being allowed out, but his release was limited to the confines of the wheelhouse until he could be trusted. In the interim it had been decided that Walter would have to cross the Pacific Ocean with us since the captain refused to return to Japan. It was obvious that he could never make it on his own since the weather was too severe, and also we doubted his ability as a swimmer.

As the days have passed, Walter (our name for him since he will not speak) has become more familiar with us and is now allowed the freedom of the ship. He takes full advantage of this liberty, visiting the crew at work, sunbathing and lazing on the monkey island. He still spends most of his time on the bridge however, seemingly content just watching the world go by.

We must now decide whether we are going to hand him over to the U.S. authorities, who we believe are very harsh on illegal immigrants, or, whether we are going to smuggle him through.

POSTSCRIPT

Walter decided his future for himself when the vessel was several miles off the North American coast. He disappeared as he had joined us, quietly and alone. No word of thanks for his free passage was left nor were any really expected.

If perchance a new record is established in the Guinness Book of Records for a nonstop flight by a homing pigeon, i.e. Japan to North America, don't believe it, it's only our Walter.

R. G. HAYTON

Second Mate, m.v. Victoria City

A History of the Royal Merchant Navy School

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A POST-WAR problem was numbers. They had begun to decline as far back as 1925 when there were about 320 boys and girls. When the war began numbers increased and the Board of Management thought that there would be a considerable increase in number in the years following the war, and as it was, the school was already short of space. Therefore the Board, with financial help from the Merchant Navy Comforts Service, bought a property at Bexhill-on-Sea and started a junior school for 45 boys and 27 girls. In two years, this junior school, under Mr. J. J. Pritchard, was recognised by the Ministry of Education as "efficient". This junior school was successful from the educational point of view, but numbers were not maintained.

These difficulties were not peculiar to Bearwood; other institutions of similar type and foundation were in trouble and were not always able to deal with them. In 1949, The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution, a place of similar origin to Bearwood, could no longer finance its activities, closed its premises and sent 24 children to Bearwood. Also the committee of the Southampton Seamen's Orphanage, which was an institution formed to look after "the children of seamen who have served in ships trading from Southampton, or who reside in the neighbourhood of Southampton," sent 23 children and agreed to maintain them at Bearwood. (In the late 60s the Southampton Orphanage was incorporated into the RMNS).

The post war years brought slow but significant changes in the academic sphere. Until now the school curriculum had been aimed at taking the Oxford Local Examination at junior level, but from 1939 the senior level was to be the future target.

From 1955 to 1959 the Board were faced with many problems brought about by the falling number of pupils at the Bexhill junior school and Bearwood. In 1955 there were only 80 girls and 149 boys at Bearwood and at Bexhill 24 places unfilled. The forecast revealed that numbers would continue to fall with the closure of both schools inevitable.

There followed a period of three years during which the Board was engaged in debating the most satisfactory method to care for those eligible for education within the aims of the constitution. Numbers continued to fall especially at Bexhill with the result that in 1958 the junior school, together with the headmaster's house, were sold.

In 1959 the Board of Governors finally made their decision to retain Bearwood for boys, the girls to be found places at other suitable schools, to accept full fee payers from the Services, and in 1961 from any other source prepared to pay full fees. The Royal Merchant Navy School was now an independent boarding school with foundationers having priority.

The school was most grateful to the Joseph Strong Frazer Trustees for their great interest and financial aid during a period, making possible many improvements by the donation of no less than £63,000.

In 1965 HM inspectors visited Bearwood. The contents of their report were most satisfactory and a credit to all concerned. The improvements attracted not only masters of the required ability to improve the standard of education to 6th form level but also those skilled in the coaching of athletics, cricket and football.

For the first time the full use of the natural amenities of the estate were made available for many activities, with regular use of the lake for sailing and fishing. With these assets and helped by the contact made with local preparatory schools, numbers began to improve and a higher standard in classroom and on playing field was achieved.

The decision back in 1959 to open the school to all took on its own dynamism; change begot change, and as the numbers grew towards 300 there created beside the library and study-bedrooms in each house (to be followed in 1971 by a licensed club!). At the same time the previous picture of large dormitories, double-bunked, and day-rooms, moved towards the idea of personalising each boy's living area with bed, desk and wardrobe. This move being costly, took some years to complete. Costly also was the introduction of self-service in the dining-hall, but needful too for larger numbers and for economy.

