



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.17 December 2000.

Christmas Day 1957 onboard " New Westminster City" (3)

Photograph of the officers, Indian stewards and Purser taken in the dining saloon, Christmas Day, vessel was at the grain loading berth Galverston, U.S.A.



Frankie Rowell (Ch.Engr.) Mrs. Rowell (Ch.Engr's wife) Mr. Thurburn (3rd Engr.)
Dintie Moore (Elect.) Commodore Danny Lloyd (Master) at the head of the table.
Commodore Mark Higgins (Ch. Officer) Alec Osborne (2nd Engr.)
Standing front row left to right:- Mike Hollinger (3rd Off.) 3 stewards Deck App. unknown
Mr. Roderick (Engr.Cadet)) Indian Butler.
Standing back row left to right :- Bob Beasley (Ch.Steward) 4th Engr.. Deck App.
Mr. Sleighthome (Rad Off.) Phillip Vanner (2nd Off.) Junr. Engr.
Jack Barns (Junr.Engr) Indian steward Deck cadet (not known) Mr.Williamson (Engr.Cadet).



A Happy Christmas
and New year
to all readers
and their families



Further to the survival story of the men in the lifeboats of the M.V."Bradford City" in the last (June) edition "Shipmates" Commodore Oliver Lindsay tell his story when he was an apprentice on the S.S."Botavon" when that vessel was sunk.

Speech delivered by Commodore Oliver Lindsay on the occasion of the
55th Anniversary of the end of World War 2.

In August 1941, at the age of 16 I joined my first ship the 30 year old SS "BOTAVON" of 5848 gross tons – Owners, Ministry of War Transport, Manager – Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons and under the command of Captain John Henry Smith.

I served aboard the SS. "BOTAVON" until 3rd May 1942 when she was sunk as a result of enemy action in position latitude 73° 00'N, longitude 19° 46'E (Just to the south of the ice edge). At the time she was loaded with military cargo and was commodore ship of the 25 ship Russian convoy "PQ15" bound Murmansk, with Commodore Ankor, RN and his 6 naval staff on board. Enemy action had increased from 29 April, U-boat activity actively keeping the 17 escort vessels busy. Luftwaffe shadowing convoy, keeping at a safe distance and reporting convoys position. The cruisers "HMS LONDON" and "HMS NIGERIA" joined the escort and took up stations within the convoy. The sun at midnight being just below the horizon the continuous light was aiding the enemy to the disadvantage of the convoy, and the ship's crew was suffering from the arctic cold during long periods at action stations.

Bridge mounted OERLIKONS manned at Action Stations were:-

Port side One DEMS gunner, one Apprentice

Starboard side One DEMS gunner and one Apprentice "Myself"

Aft on the Poop deckhouse, was mounted a 12 lb. A/A Gun, (pre 1914 vintage), a HOLMANPROJECTOR and 4inch ANTI-SUBMARINE Gun manned by DEMS gunners and Merchant Seamen. The ship's Gunnery Officer was Second Officer DERRY.

1st MAY

Increased air activity and snow squalls.

1900 hours enemy surface ship reported approaching convoy. "HMS LONDON" and "HMS NIGERIA" steams out of convoy accompanied by two destroyers to engage, the other destroyer was endeavouring to lay smoke screen but it proved unsuccessful due to the strong wind.

2100 hours "LONDON" and "NIGERIA" and destroyers returned to convoy.

2110 signal from "NIGERIA" "Attack imminent" – 6 enemy planes bombing

Enemy planes were taking advantage of clouds to bomb convoy.

One plane - a Dornier 24 diving at BOTAVON – heavy A/A fire. Plane goes into an almost vertical dive and banks showing her underside. Shells can be seen striking home – plane crashes into sea. No survivors.

2nd MAY

Early hours, heavy snow storms. Snow freezing, air temperature Minus12°C.

0800hrs. Breakfast and time for action stations. Enemy aircraft overhead.

Convoy putting up very good barrage.

1000hrs Cruisers LONDON and NIGERIA departed

1100hrs Report of enemy surface craft.

1130hrs passed homeward bound convoy – confirmation of enemy surface craft in the vicinity.

