



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.22 March 2002.

**This edition is dedicated to ships of the
Reardon Smith Line
with names beginning with "T".**

S.S. "Truro City" 4,641 Gross Tons.

This ship was built in Rostock for German Owners in 1910 and named "Wismar" At the outbreak of World War 1 she was in the port of Benjuwangi in the Dutch West Indies and was detained there for the duration of the war. In 1919 she was declared a prize of war and allocated to Great Britain. After which until 1921 she was managed by the British India Line for the Controller of British Shipping and saw service on the Indian Coast. In 1921 she was purchased by the St. Just Shipping Company (Reardon Smith Line) and named "Truro City", her service in the Company was to last for six years, in 1927 she was sold and once again became German owned. In 1933 she was scrapped.

The duration of her service in the Company was spent tramping. I recall that two of the senior Chief Engineers, Mr. William Willis and Mr. Tommy Grey who I sailed with in the late forties/early fifties would reminisce about the "Truro", but after the elapse of fifty years there is little I can recall.

S.S. "TACOMA CITY" (1) 4,738 Gross Tons.

One of eleven sister ships built to Reardon Smith's specification by William Grey and Co. Ltd., of West Hartlepool between 1927 and 1930 for the Reardon Smith Line Ltd. The S.S. "Tacoma City" was delivered to R.S.L. in 1929, the ship being so named, for commercial purposes, after one of the ports of loading on the R.S.L twice monthly liner service, West Coast U.S.A./ British Columbia to U.K./Continent on which she would probably be employed. When not so employed she was ideally suitable for world wide tramping.

Unfortunately, like so many R.S.L. vessels she was sunk as a result of enemy action. She had arrived the River Mersey and had anchored 2.5 cables off the Rock Ferry Light to await the tide. On the change of tide she swung over and activated a magnetic mine which had been laid by a German airplane. She sank with a loss of three of her crew of fortyfive.

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After the vessel had anchored off the Rock Ferry Light the Mersey pilot disembarked, prior to doing so some of the crew requested the pilot to post letters to say that they had arrived safely and that they would be home very soon. Sadly, one or more of those letters were from the men who died.

S.S. "TACOMA CITY" (2) 5,609 Gross Tons.

This ship was built in 1938 by Short Brothers of Sunderland for account of Nitrate Producers' Steamship Co. Ltd. (Lawther, Latta and Co., Ltd.) of London for service in the Chilean nitrate trade. In 1943 she and one other vessel of the Lawther, Latta fleet were purchased by the Reardon Smith Line Ltd. However, due to Government restrictions introduced during WW2 on the changing of ships names during war, it was not until 1948 that she was renamed "Tacoma City". After eleven years service in the Company she was sold in 1954 to Williamson and Co. Ltd. of Hong Kong who renamed her "Inchcastle". In 1966 Williamson's sold her to the Wing On Steamship Co. S.A. of Panama who renamed her "Lucky", finally ending her days in November 1969 at a breakers yard in Kaohsiung.

To the best of my knowledge this was the only ship in the history of R.S.L. that was built with Isherwood framing and with an 'Arc Form' hull. She had an unenviable reputation for rolling heavily in even moderate sea conditions, in an endeavor to reduce this the technical department of Reardon Smith's decided to increase the width of her bilge keels by an additional eight inches by riveting on suitable plate over the full length of the keels.

In 1943, shortly after entering the R.S.L. fleet, she was in a West bound North Atlantic convoy to the South-East of Cape Farwell and experiencing very heavy weather, a number of fractures were found in the deck plating. After due consideration the Master decided that it would be prudent to return to the Clyde for repairs and also by so doing he would bring the weather astern and thereby ease the stress on the vessel. The convoy commodore and the senior escort were advised accordingly of his intentions.

