



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.10 February 1999.



Crossing the Bar.

*On the 2nd January 1999 at
the age of 55 Our Shipmate
and Editor of this Newsletter
Tim Lawson Crossed the Bar.*



Tim's Career,

Captain Timothy Lawson M.R.I.Nav. was born on the 27th June 1943 in Sunderland and was brought up where ships and ships engines were built. He joined the Merchant Navy in October 1957 and signed up with the Reardon Smith Line, Cardiff, as a Deck Apprentice Officer. His Discharge Book Number was R713856 and he lived at 12 Lyn Thorpe Close, Fulwell, Sunderland.

In 1962 he was promoted to 3rd Mate and sailed on the "Cornish City" (No.4) this was before he had finished his apprenticeship. While the Cornish City was on passage from U.S.A to Bombay with a cargo of grain the ship called at Aden for oil fuel, during the bunkering period the engineroom caught fire, which burnt out and the 3rd Engineer and a Junior Engineer who were in the engineroom were killed and the Second Engineer Jack Chatten was very badly burnt. The ship was towed to Calcutta to discharge the cargo where after she went in tow to Hong Kong to be broken up. Tim remained on the vessel all this period. For a boy of 19 years old on a ship with, no galley for cooking, and limited services working under awful conditions for five months, should have put anyone off from going to sea. The Chief Engineer at the time was Len Taylor who speaks highly of Tim, saying that when things were at there worst, Tim came to him and asked if he could help him by washing his cloths in a galvanised bucket Len thought this was very kind and very thoughtful thinking for a very young man because Len never had time to do the domestic things.

He returned home from Hong Kong to Sunderland in May 1963 studied at South Shields Nautical College and obtained his 2nd Mates certificate in July 1963.

He took his 1st. Mates examination and received his certificate on the 22nd February 1965.

He obtained his Masters Foreign going Certificate in 29th August 1971.

Tim sailed with Commodore Oliver Lindsey as Second Officer on the "Leeds City" joining in November 1966 and leaving in July 1967. Again they were to sail together on the "Wilkawa" a vessel of 18,461 tons from September 1971 to February 1972 Tim by this time had been promoted to Chief Officer.

On the 17th March 1976 he was promoted to Master and on 2nd May 1976 appointed to the command of one of Transportadcn Maritima Mexicana, Mexico (T.M.M.) ships the "Maria Elise" under Reardon Smith Management. In 1977 he went Master of the Amparo, and was sailing there when the Chief Catering Officer Charlie Parry from Newport died while in the port of Kobe. In 1978 he was Master of the "Atlantic" until T.M.M. took this vessel over for their own management. He again went Master of the "Amparo".

He got on well with T.M.M and carried some expensive cargos on the cargo liners such as silver and copper to Japan and extremely heavy lifts of 100 tons or more of machinery parts to Mexico. Captain De La Pena the Technical Director of T.M.M visited Tim's ship on one occasion while in Mexico and gave him a telling off for not sticking to T.M.M. company rules by not using their Ocean Routing and not using the North about route as suggest by Ocean Routing. Tim produced the deck abstracts for his ship doing the South about passages which show he did an average speed of 16.5 knots with no ship or cargo damage. Tim knew that T.M.M. ships using the North about route had damaged cargo and was late arriving at their ports.

He spent the whole of his sea going career with the Reardon Smith Line, in 1978 entered he the company head office at Devonshire House, Cardiff, and came to live in the Newport area leaving his native town of Sunderland. Here he was employed in the Personal Department where he remained until March 1982 when he decided to leave Reardon Smith's employment to start up his own business, Lawson Marine Services Newport. Ltd., in May 1983 he formed Peterstone Shipping Ltd.