U-boat destroyed – 8 survivors.

Air activity building up

3rd MAY

0000 hours Heinkel III Torpedo aircraft reported. Attack imminent!

Black flag hoisted. Emergency alteration of course to

Starboard - 6 Heinkels detected at 8000 yards

S.S. "BOTAVON" and two other ships singled out – aircraft

pressed home their attack. Planes wing close to foremast

Oerlikons firing straight at planes- range 100 feet.

Plane's port engine burst into flames. I can still remember the

pilot's head seen through plane's canopy – turned to look at the

engine and at the ship's bridge. That turned head, even after 58

years, I remember as if it were yesterday!

The plane crashed in the convoy – the pilot did not survive!

Meanwhile the BOTAVON was caught in the cross-fire from other vessels.

There was a mighty explosion as two torpedoes struck home beneath the bridge.

In under a minute there were three ships torpedoed.

SS "BOTAVON" was fatally damaged and sinking!

SS "JUTLAND" magazine exploded, ship sinking!

S.S. "CAPE CORSA" laden with full cargo of munitions, went up with a terrific explosion – red ball of fire - then nothing! There were three survivors.

On the Botavon's bridge the Commadore called "abandon ship" – however, even under these circumstances protocol had to be observed. The master

shouted, "No, I am the Master of this ship! and I will give that order when I am ready."

The order was duly given.

The port lifeboat was successfully lowered about 30 survivors boarded; they included the Commodore and his staff and also me. Unfortunately the swell drove the boat against the ship and suffered damage and the boat took in water. Almost impossible to row, hands freezing oars. The starboard lifeboat was lost during lowering and the remaining survivors including the Master took to rafts.

The survivors on the rafts were rescued by HMS "BADSWORTH". When the Master boarded the "Badsworth" he was greeted by "Welcome aboard Dad!" His son was the navigating officer. The survivors in the lifeboat were picked up by HMAT "CAPE PALISTER".

24 hours later the "CAPE PALISTER" was bombed and raked with machine gun fire. The bombs falling very close to the stern – damaging prop shaft and engine room machinery.

The survivors were landed at Vaenga on 6th May and after a march through heavy snow were billeted in a Russian Army camp, where we were to remain for two months. The camp being only 30 miles from enemy air fields kept boredom away. But that is a long story.

I returned to the UK on SS "EMPIRE BAFFIN" and after a few weeks joined the new building M/V "HOUSTON CITY" in Sunderland August 1942.

September was spent in Loch Long testing out anti-submarine net gear and paravane equipment.

The "Houston City" was then to make three voyages to North Africa in support of the landings, ALGIERS and BONE. Bone was a hectic port and heavy bombing took place at dawn and dusk – used up all our ammunition.

Afterwards vessel saw service in the North Atlantic, Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic, before returning to the UK to fit out for the Normandy landings.

The vessel made six trips from London to the beaches. The first occasion arriving at "Juno" beach at 1800 hours "D" DAY.

The cargo was motor transport including tanks and she carried 600 troops on each trip - Returning to London with walking wounded!

I left the vessel to sit for my 2nd Mate's Certificate which I obtained in November 1944 and joined the SS "BRADBURN" AS 3RD Officer/Gunnery Officer.

I celebrated my 20th birthday in Portland, Maine and was awaiting a train at Cardiff station when "VJ Day" was announced.

Note :- Captain John Henry Smith was the nephew of the first Sir William Reardon Smith.

He lost his life on his next "Command", the S.S. **"Fort Mumford"**, which was sunk in the Arabian Sea by a Japanese Submarine. There was only one survivor a DEMS rating.

Stories of Superintendents.

May 1954, the S.S. **"Orient City"** having completed discharging wheat at Brake, Germany, was about to sail - the river pilot was on-board and a tug alongside. In the engine-room shore labour was still at work completing repairs. The attending Superintendent becoming very frustrated with the progress.

There was an almighty roar from the engine-room that could be heard throughout the ship the north coast east voice of the Superintendent, "you useless bunch of **Germans B*******, how you had the cheek to go to w'aa (war) is more than I can warrant. O.L.

New Members.