At this time Captain Lionel Ford, Marine Superintendent. R.S.L. was returning to Cardiff Office after attending the M.V. "Houston City" in Glasgow. It was 2am and he was comfortable in a corner seat of a 1st class compartment and I an apprentice on the "Houston city" going home to Barry for a weekend was sitting opposite him (with a 3rd Class ticket), the remaining seats were taken up by senior uniformed officers of the forces. The train was being held at Crewe, the station tannoy was blaring out some urgent announcement which no one appeared to be able to understand, police, station staff and the train guard were searching the compartments and corridor of the train calling urgently for a Captain Ford. Suddenly, Captain Ford shot up from his snug corner seat, smoothed down his favoured Harris Tweed russet suit, grabbed his brown trilby and gladstone type bag and shouted "Um! that's me, I am Capt. Ford", saying to me as he departed with the guard. "Lad, have a good two days". He left behind a compartment of somewhat surprised, bemused and mystified officers who had suddenly been awoken from their slumbers. I listened to their wonders and assumptions but made no comment, after all who was I to talk to the mighty.

I learnt on my return to Glasgow the reason for the train being delayed at Crewe was that Captain Ford was urgently required to return to Glasgow to attend a vessel suffering from heavy weather damage

M.V. "TACOMA CITY" (3) 16,704 Gross Tons.

Between 1970 and 1972 the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders of Govan built for the account of the Reardon Smith Line of Cardiff seven sister ships. The design of these ships were the result of close co-operation between Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and the Technical and Management Departments' of R.S.L. and became known as the "CARDIFF CLASS. The Cardiff Class were the first ships to be fitted with the new model B & W KEF74 engine built at the Kincaid, Engine Works, Grennock.

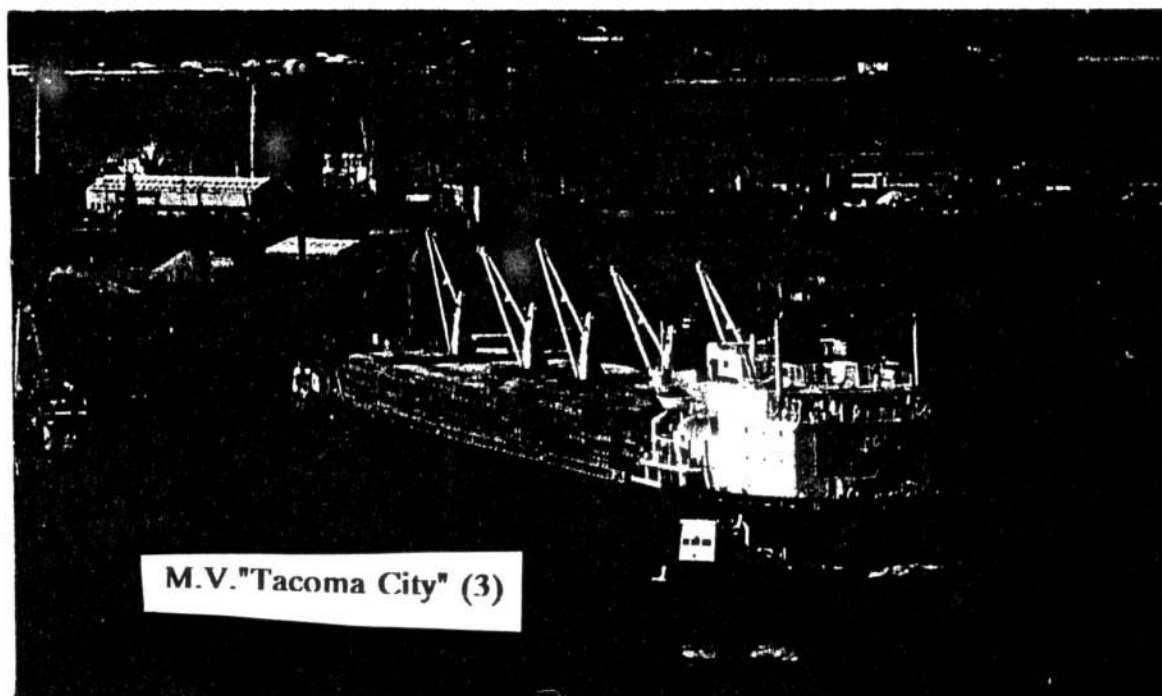
The first four the, M.V.'s "Vancouver City", "Prince Rupert City", "Fresno" and "Victoria City" were delivered in 1972, the latter two sailing from the Clyde (Tail of the Bank anchorage) at 1200 hours and 1700 hours respectively on a murky Christmas Eve. Both were bound Key West for orders.