In recent years a close relationship developed between Tim, Alec Osborne and Oliver Lindsay which in turn led to the publication of the Reardon Smith Newsletter "Shipmates" of which Tim very ably edited. This was meant to be a publication of interest to the ex sea staff of R.S.L. also to the office staff if they so wished. However, it became popular in the seafarers fraternity and was in great demand. The members of "Shipmates" send their deepest sympathy to Tim's family.

Tim's funeral service was held at St. Stephen's Church, Newport, on the 18th January at 1.00 p.m.. The church is situated a short distance from the main gate to the Newport Docks. This was followed by cremation at Gwent Crematorium. There was no flowers by request, donations in lieu payable to Missions to Seamen, may be sent c/o Tovey Bros., 9/11 Cardiff Road, Newport. During the service John Reardon Smith spoke about his close relationship with Tim during their apprenticeship and the time they worked together in the Reardon Smith office.

Despite the heavy rain many people came to the funeral and "Shipmates" was well represented some of our members coming from long distances, like, Johnny Cann and his wife from Nottingham, Len Taylor from Appledore, Alan Nicholl and his wife from Devonshire, Brian Boyer from Colchester and John Lee from Bristol. There were 14 or more from the Newport and Cardiff area. Refreshments were laid after and some of us met up to have a chat about the good old days.

Tim was a business man in the marine world, if you sat in his office for two hours the telephone would ring at least four times in that time with people enquiring for a job, Masters, Ch.Officers, Ch.Engineers, 2nd Engineers, and especially Pursers and staff for the cruise ships. he gave a lot of work to a lot of people in his time. Tim was a good man lets remember him that away. *A.F.O.*

"Shipmates."

Tim was our Editor and not only did he subsidize our Newsletter, he did all the photo copying free of charge, posted the overseas mail free of charge. He sorted all the Newsletter sheets stapled them together, placed them in their envelopes and posted about 160 of them. He spent a lot of time on "Shipmates". **We are sending out the Newsletter early (February) to let the Members know of our sad and sudden loss.** We may have to pay for the Newsletter sheets to be photo copied, this will be done until further arrangements are made. The next issue No. 11 will be sent out in June as per normal. **We are desperate for short stories so please make an effort to send some of your experiences to this address:-**

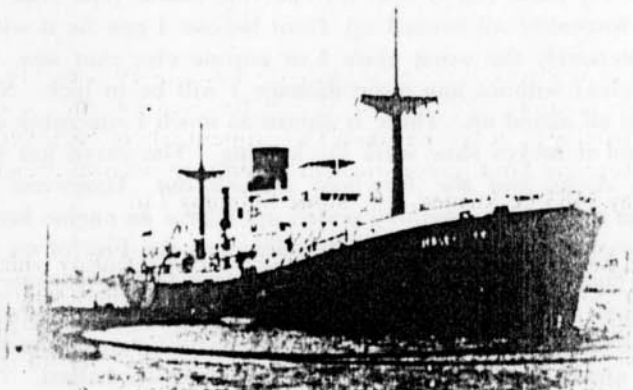
Mr. A. F. Osborne. (Shipmates).
24 "E" Heol Hir,
Llanishen,
Cardiff. CF4 5AE.

Members News.

Roy Burston tells us that Wynne Evans is not too well at the moment, we wish him well and that he makes a swift recovery.

Malcom Rayer telephoned to say that he has got pleurisy, so get well soon Malcom.

Capt. Griffiths Jones have had news that retired Chief Engineer Bert Lester "Crossed the Bar" in January. Bert joined the Reardon Smith Line in 1930 and remained with them until his retirement in the late 1960's. For the last five years or more Bert was deaf and blind. He sailed on many RSL ships as Chief Engineer, he was on the Homer City (2) in 1947, and was Chief of the "Welsh City"(2) when she broke her main engine crankshaft in the Pacific Ocean got to Japan then steamed back to the United Kingdom on three cylinders.



S.S. Jersey City (2)

Memories Of Ships.