Ian Morgan is now a member of shipmates, Ian was a Reardon Smith Engineering Cadet and sailed on RSL and Cardiff Ship Management ships. After leaving CSM he joined the American Bureau Society as a Surveyor. He now works for Graig Ship Management Ltd., as a Technical Superintendent.

We welcome aboard Glen Murray Dickson from Penarth, Glen was an Engineer Cadet with RSL, and sailed on many of RSL ships. After leaving RSL he worked for a variety of companies, which are as follows, Canadian Pacific, Snako Line, Wallem, Pelican S.M., GSAB, London, Ropner's. He is now a Superintendent with Graig Ship Management, Cardiff.

We welcome aboard Robin Reed who was Chief Engineer with the Reardon Smith Line and Cardiff Ship Management. After leaving these companies he worked for Dubai Drydock as a Ship Repair Manager, has been a Senior Surveyor for Class and a Superintendent in Cyprus for a German concern. He is now settled down in the U.S.A. living in Ft Lauderdale, Florida, and is Technical Director of Renaissance Cruises, Inc.. If any one wishes to get in touch with Robin write to the Editor.

Hospitalized. At the time that this Newsletter is going to the printers our treasurer, and one of the main stays of **"Shipmates"** Commodore Oliver Lindsay is at the Bridgend Hospital, Bridgend. He is now recovering from an operation and is doing very well. Commodore Lindsay has written many interesting stories, etc. for the newsletter, and has put articles in every **"Shipmates"** since it began in 1996. His memory and knowledge of the history of the Reardon Smith Company, is, and has been invaluable for the newsletter. **Get well soon Oliver we need you.**

Obituary. Mrs. Rayner that's Malcom Rayner's mother crossed the bar on the 8th November 2000, we send our deepest sympathy to Malcom and his wife Mary.

News from Members.

Captain Norie from Christchurch, Dorset wrote to me to say that he paid a special visit to Weymouth to visit a book shop called "Books Afloat". The man who owns the shop is called Mr. Ritchie and he had sailed as purser on one of the Reardon-Smith larger vessels. Captain Norie says that his premises are a treasure house of everything maritime: books galore, to artefacts of every kind from ships bells to souvenirs of any and every sort: badges, paintings and printed maritime pottery. His shop is situated very close to Weymouth Station, just near the Promenade. I must emphasise only a personal visit will bear out my admiration for his enterprise. By the way, Mr. Ritchie will welcome any Reardon-Smith memorabilia anyone has for sale, or any other pieces for that matter.

Capt. John Norie

Mr. Charles Boyd from Liverpool drew my attention to the "Help Wanted Section" in the "Sea Breezes", a Mr. Nicolas Watson, writes and asks if anyone knew his uncle Arthur Trethewy who was an apprentice on the M.V. "Cornish City" (3) which was sunk by the U Boat U-177 off Madagascar on the 29th July 1943. The master and 34 crew were lost, there were only 6 survivors. If you can help please write to Mr. Nicolas Watson, "Khandallah", 68 Tower Road, Epping, Essex. CM16 5EN.

Our Member Robbie Bell from Berwick-on-Tweed who was Chief Engineer with RSL writes to say that he do a monthly column "Harbour Notes" for the Berwick Advertiser. He list all the ships entering and leaving the port and write gossip and news of happenings around the dock. Robert is also a Harbour Commissioner involved in the running of the port, this of course helps with his column in the Berwick Adviser.

Brother

Robin Reed wrote to me and mentioned some names who helped him in his career such as Robbie Bell, Gerry Hughes and a few more. He made a special mention about Mo Green and said he was like a brother to him. Maurice Ronald Green, everyone called him Mo Green, was an engineer cadet with the Reardon Smith Line, he sailed as Chief Engineer with R.S.L. and also Cardiff Ship Management. Mo was a big motorbike man and in his early days he did the T.T. circuit on the Isle of Man, where he came off his motorbike and broke some bones. I can remember him coming to Devonshire House to the Technical Department with his arm bandaged up. After Mo left Cardiff Ship Management he ended up in Hong Kong working for a shipping company as a Superintendent Engineer. Mo's obituary was mentioned in the No.1 issue of Shipmates in December 1996.