By 1970 increased numbers and classes and teaching staff meant a need for more classrooms. In consequence parents and Old Royals responded generously to an appeal for funds, with the result that when, on 29th April, 1971, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited Bearwood, he was able to open a new teaching block, together with matrons' quarters. (He was also able to meet foundationer girls from other schools assembled for the occasion.)

A picture of the school in the mid-70s must portray more than bricks and mortar.

In line with these came new teaching methods (like a theatre workshop), allied with the tried discipline of "pluses" and "minuses" well-remembered by generations of Old Royals. House plays each December and the school play in March, music with its termly concert (the house competition died in 1974), the choral society, the Devitt society and the Captain Hill public speaking competition—all these gave life to the bones.

In 1976 the school numbered 335 boys, 28 teaching staff, a junior house, four senior boarding houses and a day house. The sixth form numbered 55. Extra-curricular activities once a week ranged widely from archery and chess to squash and war-games (the squash court was put up in 1972). A second afternoon was devoted to the combined cadet force and community service. Team games were on three other afternoons a week. The years 1971 and 1976 were vintage rugby years, soccer developed an inter-schools league, and the end of every summer season saw a cricket festival. Options proliferated—athletics, sailing, canoeing, tennis and golf. (The Jubilee year will see another, swimming, with the building of a 25-metre heated pool.)

To turn from the school internally to its governing body, the period of growth since the decision of 1959 increasingly found the governors exercised by the consequences of their decision, namely, the calls of expenditure needed for change on the one hand and the shortage of income for the Trust on the other. Furthermore, inflation as experiences in the mid-70s hit educational charities hard. The Board was, therefore, more than grateful for the firm and continuing support especially of King George's Fund for Sailors and of the Frazer Trust, both of whom subscribed most generously not only annually but, on occasion, for capital projects. Looking at their own assets, furthermore, the Board pursued a policy of estate development, in itself a matter of sound management. This they did by raising beef cattle, by resurrecting the market-garden and by starting a golf-course open to the public. Simultaneously, administrative economies were enforced, both in manpower and in organisation. (For example, the farm laundry of the old days were rehousing and harnessed to the school boiler.)

The changing face of the school since the great decision of 1959 is but the latest picture in a history of 150 years. It will not be the last. If this history has a message, it is that while the face may change, the heart remains the same. Born in Bow Row, nurtured at Snaresbrook, and now renewed to face the modern world as Bearwood College, the school has an abiding trust, firm in its foundation, to serve its generations as the past served theirs.

Hague—Visby rules and the P&I clubs

By John Honour, General Manager, West of England P&I Association

THE BRUSSELS PROTOCOL of 23rd February, 1968, amending the Hague Rules of 1924, came into force on 23rd June, 1977. Ten countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, have ratified or acceded to the protocol. The Hague Rules as amended by the protocol are known as the Hague-Visby Rules.

To understand the effect that the Hague-Visby Rules will have on the P&I clubs, one must look at the main changes made by the Brussels Protocol and examine them one by one to see whether they will have an advantageous or disadvantageous effect on the clubs.

However, before doing this, the following general comment must be made regarding any material changes in the Hague Rules such as those effected by the protocol. The Hague Rules have provided a considerable degree of certainty in dealing with cargo claims and the clubs have been able generally to advise their members, with a certain degree of accuracy, as to their rights and obligations. This has avoided unnecessary litigation in the courts and the vast majority of cargo claims are settled on a compromise basis.

Accordingly, any material change in the rules will result in a degree of uncertainty as to the meaning of the amendments and disputes are bound to arise that will eventually have to be dealt with by the courts. This is clearly against the interest of the clubs and their members.

Turning to the actual amendments made by the protocol, probably the most important is the increase in the limit of liability. Instead of the old limit of £100 per package or unit, the Hague-Visby Rules provide for a new basis of limitation of Fr10,000 per package or unit or Fr30 kilo or gross weight of the goods lost or damaged, whichever is the higher. The francs referred to are Gold Poincaré Francs and in present terms Fr10,000 amount under English Law to about £447.

There is also a special provision dealing with limitation of liability where a container, pallet or similar article of transport is used to consolidate goods. The words "used to consolidate goods" and "similar article of transport" however, leave doubt as to

(a) what types of articles of transport are included and

(b) what is actually meant by the words "used to consolidate goods."