The remaining three ships M.V.'s "New Westminster City", "**Tacoma City**" and Port Alberni City" were delivered in 1972 and benefited from improvements to the hatch covers that were made from the practical experience learned in actual operational conditions at sea of the first four ships.

The "Tacoma City" was the last of the Reardon Smith Line fleet to discharge/load in the Cardiff docks. She arrived on the 18th October, 1984 to discharge packaged lumber and on completion loaded 10,000 Tonnes of steel billets for China/Japan via U.S.A. Sadly on the 31st May 1985 the Company ceased trading and the "Tacoma City" arrived the River Blackwater Anchorage on the 3rd June 1985 and subsequently sold.

After her years of service in the Reardon Smith Line she was to sail under seven different names and house flags until finally sold to Indian Shipbreakers during May, 1998 for between U.S. \$138 and U.S.\$139. Light Weight Displacement, 6,651 Tonnes of memories.

O.J.T.L.



M.V. "Tacoma City" (3)

M.V. "Tacoma City"

December 1980

This report deals with a fire which occurred in a cargo of bulk grain, which was being fumigated whilst the ship was in transit. Although the incident was an unusual occurrence, it highlights a potential hazard and emphasises the need for strict observance of recommended procedures for in-transit fumigation.

Background

1. A 26,000 dwt bulk carrier had loaded in the U.S. Gulf a full cargo of grain for a voyage to South America. The loading was without incident, and on completion all holds were full except No.4 which was slack. One of the conditions of sale for the cargo was that the buyer required the cargo to be fumigated while the ship was in transit. A specialist company was engaged by the sellers of the cargo for this purpose. The fumigant they used was in the form of tablets which were placed on top of the cargo after loading. Fumigation was effected during the voyage by the decomposition of the active ingredient in the tablets (aluminium phosphide) releasing phosphide gas into the cargo.

The Incident

2. The first indication of fire was five days after the vessel had sailed, at 0120 hours, when the Second Officer on watch smelled smoke. The Third Officer was summoned to the bridge and the Second Officer proceeded to check around the accommodation and decks. At 0130 hours he confirmed that the smoke was coming from the forward end of No.4 hatch. The Master, Chief Officer and Engineer on watch were alerted. The Master rang fire stations and engines were put on stand-by. The Master and Chief Officer inspected No. 4 hold, and confirmed that there was a fire, although they could not locate it. To do this the Chief Officer and Second Officer entered No. 4 hold wearing breathing apparatus, but the smoke was too dense and the attempt had to be abandoned. Checks were also made in No. 4 wing tanks, but no traces of smoke or heat were found.

It was decided to try to extinguish the fire with CO₂. No.4 hatch was sealed and at 0400 hours the CO₂ was released. Because a leak occurred in the CO₂ room it took until 0500 hours to release 33 cylinders. Nos. 3 and 5 holds were ventilated to remove the phosphine gas and allow inspection of these holds. At 0900 hours a further 10 cylinders of CO₂ were released into No.4 hold. Throughout the rest of the morning and early afternoon single cylinder of CO₂ were released into the hold at hourly intervals. However, the smoke continued to build up and there was no decrease in hold temperature. At 1512 hours, the Master radioed that he was diverting to Trinidad for assistance and gave his E.T.A. at Port of Spain as 0600 hours the following morning. Throughout the night CO₂ was injected into the hold at regular intervals.