Mo was a member of a motorbike club in Hong Kong and on the 1st July 1996, while out motor cycling with the club, Mo was hit by an on-coming vehicle. He was very badly injured and taken to the hospital where he died shortly after.

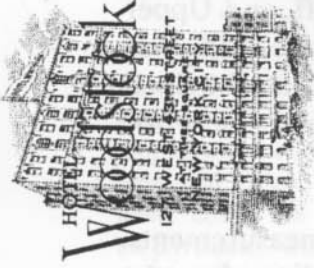
Mo's grave, with a motobike engraved on the headstone, is at Gilwern Parish Church Graveyard, Clydach, Nr. Abergavenny.

Robin Reed said in his letter the word "brother", that he loved Mo like a brother. When you sail with someone for years and months on end you usually end up like brothers.

Now, 58 years ago Mr. Arthur Thompson wrote a letter to our member Mr. Thomas Major who sent it on to me, which is on the next page, where Arthur calls Mr. Major "Brother". Mr. Major was the Second Engineer on the S.S. "Madras City" during the early part of the war and Arthur Thompson was sailing with him as Third Engineer. Arthur left the S.S. "Madras City" and went for his 2nd Engineer's Certificate. He joined another ship as 2nd Engineer and this ship was sunk in the Atlantic Ocean. Ar then finally ended up in America and stayed at the Woodstock Hotel, New York, in July 1942 waiting to join another ship.

Arthur's letter explains clearly the meaning of "Brother"

The Editor



CABLE ADDRESS 'VALQUETTE' - NEW YORK

29/7/42.

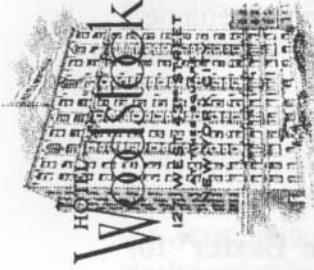
Dear Thomas,

This is your late 3rd Engineer writing to you, well brother slave driver just send 10/- to my home address, & our bet as regards me passing my second B.O.T. before the New Year, 1942.

I passed OK, was in fact the only one to get through. At present I am at the above address having lost by enemy action my first ship as second, of course I stayed with the firm, Lord knows why.

We expect to be home soon, will probably bring another one home, only look out for trouble if that 10/- not been paid, I remember you twisting me out of 4/-.

Give my regards to Miss Grey if you see him, Best was a big noise over here



CABLE ADDRESS 'VALQUETTE' - NEW YORK

the last I heard from him. Peggy Ferguson in Philadelphia was please to see me when I went down on an invitation to see her. Best had been there a couple of months previous with a brother officer.

Well so long for the present,

The very best of luck to you,

Yours truly,

Arthur E. Thompson

P.S. my kiddy can

talk and walk now

and nearly as good looking as her father.

Reardon Smith Ship's beginning with "P".

S.S. "Paris City" (No.1) Gross Tonnage 6,343 tons.

Built in 1920 by Craig Taylor & Co. Ltd, Stockton on Tees for the St. Just Steamship Co. Ltd., this vessel was transferred in 1928 to Reardon Smith Line Ltd. The vessel was sold to Rokon Vergortis of Greece in 1938 and renamed "**Gerassimos Vergottis**". In 1940 she went to the Poseidon Steamship and Trading Co., Ltd. Greece, and in 1950 to World Wide Steamship Co. Inc Liberia and renamed Greenville. On 21st September 1953 the vessel foundered in gale force winds 600 miles off the Azores. Two of the crew members were lost.

S.S."Paris City" (No.2) Gross Tonnage 7,024 tons.

Built in 1941 by Vickers Armstrong Ltd. Barrow on Furnnis as "**Empire Baxter**" for the Ministry of Transport, Managers Haldin & Phipps Ltd. In 1943 the managers changed to Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons, Ltd., and she was renamed in 1945 the "**Paris City**". In 1954 she was sold to Duff, Herbut & Michell Ltd., (J.Billmer & Co., Ltd.,) London, and renamed Westford. In 1957 the vessel was sold to Cia. Atlantica Pacifico, Liberia and renamed Silver River. In 1958 she was sold on to Risaa ve Asian Sadikoglu Ortakiari Komandit Sirken, Turkey, and renamed Huseyin Kaptan. The vessel was scrapped In 1962.