The increased limits will obviously have an important effect on the cost to the clubs of cargo claims. Although it is true to say that it has often not been possible for ship-

owners to effectively limit their liability to £100 per package or unit because of doubt as to the interpretation of the Gold Clause in the Hague Rules, the fact remains that the limit of liability under the Hague-Visby Rules will substantially increase in most cases the amount for which shipowners have previously been able to settle those claims for which they have been liable.

Furthermore, the effect of the special provisions dealing with limitations of liability in the case of containers, etc. is that where the number of packages or units within a container are enumerated in the bill of lading the shipowner will be unable to limit his liability to the number of containers and his limit of liability will be based on the number of packages or units within the container.

Another effect of the provision on containers is that where the packages or units within the container are not enumerated in the bill of lading the container itself will be the basis of limitation and since it will almost certainly weigh more than 333 kilos the weight basis will apply (Fr10,000 = 333 kilos × Fr30). Thus, in the case also the limitation will be very much higher than under the Hague Rules.

There is doubt, however, on the meaning of "enumerated", where the container is described as "said to contain" a number of packages. The better view would seem to be that in such a case, the number of packages within the container would be regarded as "enumerated".

The protocol also extends the application of the Hague Rules. The Hague Rules only apply to bills of lading issued in any of the contracting states. Thus, they only apply to outward bills of lading issued in a convention country. The protocol has extended application to every bill of lading relating to the carriage of goods between ports in two different states if

(a) the bill of lading is issued in a contracting state or

(b) the carriage is from a port in a contracting state or

(c) the bill of lading provides that the convention or legislation giving effect to it are to govern the contract.

But what happens if the bill of lading is issued in a Hague Rule country and the carriage is from a port in a Hague-Visby Rule country?

Another important innovation brought about by the protocol is the protection given to the servants and agents of the carrier. Under the Hague Rules only the carrier can invoke the benefit of the exceptions, i.e. the rights and immunities afforded to the carrier under the Rules.

Under the Hague-Visby Rules there is a provision to the effect that if an action is brought against the servant or agent of the carrier such servant or agent shall be entitled to avail himself of the defences and limits of liability which the carrier is entitled to invoke under the convention.

The provision, however, does not apply to independent contractors. For some time carriers issuing liner bills of lading have included in their contracts of carriage a special provision known as the "Himalaya" Clause under which servants, agents and independent contractors have been given the right to rely on the defences and limits of liability of the carrier under the bill of lading, but doubt has always existed as to the validity of such a clause.

Accordingly, the provision in the protocol to which I have referred is of some definite advantage to shipowners and the clubs, even though the provision does not extend to independent contractors. Although there is some doubt as to the meaning of the word "agents" it would seem that in the case of stevedores, for example, unless they are direct employees of the carrier or so closely connected with the carrier that they would be regarded in law as the carrier's agents they would not be protected.

There is also a provision in the protocol that has the effect of making statements in the bill of lading as to leading marks, number of packages, etc., and the apparent order and condition of the goods conclusive evidence against a third party to which the bill of lading has been transferred, provided the third party has acted in good faith.

The particular importance of this amendment from the point of view of English law lies in the fact that if a claim is made against an owner under a bill of lading signed by the master or an agent and transferred to a third party acting in good faith, the owner will no longer be able to resist the shortage claim merely by proving that the number of packages or quantity or weight stated in the bill of lading was incorrect and had not in fact been shipped.

Accordingly, this provision is unfavourable to shipowners issuing bills of lading governed by English law since a particular defence to shortage claims which had previously been open to such shipowners and their clubs will no longer be available.

As a result of the Hague-Visby Rules, the cost of club cargo cover for those members who trade to or from Hague-Visby Rules countries will inevitably increase, but it is impossible to forecast exactly the extent of the increase.

Now for the Hamburg Rules

(With acknowledgments to the "Shipbroker", May 1978)

By Bill Robertson

THE UNITED NATIONS Conference on the Carriage of Goods by Sea was held at Hamburg from 6-31st March, and attended by representatives from seventy-eight States. This diplomatic conference adopted the United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea 1978 to be known as the "Hamburg Rules".

It is provided in the convention that the rules will come into force one year after the 20th state has ratified or acceded to it. Unlike other major conventions there is no requirement that the referred ratifications or accessions should represent a certain amount of gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping.

There is therefore no guarantee that the new convention will come into being when

it is subscribed to by the required proportion of the major maritime or trading nations. It will remain open for signature until 30th April, 1979.