The ship anchored at Port of Spain where firemen and the coastguard boarded the vessel. The firemen attempted to enter the hold wearing breathing apparatus, but the density of the smoke forced them back. After consulting the Master it was decided to open up the forward end of No.4 hatch and try to extinguish the fire with water spray. Because of the danger from phosphine gas all personnel involved wore breathing apparatus. The hatch was opened and after the smoke had cleared, an area

of about two square metres in the centre of the hatch was seen to be on fire. This was rapidly extinguished by water, and men were sent in to start removing the charred grain. Whilst this was in progress, the fumigation tablets away from the seat of the fire started to explode and caused several more flare-ups which were quickly extinguished with water. Some of the tablets were salvaged from the hold and sent ashore for examination by a surveyor who was in attendance. The fire was extinguished by 1400 hours, but it took another four days before all the burnt cargo was removed and the classification society surveyor was satisfied that the ship was no longer in any danger. The other holds were inspected but nothing untoward was discovered. However, the ship was delayed for a further ten days until her CO₂ bottles could be refilled. Replacement CO₂ bottles had to be air freighted to the ship.

3. Damage About ten tons of grain had been affected by the fire. There was no structural damage or any injuries to personnel.

4. Cause of Fire The unstable decomposition of the fumigation tablets suggests that their quality was suspect or that they had been incorrectly applied.

5. Conclusion The incident confirms that the fire fighting procedures adopted by the Master and crew were successful in containing the fire until the ship reached port. However, had fire occurred in more than one hold the result could have been much more serious. It appears that the tablets used in No.4 hold reacted somewhat differently from the rest. The fact that there was fourteen feet of ullage in No.4 hold compared to very little air space in the remaining holds may have had something to do with this.

In particular, the incident illustrates a potential hazard resulting from in-transit fumigation and the need to be aware of the possible dangers from fire and/or toxic gases at all times. Further information can also be found in the IMCO publication "**Recommendation on the Safe Use of Pesticides in Ships**".

The above report mentions that the "**Tacoma City**" was delayed a further 10 days after the fire was put out and things cleaned up, this, was because a safety certificate could not be issued due to insufficient CO₂ gas onboard for fire coverage.

This was a major problem for me in the Technical Department at head office. Superintendent Captain Keith Fulker went to the vessel at Port Of Spain to supervise operations. He searched the Island of Trinidad to get the CO₂ gas bottles replenished without success. The Superintendent's Department had to make arrangements to fly new bottles of CO₂ to Trinidad. Each bottle contained 80 lbs. of Liquid CO₂. The regular airlines would not carry gas bottles on their aircraft. Several freight aircraft companies were contacted many of them would not carry gas bottles and many did not have large enough aircraft to carry over 80 full large bottles of CO₂. It was nearing the Christmas period and contractors were not too interested. Finally a suitable aircraft was found which had to have cradles fitted to strap the bottles in place for the flight. It took days to fit the cradles, and load the aircraft. When they arrived at Trinidad it took a lot of time to discharge the load. Also when on ship, it took time to get them in the CO₂ room, mount them in place and connect them into the CO₂ system. The insurance claim for this stupid accident was £37,136.96. *Editor.*

Cockie the Parakeet.