The "**Paris City**" (2) went aground at Torrevieja 270 miles east along the Spanish coast on the 24th April 1951 and remained aground until 15th October 1951, the vessel was brought back to the U.K. for repairs and returned to service. A full story of this accident and the salvage operation was published in the 5th issue of "**Shipmates**", Christmas, December 1997.

"Port Alberni City". Gross Tonnage 16,694 tons.

There was only one "**Port Alberni City**" which was built in 1972 by the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders for the Reardon Smith Line, Ltd then transferred to Reardon Smith Navigation Ltd. This vessel was sold in 1985 when RSL went into liquidation.

The "**Port Alberni City**" was a "Cardiff Class Vessel" named after Cardiff, and Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, who built many of these vessels. Reardon Smith Line, Ltd., was the first company to order four of the these vessels and RSL technical staff helped with the design of the machinery and selected the main and auxilary machinery for the vessels.

The "**Port Alberni City**" was the first ship of this class to be built at U.C.S. in metric size whereas previously the hull framing was in imperial measurements. Another feature, different on this vessel was that the steel plate for the accommodation housing was corrugated to give the bulkheads strength.

Due to lack of space in this issue the two ships called "**Prince Rupert City**" will be featured in issue No. 18. in March 2000.

MEMORIES OF THE S.S. "TACOMA CITY" (2)

Our member Mr. Tinsley from Barry writes to give his experiences when he first went to sea and sailed on the S.S. "Tacoma City".

S.S. "Tacoma City", ex- S.S. "Anglo Indian", could I suppose be classed as a splendid example of a steam trampship of her day, but my memories of her, although nostalgic, are not all splendid ones.

Being apprenticed to Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons of Cardiff, who had purchased the "Anglo Indian" and renamed her "Tacoma City", I served as a third year apprentice from March 1951 until December 1951. During this period we "tramped" around the world carrying the usual bulk cargoes of coal, salt and grain, etc.

We apprentices were housed in a deck-house on the port side, termed "mid-after" accommodation, situated abreast of the mainmast between Nos 4 and 5 hatches, the outside bulkhead being flush with the sheerstrake and comprised a cabin for four with a small messroom attached. A similar deck-house was sited on the starboard side for catering staff.

I have memories of trying to get some sleep whilst four Clark Chapman steam winches hammered away just outside the cabin door discharging/loading using Union Purchase rig night and day.

Meals had to be brought aft from the midships galley - we used to eat our soup last, it kept hottest the longest.

The position of these deck-houses were such that in heavy weather they took some battering from seas breaking inboard, but they were distinctive and combined with the cowlings atop the funnel casing combined to make the ship somewhat different.

I can confirm that she did carry two lifeboats on the boat-deck and two what we termed "jollyboats", about 18ft in length, on the bridge-deck.

On leaving the "Tacoma City" I was appointed to the firm's newest motorship M.V. "King City" to finish my "time". She really was a splendid ship and we actually had individual cabins and got to dine in the midships saloon with the rest of the officers.

F. J. Tinsley

Letter to the Editor.

Our member Mr. Major writes as follows:-

It is good to see in the last issue of Shipmates (Issue 16), that Keith Fulker had now joined the Newsletter. When RSL had set up the computer Planned Maintenance and Stock Control System, there were doubts raised as to whether it was worthwhile including the Deck Department in the system. Keith, working in his own time, checked through many Ship Repair lists and came up with a whole list of items which, given maintenance attention, would not have come on to a repair list. So the maintenance System was extended to the Deck Department, with very useful cost savings. It also gave the Chief Officer a worthwhile boost to their status. One surprising, and quite dramatic saving was on L.S.A. (Life Saving Appliances) Surveys. Second Mates took charge of these (with a status boost to them) and whereas we used to reckon on a £2,000 (in 1977 money) plus cost, when each Survey came up, plus on one occasion, the ship came off hire when the survey wasn't finished. Under the new system the Second Mate would just run through the appliances with the Surveyor, usually at no cost, with a commendation from the Surveyor. So Keith's work was very worthwhile.