It is not possible to state a definite time within which the convention will become operative, but it could be in force in two years. Three to five years is, however, considered to be more realistic.

Whether or not the UK government intends to ratify the convention is not presently known.

There are many major changes in the Hamburg Rules compared with the 1968 Rules known as the Hague Visby Rules.

More about The Hamburg Rules in our next edition.

THE SHIP, THE CREW, THE FLAG

(Extracts from Speech by President of the ISF to the Seatrade Conference "Money and Ships" in London on 4th and 5th April, 1978.)

1. The ship, the crew, the flag—the three inevitable elements which have to be welded by the shipowner into one whole: the business of ship operation. They are the maritime version of the basic elements in any industry: the tool, the operator, and the legislative/administrative framework within which the tool and the operator function.

2. The three elements are quite distinct, although they are often confused. There has been much debate on the subject of "flags of convenience", "crews of convenience", "open registry" countries, sub-standard ships, and the "genuine link" between ship or operating company and the flag of registry. These terms are continually being treated as though they were interchangeable: they are not, and much confusion is caused by their wrong use.

3. What matters in all this debate is that there are a number of practices of international ship operation which are the subject of criticism. Some of this criticism is justified and the ISF (which represents companies managing about 60% of the world's tonnage) is among the critics. The ISF in no way countenances or supports sub-standard ships or operations. But some of the criticism is unjustified. That militates against the effective operation of shipping, and against the service which shipping provides as a vital part of the world economy.

4. If we want to get anywhere in dealing with what is justifiably open to criticism, it is going to be necessary to identify what criticism is valid and dispel what is invalid. There must surely be universal support for an international service of the maximum efficiency and minimum cost, provided this is achieved consistently with, of course, proper safety standards and just conditions and prospects for those who operate it.

5. Each country, each company, each ship should compete to this end. If ships under Flag A are inhibited, then the trade will go to Flag B. Our concern, as an international organisation, is to ensure—as far as we are able—that the only inhibitions are by way of generally accepted international instruments or practices which encourage fair competition and equitable conditions of work.

STAFF NEWS

CONVALESCING

Mr. Dennis Mathews of the Secretarial Department, Head Office, is now at home after a recent operation.

We wish him a speedy recovery.

BACK TO SEA

Best wishes to Captain Jeff Birrill and Captain Ray Skinner on their return to sea after a period at Head Office.

BEREAVEMENT

We extend our sympathy to Mr. T. W. Major on the passing of his mother, Mrs. Major was the widow of the late Mr. T. F. Major was a Superintendent Engineer with Our Company for many years.

HONOUR FOR COMMODORE HIGGINS

We extend our warm congratulations to Commodore Mark Higgins on being awarded the M.B.E. Commodore Higgins has been with the company for 44 years.

We understand that to relieve congestion a certain Government department was instructed to destroy all old documents and correspondence going back more than five years, but, of course, to make copies of them first!

Continued success demands learning something new today you didn't know yesterday for improved performance tomorrow.

These are the answers to the Anagram puzzle which appeared in April's issue:—



SHIPS POSITIONS AT 24th MAY, 1978

Cardiff City. Under Time Charter a/c Salen. Sailed from Durban with steel and ore 13th May for Port Nickel ETA 7th June, Burnside ETA 9th June, Baltimore ETA 16th June and Bridgeport 19th June. Next business not yet fixed.

Devon City. Under Time Charter a/c Motorank. Sailed from Hong Kong 23rd May for Bangkok ETA/ETD 26th May/3rd June to complete discharge of steel pipes. Next business not yet known.

Eastern City. Under Time Charter a/c Yamashita Shinshiro. Sailed from Newcastle N.S.W. 16th May with coal bound for Higashiharima where arrives 30th June, and Amagasaki 31st June. Followed by direct continuation Time Charter, loading coal at Hay Point ETA 15th June for Sakai where arrives 2nd July.

Fresno City. On Time Charter a/c Gearbulk. Sailed from Port Alberni 22nd May for Port Elizabeth (N.V.) for part discharge where expected to arrive 8th June, transiting Panama Canal 2nd/3rd June. Further discharge ports Brunsbüttel 21st/26th June, Antwerp 28/30th and Avonmouth 2nd/8th July.

New Westminster City. On Time Charter a/c Alanca. Sailed from Montreal 10th May with cargo of wheat for discharge at Maccos 24/29th May and Recife 31st May/6th June. Next business not yet known.