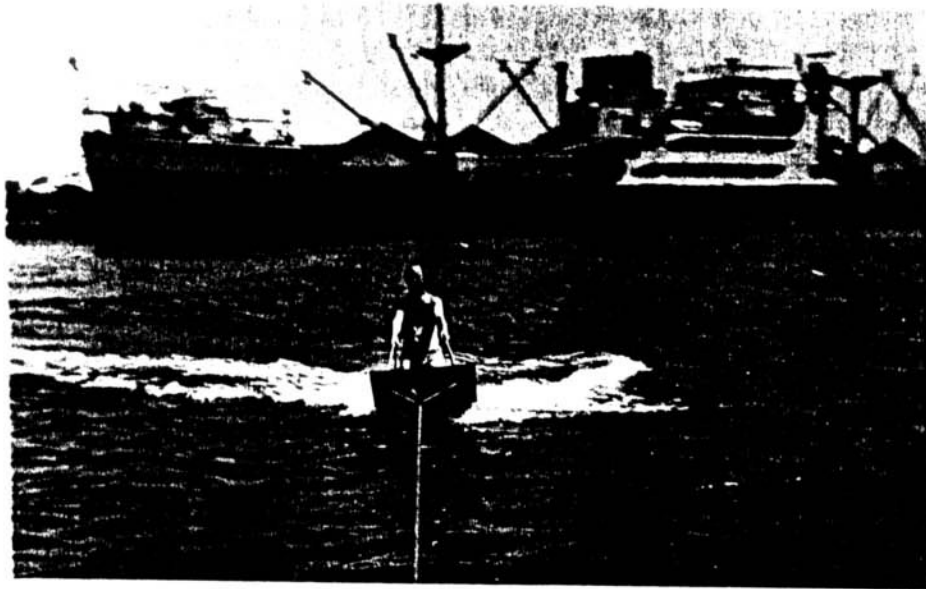
Cockie the parakeet was born in Western Australia in about 1966.

It was the number two voyage on the good ship "New Westminster City" (3), Captain Alfred Ward O.B.E. was master and I was the Second Engineer. We sailed from the U.K. to Norfolk, Virginia, USA, loaded a cargo of coal, steamed through the Panama Canal and discharged this cargo at Osaka. It was New Year's day, 1967, when we sailed for Geraldton, Western Australia. to load a cargo of grain. Now Captain Ward was well known and well respected at Geraldton and it was like a home port to many Reardon Smith men, some seemed to visit this port once a voyage. Geraldton is a nice town about 220 miles north of Perth. On arrival off the port of Geraldton, Captain Sweet the Pilot, Harbour Master and Surveyor came to the ship in his pilot boat and safely navigated the ship into Geraldton Harbour and put her along side the grain berth quay. If Captain Sweet didn't survey the cargo holds this was done by Captain Bruce who was an Australian Board of Trade Surveyor, his office was in Freemantle. He used to be pretty hard on some Chief Officers if the grain shifting boards were not erected to his satisfaction. The next person onboard was Rocky Carlton he was the Australian Wheat Board Surveyor. He came from Perth his job was to inspect the cleanliness of the cargo holds and supervise the loading of the grain. Rocky was an Australian character. The Wiltshire Brothers that was George and Len they soon arrived onboard. They owned an Engineering Company in Geraldton and did ship repairs. We, being a new ship needed little or nothing done this time. Len and his wife Norma, and sometimes some their friends, came to visit us on the ship. They liked to see a few new faces, have a chat and a glass of beer.

Geraldton was a friendly place and after leaving the dock area on entering the main drag, which was one long street, the first pub on the left hand side was the Shamrock Hotel. Continuing along the street the next on the right was the Shepherds Hotel, this was a bit up market and was owned by Mr. Shoemaker and his wife, Mr. Shoemaker was a pilot or aircrew in the Australian Air Force during World War Two. The big attraction in the Shepherds Hotel was the bar maid who was a buxom blond they called Sabrina. This could had been her nickname because she resembled Sabrina the very large school girl in the film "Blue Murder at St. Trinians". She was a good bar maid, friendly to all the young men. Across the road on the left hand side was the Victoria Hotel, there was not much attraction here. Continuing along the street one came to the Great Northern Hotel. This hotel had a nice beer garden with round tables where a group could sit and be served with large jugs of Swan lager. It was very relaxing to have a drink here on a nice warm evening. This hotel was owned by Mrs. Perryman. There was a friendly barmaid here called Dasiy. Now, Mrs. Perryman was a very good friend of Captain Ward (Alfie), and this was the only place that Alfie used to visit. Rocky Charlton came from Perth and he used to lodge at the Great Northern Hotel when he came to Geraldton. So it used to be a nice get together at the Great Northern with Rocky, Captain Ward, our Chief Officer, Chief Engineer the Geraldton Chief Of Police and a few of Mrs. Perryman's friends. On this visit to Geraldton Captain Ward decided to get an Australian driving licence. He hadn't learnt to drive a car before. He took a quick lesson around Geraldton. When the driving test day came a car pulled up at the foot of the gangway of the "New Westminster City" at 10.00 a.m.. The Chief of Police was driving the car. He was the examiner who was to carry out the test. At lunch time the news buzzed about