See page No. 6

for the three

"Jersey City's

The following copies of letters are authentic copies of
communication sent by the Master of the Barque "Baranaci"
to the owners in New York, during October and November 1892.

Fremantle.
October 27, 1892.

Messers. Simpson & Shaw,
New York.

Gentlemen,

I arrived here Oct. 21st p.m. 22nd being Saturday and short day doing nothing. Sunday done nothing. 24th entered and fought against putting vessel along side the Jetty to discharge. It is a terrible place. No place to put a vessel, no shelter whatever. All the ships have to lay discharging at the wharf or pay lighterage. I began this morning. Got out 50 tons. Have to hoist with an engine. Cant do without one. Have to pay 50/- per day for that. Captain Shaw told me that this was a very cheap port. It is not so. It is very expensive port and the worst I was ever in.

This loading for two ports in one ship is a mistake and a great big one. Nearly half of the cargo in tween decks so far is Launceston cargo and it is has to be handled over so many times to make room. My crew are half drunk. Some of them have cleared out and the others too drunk to work. I am afraid that there wont be a great big dinner left of the Fremantle freight. I have not received any letters or papers from you.

Hope you are so busy in the Store that you could not find time to write.

I am, Gentleman,
Your Obedient Servant,
D. B. Shaw.

P.S. Will probably be here some time.

Fremantle.
November 8th 1892.

Messers. Simpson & Shaw.
New York.

Gentlemen,

I am having very hard luck in getting discharged. The weather has been very bad since I arrived and tonight it is blowing a gale of wind from the S.W. with a S.W. wind the water is keeps pretty smooth but the spray is flying all over the ship. My lines are all used up and I have got two heavy springs hired to make her fast aft, and out ahead I have my anchors down with 75 fathom of chain out and all the remaining lines that I have left and one of my bow chains fast to the wharf and it takes all are time to hold her. Once in a while there is a terrible run comes in. Then I have to slack her off and let her go. It is impossible to hold her. She will tear herself to pieces. She has done considerable damage to herself. My after bits are broken off level with the deck. My stern chocks are pulled out and about 10 feet of rail torn off including the stanchions. All my channels next to the dock are more or less damaged. About 8 feet of my main rail is split off and one hawse pipe gone. The bufalow on the starboard side of the top-gallant forecastle all twisted up. Dont believe I can fix it without changing it. My lines are all ruined. It is certainly the worst place I or anyone else ever saw. No place to send a ship of this size. If I get clear without any more damage I will be in luck. She is turning out her cargo in grand order but it is all mixed up. There is almost as much Launceston cargo in the tween deck as there is Fremantle and it makes slow work discharging. The cargo has to be handled over so many times. The tween decks and the fore-hold are all out. Tomorrow is a Government holiday. No work. Cant work in the hold. Everything sealed up. I have an engine hosting. Cant do without. The wharf is high and the cargo has to be landed into railway trucks. Five of my crew have run away and one is sick, so you see I have not many to work cargo. Have to hire considerable labour. I dont know what I will do for sailors. Everyone goes to the gold diggings and wages are 65 per month. It will take me two days to restow my Launceston cargo. The greatest part of the heavy stuff will have to go to the lower hold. I am afraid that she will have none too much for ballast.

I hope to get away this week if the weather gets fine. It is a mistake loading cargo for two ports, nothing in it but expense and loss of time. I met with a curious accident the other day. The ship was rolling about and a sling load of cargo capsized into the dock. Three of the cases were cartridges and one beef. I got a diver to go down. He got two cases of cartridges. Said he could not find any more. I had to give him 2. The cartridges were worth about 25. It was too bad but it was not through carelessness. I would not come to this port again if they made me a present of the vessel. I never get any rest day or night. Keeps me all the time running fixing something. Fenders grind up as fast as I put them in. I have bought two sets besides the one I had on board.

I remain, Gentlemen,
Your Obedient Servant,
D. B. Shaw.

Fremantle
November 11, 1892.