Orient City. Sailed from New Orleans 8th May with yellow corn for discharge in Hamburg where ETA 24th May and completion on 29th. Next business not yet fixed.

Port Alberni City. Under Time Charter a/c D'Amico. Transited Panama Canal 11th May with lumber and containers for discharging in

Leghorn 26/27th May, Genoa 28/29th, Savona 30th/31st, Civitavecchia 1st/2nd June, Arbatax 3rd/5th, Naples 6/9th, Brindisi 10/12th, Monfalcone 13/16th. Next business unknown.

Prince Rupert City. At present loading Forest Products in New Westminster 19th/22nd May, Crofton 23rd/24th May, Vancouver B.C. 25/28th May, Cowichan Bay 29/30th, Long Beach 3/3rd June. Transits Panama Canal 11/12th June for discharging at Tilbury 26th/3rd July, Boulogne 4/6th, Rotterdam 7/9th and Brake 10/12th.

Tacoma City. On steel service ST-58. Sailed from Antwerp 12th May, transits Panama Canal 27/28th, and expected to arrive at Long Beach 7th June where discharges until 11th. Thence continues discharge at Oakland 12/14th, Portland 16/18th, Seattle 19/20th and New Westminster 21st/23rd June.

Vancouver City. On Time Charter a/c Almas. Arrived Antwerp 19th May where loading steel until 24th. Thence Pils to continue loading from 30/5th June. Discharges at Houston 20/25th June. Transits Canal 30th June and continues discharging at Oakland 10/12th July, Portland 14/16th and Vancouver 17/20th. Further business not yet known.

Victoria City. On Berth Service BS-91. Arrived at Tilbury 24th May for discharge of Forest Products to be followed by Boulogne 28/30th, Rotterdam 31st May/2nd June, Brake 3rd/4th June. Sails on 5th June at start of steel run ST-59 calling at Antwerp 6/11th. Expected to transit canal 25/26th June for U.S.W.C. for discharge.

Webb City. Sailed from Norfolk 18th May with load of grain. Indicated discharges Hamburg 29th May/5th June. Next business not known.

Amparo. Sailed from Yokohama 23rd May for Nagoya where expected to arrive 24th May, sailing the next day for Yokkaichi. Then Kobe 27/29th, Keelung 1st/3rd June, Hong Kong 4/5th, Fukuyama 9/10th.

Atlantic. Direct continuation Yuban Time Charter. Expected to sail from Busan on 26th May for Ulsan where dry docks until 1st June. On completion loads pipes in Kokura 1st/3rd June, Wakayama 4/5th, Kimura 6th, Yokohama 7th, Kawasaki 8/10th, Kimitsu 11/12th. Discharges in Coatzacoalcos 7/10th July and Tampico 11/14th.

Elena. Expected to arrive in Ensenada 24th May to discharge part cargo of Generals to be followed by discharge at Manzanillo 28/30th, Acapulco 31/1st June, Puntarenas 4/5th, Corinto 6/7th, Cutaco 8/9th, Acapulco 10/11th, San Jose 12/13th, Champerico 14th/21st, Salina Cruz 22nd/23rd, Manzanillo 24/26th, Maratlan/Guaymas 27/28th and Ensenada 1st/2nd July.

Gela. Sailing from Antwerp on 26th May for Liverpool 29th/2nd June, Bilbao 4/6th, Vera Cruz 21st. Sails from Vera Cruz 23rd June for Tampico 24/25th, Coatzacoalcos 26/27th.

Maria Elisa. Arrived Vera Cruz 20th May and expected to sail on 26th May. Then Tampico 27/28th, Progreso 30th/1st June, Coatzacoalcos 2nd/3rd, Vera Cruz 4/5th, possibly calling at a U.S. Gulf Port 7/9th bound for Hamburg where expected to arrive 23rd June to complete on 27th June.

Sara Lupu. Arrived at Leghorn 20th May to drydock until 29th, then sails for Genoa 1st/5th, Marseilles 6/7th, Barcelona 8/9th, Valencia (or optional port) 12/14th, and Coatzacoalcos where expected to arrive 30th June.

An evangelist was drumming up enthusiasm for a forthcoming series of meetings. Going down a country road, he saw a farmer on a tractor just across the fence. He walked over and said, "Brother, are you a member of the Christian family?"

The farmer said, "Oh no. The Christian family lives two miles down this same road, on the old Higginer place."