the ship and in the engine room that the Captain had passed his driving test. Captain Ward had got his Australian driving licence. Mind you, Geraldton was not heavy with traffic in those day. I don't think Captain Ward drove a car after that.

A few days before sailing Captain Ward was presented with Cockie the cockatoo in a nice cage, which was placed in the Captain's day room.



The above photograph shows Chief Officer Mark Higgins water skiing in Geraldton Harbour being towed by the ship's lifeboat, with "New Westminster City" in the back ground at the grain loading berth. The photograph was taken by Jan Dennis, 2nd Mate and developed by Mark Higgins in his dark room on "New Westminster City" (ship's office). Mark was a great photographer.

Cockie was now a sailor, I don't think he was put on the ships articles. We sailed for the U.K. via the Cape of Good Hope. The Suez Canal was closed at that time.

On Sundays when at sea Captain Ward would invite the senior officer to his room to have a pre-lunch drink, of course with Cockie in the cage in the captain's cabin, Cockie was the centre of attraction and talked about most of the time. On this particular Sunday we were sailing near the Tropic of Cancer off the West Coast of Africa, when Captain Ward decided to let Cockie out of the cage, Cockie could not fly very well. Cockie flapped about a bit and finally landed on the back of the arm chair that the Chief Engineer Frank Rowell was sitting in. Cockie was walking sideways along the back of the chair like birds do on a perch. You know how birds creep up on things. Cockie jumped on Frank's shoulder and stood there for a few minutes. Everyone had a good laugh. Captain Ward then went to the mini bar cabinet to pour out the second leg of drinks, with his back turned on Frankie. Cockie standing on Frankie's shoulder decided to have a peck at Frankie's right ear, it was a vicious peck, Frank gave out a scream, and at the same time gave Cockie such a clout, that Cockie went flying to the cabin deck, wings flapping and squawking. Captain Ward turned around alarmed stuttering "wha wha what's wrong with Cockie, what's wrong with Cockie", Frank spoke up and said "Cockie fell off the back of the

arm chair", which all in the room agreed. Cockie was picked up and confined to the cage from then on.

The vessel arrived in Avonmouth and discharged part cargo then around to Newcastle on Tyne for the final discharge of cargo, and then went to a drydock on the Tyne. Cockie remained onboard during the whole of this period. Captain Ward had a short leave and rejoined the ship bringing his wife with him for the next voyage. We sailed for New Orleans to load a grain cargo, on arrival there we had a long wait at anchor in the Mississippi River. We were waiting six weeks before going alongside to load the cargo. With the grain cargo onboard we sailed bound for Bombay via the Panama Canal.

Cockie had been onboard some months now. On some days, with nice weather, Cockie was taken to the bridge in the cage to see the world and for a change of scenery. The Second Mate was Jan Dennis from Somerset, the son of a farmer, he was a bit of a character. During long passages he would have some time to spare and would talk to Cockie during his afternoon watch. He would teach him some naughty phrases, something like "The old man's a b*****" and many others phrases.

When we arrived at Bombay, the anchorage was full of ships waiting to go into the port to discharge their cargos. When we anchored, there were four Reardon Smith's ships at anchor, the "Queen City", the "Eastern City" and one other which could had been our sistership the "Welsh City".