J. W. Major.

PLUMBERS MATE

Despite what you may have heard to the contrary, there were certain advantages to being promoted from 2nd Mate to Chief Mate. Once you have recovered from the shock of joining the real world, the increase in salary comes in handy for a start. You also have the added thrill of dealing with an assortment of serangs, surveyors, stevedores, bosuns, chandlers, representatives and any other person who thinks that he has a claim on your time. All this on top of keeping abreast of the Master's (many) foibles and keeping in his good books. What little power of your own that you exercise whets your appetite for the day when you may eventually achieve that ultimate exalted position.

And don't forget – you have finally left behind forever the dreaded world of chart and publications corrections. However, after a while it gradually dawns on you that you have inherited the role of ship's PLUMBER !! I decided at an extremely early age that I hated plumbing. I don't mind a bit of DIY, but any time that I touched anything remotely connected to the flow of water, I invariably ended up with a leak. Or a weep. Or an horrible seepage. Even on occasions – a flood. So I tended to avoid, shun, palm off, or pay for somebody else to do this work for me. But, becoming Chief Mate and Plumber means that there is no hiding place. If you were very lucky, you would have a competent Maintenance Man, but more often that not, that position on board was filled by a born again carpenter, whose plumbing skills were more notional than practical. True there were also cadets, but acquiring the learned art of plumbing was not generally what had inspired them to take up a seagoing career, and any contribution from this dubious source was highly suspect. Not to mention totally unenthusiastic !

Although I am a self confessed failure in the arts of plumbing, a quick look at the workshop or the Mate's locker, after joining a vessel, would be enough to confirm that I was far from being alone in my dismal lack of aptitude with regard to leak fixing, valve operation, knowledge of tap innards and other arcane arts of the true pipe bashing professional. Not that this was much consolation.

A rapid glance through any Mate's locker would at best reveal the presence of one lonely complete spare – be it a spring operated tap, toilet flush valve or shower mixer assembly. Sometimes there were only empty boxes, with a nice coloured picture of the contents on the front of the carton. It was unheard of to discover that you actually had a decent stock of most of the spares items.

Nestling unlabelled and unidentified, usually on the deck where they had fallen in heavy weather, totally mixed up in a dog eared assortment of cardboard boxes, would be the evidence of the guilt and incompetence of my predecessors. There would be springs, washers, spindles, nuts, bolts and other articles, some new, others obviously clapped out; all discarded in previous attempts to maintain the vessel's domestic plumbing as a going concern.

Sometimes it appeared that you were about to have a good day on the plumbing front. Called on to fix a fault, you would find that the malfunctioning piece of apparatus was one for which you had a spare in the locker. 'I can get this changed in half an hour', you would think to yourself, 'knock off early and be in the bar early enough to miss buying the first round'. Usually the optimism lasted only for as long as it took to fetch the spare unit from its box. Then, if you were lucky, you would find that the spare looked suspiciously as if it may have been opened beforehand. Taking the cover off would confirm your worst misgivings – somebody had been there before

you and removed some vital component to use in another repair. Of course, if you were unlucky, or just a plain trusting soul, you would fit the spare first and then spend ages trying to fathom out why the appliance in question was not even working as well as it had when you first looked at it.

Taps were among the worst items to deal with. On a simple domestic tap at home, a leak is usually cured by replacing the washer. Not so nautical type spring loaded taps. These were designed to purportedly save fresh water, but had a distressing tendency to drip furiously at the slightest provocation. Taking these apart hardly ever revealed any straightforward defect – the most guilty looking washers could be replaced, and the tap re-assembled, only to find that the leak was worse than before. The only resort then was to go to the boxes of so-called 'spares' in the locker, sort out some bits that vaguely resembled the suspect parts, and go through the whole procedure again. Then, if meeting with success, all the used and unused bits could be flung back in the box to await some unfortunate future Mate!! Ordering spares for these taps was a time consuming and headache inducing process – this was on the rare occasions when you could actually find a current spares manual. (In the average Mate's cabin, filed anywhere between the ship's stability information and the secret stock of porn magazines!!)