Messers. Simpson & Shaw,
New York.

Gentlemen,

You will please find enclosed the First of Exchange for L. 500. I hope to get finished discharging today. I have been two days shifting cargo trying to find 5 cases of machine oil. When I left the ship they had found 5 cases stowed under the Lauceston cargo in the lower hold. It has been the devil's own job. It is now blowing heavy from the S.W. may last two or three days. Cant get clear of the wharf until it moderates. No steam power that can tow her. It is a bad job coming here. I will remit you balance when I get settled up. The vessel is 6 feet by the stern and I have hoisted nearly all the cargo out of the after hold and run it forward. It will take some days to restow the cargo and retrim the ship before I can go to sea. Will get away as soon as possible.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your Obedient Servant,
D. B. Shaw.

Fremantle
November 19th, 1892.

Messers Simpson & Shaw,
New York.

Gentlemen,

You will please find enclosed a Draft on London for L. 200. There is about L. 58 in Merchant's hand yet which they won't pay until balance of claims are paid which won't be today. I was never so sick of a place in my life and may the curse of Christ rest on Fremantle and every son of a bitch in it. God dam them all.

I remain, Gentlemen,
Your Obedient Servant,
D. B. Shaw.

Any man that would come or send a ship a second time is a dammed ass. The mail closes at 1 p. m. today sharp and the Bank wont give me a draft until 1 p. m. so it wont get away by this mail. It is some of the Agent's doings, I think, but do not know for sure. Still blowing a heavy gale.

D. B. S.

The above correspondance was sent to "Shipmates" by one of our members who we thank very much.

New Members since the December List.

John Cotton from Dover. G. Gaywood from Co. Antrim. B. Hill from Somerset.
J. Townsend from Middlesex. John Robinson from Northumberland.

Memories - Ships Of The Fleet.

"Jersey City" (1) 1914 -1917 .

- 1914 Built By Irvine Shipbuilding & Drydock Co. Ltd West Hartlepool as "Santeramo" for the Gulf Line Ltd. (Furness Whithy & Co. Ltd.) West Harlepool.
 1914 To Great City Steamship Co. Ltd renamed "Jersey City" .
 1917 Torpedoed and sunk by submarine 35 miles North West of Flannan Isles. Master taken prisoner.

"Jersey City" (2) 1920 -1940.

- 1920 Built by J. L. Thompsons & Sons Ltd, Sunderland, as "Jersey City" for the St. Just Steamship Co. Ltd.
 1928 Company restyled to Reardon Smith Line Ltd..
 1940 Torpedoed and sunk by German submarine U99 , North West of Malin Head , in position 55.47N 09.18W. 2 members of the crew lost.

"Jersey City" (3) 1942--1960.

- 1942 Built by Bartram & Sons, Ltd., Sunderland, as "Jersey City" for Reardon Smith Line Ltd..
 1956 Sold Lion Steamship Co.. (Arnold de Champs), Sweden renamed "Jacqualine".
 1957 Sold A/B Billingsfors Langed (Erik Kekomus), Sweden.
 1959 Managers restyled as Erik Kekonius . Lion Steamship company renamed "Kopalnia Szombierki".
 1964 Converted to a hulk, renamed "MP -PZZ -1" .
 1978 Arrived in tow Fasiane for breaking up by Shipbreaking Industries Ltd..

 The winter of 1948/49 was particularly boisterous in the North Pacific with a series of intense lows sweeping from the Sea of Japan area F NE'ly to E, to cross the Aleutian Islands and on to the Pacific coast of Canada and the U.S.A.

February found two vessels of the Reardon Smith Fleet having discharges cargoes of coal in Japan on passage to Vancouver ,B.C. to load grain for the U.K.. The S.S. "Jersey City" (3) followed some 800 miles astern by the S.S. "Orient City", both ships were on a composite great circle track passing approximately 80 miles south of the Aleutian Islands. Both vessels were experiencing heavy weather with frequent snow squalls , ships rolling and pitching heavily with engine racing.