The evangelist said, "I mean . . . are you lost?"

The farmer replied, "I've been living right here on this same farm for 32 years."

"Well," the evangelist said, "let's put it this way. Are you ready for the Judgement day?"

"When is it?" the farmer asked.

"It could be today. It could be tomorrow," explained the evangelist.

"Look," replied the farmer, "when you find out for sure when it is, let me know, because my wife will likely want to go both days."

Your brain is no stronger than its weakest think.

Recently, a modern young lady came to work and began passing out cigars and candy, with blue ribbons attached. Somewhat puzzled and surprised, her co-workers asked why.

Proudly, she displayed a diamond on her left hand and announced: "It's a boy—six feet tall and 170 pounds."

"I'd move heaven and earth to break 100," the golfing duffer said as he swung at the ball.

"Concentrate on heaven," pleaded his friend. "You've moved enough earth already."

Apropos of the recent disaster of the "Amoco Cadiz", brings to mind an incident concerning an oil spill, of lesser magnitude, but which no doubt caused a lot of Red faces to those concerned.

A FEW YEARS AGO one of the R.S.L. fleet was loading in a delightful little Adriatic port, on a coast well known for its summer grandeur. A leisurely loading of about 500 tons per day was in progress when a public holiday was declared for a visit of the head of state, accompanied by a visiting head of state. The former is still with us, but the latter to a hero's grave has gone. These two gentlemen were visiting the coastal towns in an ex king's yacht. (The said king was well known for his love of the "Dolce Vita".)

Vessels were duly dressed in the port, and we all turned out to see the spectacle. The yacht steamed slowly into the harbour, both gentlemen standing to attention on the bridge, followed by some fancy destroyers, which the visitor's state had just received from "Big Brother" (for which no doubt they are still paying). Very sleek and sinister they looked. In the midst of their cavorting, it was observed that one of them was pumping out thick black oil, and I do mean pumping for in about ten minutes before it stopped, the pretty little harbour was covered with a thick coating of oil.

One imagines that it would have taken more than the kiss and garland of flowers delivered by a pretty young maiden on the landing stage to the visiting head of state to soothe his temper!

W. G. CROSS
Master

An income is what you can't live without or within.

A pinch of common sense is still worth more than a pound of learning.

A school-teacher, interested in the views of his young pupils, asked them in turn who, in their opinion, was the wisest man who had ever lived. He offered a prize of 5/- for the most thoughtful reply.

The answers were illuminating but none more so than that of a Jewish lad who promptly answered "Jesus Christ." The teacher registered surprise. "As a good Jewish boy I would have expected you to have given your vote for Moses."

"Oh, yes, Sir," the youngster explained. "Of course Moses is the right answer but then business is business!"

Thanks for the Memories

I AM WRITING this letter to you in thanks for allowing my two children and myself to accompany my husband on his recent voyage on m.v. "Tacoma City". It was the trip of a life-time for us, and it enabled us to see many places we would probably never have seen otherwise.

We joined the ship at Tilbury, and from there we went to Brake (Germany) where we spent Christmas. There were three wives on board and seven children, including the Captain's wife and two daughters, and we all had a marvellous time. It was touch and go from there whether we would be at sea or in port for the New Year, but we sailed up the river to Rotterdam with just half an hour to spare! As we were an hour in front of Britain, needless to say we celebrated twice, once at midnight Rotterdam time, and again at midnight British time! All the ships in the port were blowing their horns, and the children were allowed to blow ours. What a thrill it was for them.

From Rotterdam we went to Antwerp, then across to the Panama Canal. We found the Canal most interesting, as we had never imagined it to be so big. We saw the famous Panama "mules" and took plenty of photographs. We went through the second half of the Canal at night. There were lights all along the banks and we could hear the crickets chirping, which really gave out the sound of the jungle. It was very exciting.

We arrived in Long Beach, California, on 7th February, and as we were there for 7 days we managed to visit many places of interest, including the Queen Mary, Universal Film Studios, Disneyland and Los Angeles. Disneyland was really beyond words. I cannot do it justice by describing it—it must be seen to be believed. The children were in their element, and I must say they weren't the only ones! The puppets were so realistic, you had to look twice to see if they were really puppets. An awful lot of work and imagination went into building that place. We spent all day there—from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.—and we still didn't see all of it, but what we did see we will never forget.