Some examples of plumbing expertise spring to mind. The toilet flushing valves on one vessel were playing up, not closing fully, mainly due to old age and the constant ravages of sea water. Fed up with the piecemeal maintenance, I commandeered the two cadets to remove all the valves and soak them in some (boiler cleaning?) chemical obtained from the engine room. The valve removal and consequent toilet flushing by bucket caused many complaints. Some people are never happy! The next morning I dispensed with the services of the cadets and replaced all the gleaming valves myself. On opening the sanitary water, all the valves worked beautifully. The only trouble was that they were working in reverse !! Press the spring loaded button on top and the water shut off completely – release the button to get a good healthy flow. I was unable to correctly re-assemble all the valves the right way up before my guilty secret was common knowledge. One of the milder words used to describe the Chief Mate was knuckle dragger !! Not a word of thanks for the eventually perfectly operating valves.

Another example is not actually about a plumbing accident, but it is a close cousin. It shows unequivocally that Chief Mates and valves are not compatible. A certain Chief Mate (who will probably recognise himself if he ever reads this) had recently carried out some planned maintenance on the fire hydrants. This was not, I must point out, because the Mate had any workaholic tendencies (quite the reverse in fact !!), but simply because he was on daywork during the deepsea passage while a fourth Mate/senior cadet was watch keeping.

The said Mate had replaced the hydrant valve covers incorrectly. He had not noticed that the covers were slightly oblong, and had replaced them crossways, compensating for the corresponding misalignment of the studs by tightening same with a three foot stillson !! (or some similar subtle tool commonly used by Chief Mates). The following morning, all of the decks around the accommodation were painted a lovely fresh bright green. Somebody asked the Mate a bit later on if the swimming pool could be filled. (There were families on board). He reluctantly gave his permission, on condition that the pool be kept only part full, to avoid any overflow on to his freshly painted decks.

Shortly after the hydrant for the pool (not one of the overhauled valves) had been opened, and water on deck requested, a puce faced Mate raced screaming up to the

pool, demanding to know why every deck around the accommodation was awash, and which raving lunatic was responsible for overflowing the pool. Onlookers shrugged and cheerfully pointed out the half empty pool. It was then suggested, helpfully, that there might be a leaking hydrant somewhere. A quick check on the decks below revealed every overhauled hydrant giving an excellent impression of a lawn sprinkler through their ill fitting covers. The Mate retired mumbling, to contemplate the repainting of his ruined decks. He was so ashamed of the misaligned hydrant covers that I think he rectified the problem under cover of darkness!

Given all the hours that I spent messing about with plumbing, it is a wonder that I had any time and energy left for my real work !! I never had any sympathy regarding my plumbing efforts – although everyone else was quick with advice and always knew exactly what the problem was, there was a distinct lack of volunteers rushing to take over the repairs !!

There was one small benefit that came from my attempts at plumbing and planned maintenance during my time as Chief Mate. One Chief Engineer, who obviously did not have much faith in the engineering qualities of Mates in general, quite often used to assist me in planned maintenance work out on deck. When I asked him why, he said that he used to look out of his window after breakfast, and if he saw me heading up the deck, dressed in a boiler suit, with a bucket of tools and a bemused look on my face, he knew that some unfortunate piece of equipment was due for a schedule, and that it was therefore much easier to help me do the job than to wait until I had done my best and was well on the way to wrecking something!!

This particular Chief often used to say that he would have no fear if the day ever came when combined deck/engine certificates of competency were introduced. 'If such a system came in', he would say, 'engineers will be o.k. because we can take the two week, (one week if rushed), conversion course to become deck officers'. 'But', he would add, 'you rock dodgers will be out of work because you would never make engineers even if you took a ten year course' !!!

R. Alford

A BANDMANS DREAM

A band was playing in the park when a young lady stepped forward and asked the Band Master if she could request a him. "Certainly" said the Band Master "which hymn would you like?" "The one sitting in the front row playing the cornet" said the young lady!

We thank all members for paying their year 2000 subscriptions,
especially those who gave a donation towards the running of the newsletter.

Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year to all.