Daily radio contact was maintained between the two ships . On both ships the deck crew s engaged cleaning and washing out the holds, erecting shifting boards , feeders and bins.

The Engineers aboard the "Jersey City" (3) aware of an occasional unusual 'thump' heard in the shafting tunnel and could be felt in the propeller shafting. After further investigation a conclusion was reached that this was probably due to a slack propeller. The master decided it would be prudent to deviate to Dutch Harbour (Unalaska Is.) Aleutian Islands. (U.S. Navy Base) as a harbour of refuge.

No approach chart to Dutch Harbour was on board, however, the U.S. Coastguard was very co-operative and met vessel in the Unimak Passage and guided her to a safe anchorage in Dutch Harbour.

On safe arrival in the anchorage the vessels after ballast was discharged, the forward tanks ballasted and No. 1 hold partially flooded sufficiently so that the propeller nut was clear of the water. In cold miserable conditions a lifeboat was lowered and the propeller examined, and it was found as believed that the propeller nut had worked slack. The propeller nut spanner was taken from the engineroom and laid on the deck alongside the poop house prior to lowering overside into the lifeboat. The officers went for a hot drink (smoko) and a warm up, on their return the spanner had disappeared and it was never located.

This meant further delay whilst the Engineers manufactured another spanner from a piece of steel plate. The Engineers were working under difficult conditions made an outstanding effort and the repairs were carried out satisfactorily allowing vessel to proceed passage to Vancouver, B.C.

When the ships arrived at Vancouver both were then at the Continental Grain Terminal pier.

The writer was serving on the S.S."Orient City" at the time visited Mr. Steve Wardropper a past shipmate and found him lying on his dayroom settee nursing three fractured ribs which he sustained carrying out the repairs at Dutch Harbour.

Commd.O. J. Lindsay.

Tom Major writes the following:-

The appearance of the founder of Reardon Smith on the frontispiece of the December issue of "Shipmates" corresponding with the ninety third anniversary of the founding of the firm, suggest we should say more about this remarkable man.

Born in Appledore in 1856 and receiving only the basic education he first went to sea at the age of 12, in the 31 ton ship "Unity" as a ships boy, rising through the ranks until 1878 when he joined Hogarths as mate, and finally in 1881 as Master, in the barque Drumadon. He was highly regarded by Horgarth who appointed him to superintend the building the iron three masted ship the Ochtertyre, in which Horgarth allowed him to take 2/64th shares, that is his first venture as a ship owner, in which he then sailed as master. He left Horgarths on good terms, as Horgarths became RSL agents in Glasgow and RSL Horgarths in Cardiff. In 1896 William commanded the steamship Starcross of 2823 tons gross and subsequently had spells supervising the building and sailing in various vessels. He made his home in Cardiff which had now become the biggest coal exporting port in the world.

In 1905 at the age of 43 he founded the firm of which W.R.Smith & Sons and built his first ship, City of Cardiff of 5,000 tons deadweight, and cost £32,000, and so began the steady expansion of the firm right through to the 1930's when the Company had about 35 vessels and it remained about this size until Sir William's death in 1935.

Some interesting matters:-

In world war one as men went off to sea or in the forces Sir William took on woman staff of good education, and after the war when woman's place was still considered to be in the home, Sir William kept them on, and they remained outstanding staff, until some left to get married or in most cases until they retired.

Sir William started a Marine College to train deck officers, and gave the college its own training ship. The writer is not aware of any British Company which did this, and certainly not any Companies of cargo ships. For these times, this was quite outstanding philanthropy, for the college trained many more cadets than RSL itself could employ.

In the 1930's also Sir William started a pension fund, and note this, it was for seagoing staff only. It was only when sea-going staff who had been promoted ashore protested this was unfair, was the fund extended to include office staff.