After Long Beach we went to Oakland, just outside San Francisco. My ambition has always been to ride on one of the famous San Francisco trams, so as you can imagine that was the first thing I headed for when we arrived. The streets are exactly as they seem in the films on TV—mountainous! It is very tiring to walk up them, so you can understand it when I say the trams were packed full! We managed to squeeze into one of them though, and we stood just inside the tram hanging on to the bar for grim death! The ride was just like the switchback ride at a fairground. The braking system on the trams seemed very primitive too, just a man with a lot of muscle pulling for all he was worth on a long brake lever, and praying it wouldn't fail him! Still, we enjoyed the ride and it took us down to Fisherman's Wharf which was a most interesting place. All along the Wharf were shops and stalls selling fish of all sorts and sizes, and they seemed to be doing a roaring trade. There were also stalls where students were selling gifts they had made, also some students busking, including one who was dressed as a clown juggling with firey rings. We didn't get over on the ferry to see Alcatraz as the queue was about 2 hours long, but maybe next time . . .

After Oakland we went to Eureka, then Coos Bay, where the local darts team asked us to their club for a match. We managed to beat them and they presented us with a new dartboard for the ship. We had a return match on the ship the following evening, where we managed to beat them again. They were good sports though, and didn't ask for the dartboard back! We found the people of Coos Bay most friendly and sociable, and nothing seemed too much trouble for them.

From there we went to Crofton on Vancouver Island, which was a very small place (Duncan being the nearest small town) but also very beautiful. It was lovely to see some fields and trees again after so long at sea. We sailed through Active Pass on our way to Vancouver City, and saw lots of sea-lions playing around the rocks, also a pair of eagles hovering in the sky.

In Vancouver the Chief Engineer hired a car and took us up into the mountains to watch the people ski-ing and tobogganning. It was the first snow we had seen, and the children had a great time throwing snowballs. We also went to the Salmon Fisheries, and although there weren't any salmon there at the time we could see what a fight they must have to arrive at their spawning grounds. There was a terrific current as the water travelled down the dam from the reservoir above, which was made worse by all the snow melting in the mountains.

Vancouver was our last port of call in Canada, so from there we made our way back to Panama. We had a swimming pool on the ship, and I am pleased to say that my daughter learnt to swim during the hot weather we had whilst passing through the Panama Canal and back. Back in home waters again, we spent a few days in Tilbury, in exactly the same place where we had started. It was a very peculiar feeling to know that 4 months before we had been in the very same place, waiting to begin our travels.

After Tilbury, we spent one day in Boulogne, then went on round the European coast to the places where we had started our journey, ending at Antwerp, from where we flew home.

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My children and I have gained a lot from our travels, but it would not have been such a happy time for us if it had not been for Captain Murray and all the Officers of the "Tacoma City". They were a really friendly crowd, and were always most pleasant and co-operative with the children. We appreciate what they did for us very much, and so we would like to say a big thank you to them and to you for making our trip possible. It was one we will certainly never forget.

Mrs. J. LEWIS
wife of 3rd Engineer D. C. Lewis

HOW BIRDS DISTRIBUTE SEEDS

Some Discoveries

WHEN THE FRUITS of the earth have flowered freely and the plants are heavy with fruit and seed, Nature calls upon her wonderful transport system, the wild birds, the wind, water and the coats of passing beasts or even man. After many of the heath fires of summer have burnt out vast stretches of land, it is possible to see how the seeds of the new plants are brought to the impoverished areas.

Rooks and 'daws flying over from their frequent visits to the walnut trees and the orchard fruit trees, drop fruits on their way, and rather than retrieve their losses, return to the orchards for more. Small birds settle on the ground, and from the fragments of soil adhering to their feet, small seeds of divers plants fall out, later to grow up as new plants. There are a hundred and one different ways in which a bird may bring seeds to colonize a new stretch of meadow, woodland or burnt gorseland.