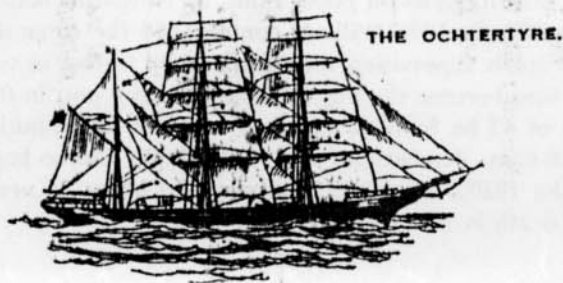
In the 1920's good quality coal was difficult to get outside the U.K. and fuel oil was becoming available. Sir William got his Superintendents to look into a system whereby either oil or coal could be burnt in the boiler furnaces, and oil then tending to be very thick, how could this be kept fluid, and pumpable from the storage tanks. Such a system was devised with the help of C.M.E.W. (Central Marine Engine Works) and RSL became one of the very first Companies to do this. The writer recalls a Superintendent from a very famous liner company, ringing an RSL Superintendent on a Sunday morning to ask if he would be prepared to disclose details of this system, the answer was yes provided they obtained Sir William's permission. Nothing further was heard from them.

Sir William became aware that if it was practicable for a diesel to be used instead of a steam, then big savings could be made as diesels used only half the amount of a steam engine, and diesel fuel was very cheap, at that time being almost an unwanted byproduct of producing petrol. The problem was that most shipbuilders had their own diesel engine some of which were so unreliable as to be expensive to maintain, and some were simply hazardous. A Superintendent was deputed to make a country wide examination of all the engines available and he came up with nothing to choose between B & W and Doxford, so of the next two ships to be built, the first, the "West Llyn" had a B & W engine, and the second, the "East Llyn" a Doxford engine, which proved to be better of the two, and then adopted in most of his future vessels.

So the December issue of the "Shipmates" featuring Sir WILLIAM is a most appropriate reminder of this remarkable man, who knew from old time wooden sailing ships to modern steel diesel powered ships, knew world trading routes, knew a wide variety of cargoes, understood financing, had a complete understanding of men and how to get the best out of them, and lastly in his spare time was a considerable philanthropist. **Men don't come better than this.**

T.W. Major, Technical Director.

Mr. Major kindly provided the Programme and Menu for RSL 21st Anniversary over leaf.



Sir WILLIAM REARDON SMITH & SONS, LIMITED.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY
of the FOUNDATION of the FIRM



PHOTO ELLIOTT & FRY

W. R. Smith
CHAIRMAN

*Saturday, Eighteenth of December,
Nineteen Hundred & Twenty Six.*

Dinner at Angel Hotel, Cardiff

MENU.

HORS D'OEUVRES VARIEES
WHITSTABLE NATIVES

—
CONSOMME TROIS COULEURS
CRÈME AMERICAINE

—
FILET DE SOLE ST. GERMAIN

—
ESCALOPE DE RIS DE VEAU MARIE STUART.

POMMES NOISETTES
HARICOTS VERTS AU BEURRE

—
DINDONEAU ROTI ET SAUSSICES
SALADE

—
POUDING SOUFFLÉ AU CITRON
BOMBEE PRALINÉE
PETIT FOURS

—
CAFÉ

TOASTS.

"THE KING."

"SIR WILLIAM REARDON SMITH, BARR."

Captain R. COMPTON.

Response : SIR WILLIAM REARDON SMITH,
BARR.

"THE FIRM."

Mr. J. WILKINS.

Response : Mr. WILLIE SMITH.

Mr. DOUGLAS SMITH.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

by

JAN STEWER, *Entertainer.*

Miss GRACE HOWELL, *Contralto.*

Mr. GEORGE COBNER, *Baritone.*

At the Piano :

Mr. HERBERT SIESE.