Many of these methods of seed distribution are seldom realized, even in our natural history circles, though the facilities for observation from autumn to spring are visible on every hand. When we see a hawk dart over a hedgetop to pounce on some unfortunate bird, ripping open its breast, it very often scatters about the place a number of seeds from the crop of the finch or pigeon. This may often be observed where a hawk has struck down a cushat and left the pigeon for our inspection. Of two pigeons killed by a peregrine falcon in Lincolnshire, one had scattered round its torn crop seeds of twenty-five plants, including goose-foot, charlock, broom, greater plantain, knotgrass, yellow-toad-flax, gypsy-wort, bindweed, chickweed, white campion, nettle, thistle, chicory, barley and wheat, while the second revealed acorns, beechmast, hawthorns, red poppy and white campion. As many as 8,000 seeds of one plant have been found in the crop of a wood-pigeon, and one shot in Lancashire contained 561 barley grains, 986 rye-grass seeds, 109 clover seeds and sixty to eighty weed flowers, as well as 113

clover leaves. In a somewhat similar manner, herons and kingfishers may catch and eat a fish that has fed on the seeds of some aquatic plant, and fly some distance to another water before they evacuate the seeds, which will germinate.

The transportation of plants by our water-side birds proves one of the most fascinating branches of this seed-distribution. Almost every time one flushes a bird from the water's edge one sees the mud drip from its feet, and, as Darwin has shown, a cupful of mud may contain as many as 537 seeds, one can really understand how easy it is for birds to transport seeds clinging to the mud on their feet, many miles. In one case, a small cake of earth weighing only nine grains, taken off the leg of a woodcock, was found to contain a small seed. Upon planting this seed grew into a rush and subsequently flowered. How far the woodcock had carried the seed was pure conjecture, but in autumn and winter many woodcock visit this country from northern Europe. In another case a piece of earth weighing 6½ ounces was taken off the leg of a partridge after the bird had been shot. In this case the material was put aside for three years before planting, but when placed under a bell-jar and watered, it produced eighty-two plants.

One of the commonest ways of seed-distribution by the birds occurs when they feed on the fruits and seeds and fly many miles before they excrete them in their droppings. It has been proved that birds pass more germinable seeds after a dry season than a wet one, and thus, through the distribution there are more weeds on arable land after a dry summer than a wet one. Examination of starlings and sparrows during wet and dry seasons has shown a difference of less than half as many seeds transported in the wet season. Birds with hard gizzards crush the seeds and so kill them, but insectivorous birds do not harm them in any way, and thus it is not always true to say that birds seen feeding on the weeds of a field are rendering a good service to the farmer, for what appears to

be their destruction may actually prove to be their dissemination over a far wider area. And as the seeds may not pass from the crop for twelve or eighteen hours, the birds may travel a great distance in the meanwhile, for the period of seed distribution coincides with the times of migration and maximum bird movements. The house-sparrow, the greenfinch and the wood-pigeon appear the chief distributors of the weeds, and the pigeons are the most important dispersers of seeds of any group of birds in the world.

Berries are coloured brightly to attract the birds to distribute them, and more berries are coloured red because the birds are more easily attracted by this colour than by anything else. Forty-eight species of birds feed on the bramble group, forty-three on the Rosacea, as hips, etc., thirty-three on the Vaccinium, or bilberry group, the blackthorn group, and the cherries, and but fourteen on the holly. Twenty-nine different birds have been noted feeding on the berries of the elder, perhaps the most attractive of all berries, though singularly not coloured red.

The crop of a bullfinch shot in Cheshire in January contained the seed of a sycamore, and another in November those of a dock. A quail shot in North Wales in August contained the seeds of field brassica, perennial rye-grass and black knapweed, while water-rails from Cheshire contained seeds of dog-rose, wheat and knapweed. As many as 4,500 seeds have been found in the crop of a British wild duck, and one from the Dee contained 300 to 400 seeds of cleavers; while a gadwall contained 1,200 seeds of the common water lily. Two teal shot near Chester contained the seeds of sedges. But for these duck feeding on the seeds the plants would stand little chance of distribution. The great-crested grebe is also largely responsible for the distribution of water-lilies. In one case in Lancashire, a pond was cleared of all plants, and observers set to watch for visiting birds. A water-hen was the only visitor, and the first plant to spring up after its visit was *Nitella opaca*, one of the rare pond mosses.

In collecting materials for their nests, many birds carry seeds, pieces of plants, and panicles of grass with the seeds attached, and build them into their nests, where they will grow. Thrushes have thus transported cleavers, cock's foot grass, red deadnettle and many common grasses along a hedgerow; the sparrow, thistle, reeds and water-plantain, while wild carrot and cleavers have been found growing in the nest of a wren, and chickweed and bed-straw in that of a water-hen. Some birds, like rooks, jays, magpies, woodpeckers, nuthatches, etc., have a habit of collecting acorns and other nuts and burying them, or ramming them in some crevice, where they later grow.