On some days the four masters from the Reardon Smith ships would go ashore together to the Agents. A boat used to do its rounds around the anchorage and take them ashore about 10 o'clock in the morning. Their first stop was Mr. Gerimal's shop in Fore Street in Bombay, where the masters would have coffee together and chat. Now, Mr. Gerimal was the owner of the outfitters shop, he would come to the Reardon Smith ships and measure you up for shirts, shorts, trousers, suits, boiler suits, etc., make them up and deliver them to the ship. They would then proceed to the agents office to do the ship's business and then go for lunch. Captain Ward was a great man for Scampi and after one of these lunches, the next day he went down with food poisoning, he was very ill, seriously ill. The Chief Steward John Loudon nursed the Captain with the greatest of care, with the help of Mrs. Ward. This illness went on for a couple of days, the Chief Officer Mark Higgins and John Loudon decided the best thing to do was to get a doctor. There was an Indian Naval vessel in the anchorage. A signal was sent to the Naval ship and asked if a doctor could attend our ship for the Captain, they agreed. A Naval launch soon arrived at the gangway with a doctor who attended to the Captain, he made a visit again the next day. Captain Ward soon recovered after the treatment.

It was a Sunday afternoon and Mark Higgins had just gone to the bridge to do his anchor watch, he was looking forward when cockie flew out of the the Captain's cabin starboard window. The Captain had let Cockie out of the cage and forgot to close the window. I suppose Cockie smelled the fresh air and thought he would find out where it was coming from. This was Cockie's first long distance flight. The Chief Officer Mark, with binoculars to hand, trained them on Cockie who finally landed on a Greek ship which was at anchor about 2 or 3 miles away. The "New Westminster City" came to an uproar, Mrs. Ward was crying that Cockie had gone, the Captain was shouting to the Chief Officer for help and everyone knew that Cockie had flown away. I was in the Chief Engineer's cabin having a chat with the Chief when Mark came running down the internal stairway and into the Chief's room to tell us that

Cockie had flown out of the old man's window and landed on a Greek ship. He wanted an Engineer to go with him to the Greek ship in the lifeboat. The Chief Frankie flatly refused saying that he was in a lifeboat for days during the World War 2 and didn't want to go in one again. I volunteered to go if the Third Engineer Alan Martin would come along, which he agreed to do. After collecting up a hand full of tools, just in case, Alan and myself went to the starboard lifeboat station. We got the starboard lifeboat engine running. The Lifeboat was lowered to the water. Onboard were the Chief Officer, two deck apprentices, (they always had the difficult jobs whether they liked it or not) the Third Engineer Alan Martin and myself. In the boat was Cockie's cage with a cloth to cover the cage so he would not see what was going on when we got him back in the cage. It was a nice winter's day in Bombay, sunshine and quite warm, the lifeboat was very light, a stiff breeze was blowing but you didn't notice that it was blowing up our stern. We made a good passage to the Greek ship, passing several of the ships at anchor on the way. We pulled alongside the ship's portside, where a rope ladder was hanging from the main deck to the waters edge. Fortunately this was on the lee side of the ship which was comfortable for us. There was no sign of anyone onboard. Mark climbed up the rope ladder with the end of a rope that was tied to Cockie's cage, just as his head got level with the ship's main deck a very large dog, it could have been a great Dane it certainly looked big enough, came at Mark. Mark quickly clambered down the rope ladder. We were in the lifeboat bobbing about trying to decide what to do next when a man walked along the deck to the rope ladder and shouted down to ask us what we wanted. He was an English man who was the Greek ship's Radio Officer. We explained to him that we were from the "**New Westminster City**" which was at anchor and that our Captain's parakeet had flown from our ship and landed on their ship's bridge. The Radio Officer said he would speak to the ship's Captain to see if Mark could go onboard. The big dog was still standing by the rope ladder looking down on us. Shortly after the Radio Officer came back and said it was alright for Mark to come aboard, the big dog was called away. Mark climbed up the rope ladder with the end of the rope and hauled up Cockie's cage and went to the ship's bridge with the Radio Officer. It was sometime before Mark came back and lowered Cockie and the cage down to us in the lifeboat. Mark said he had great difficulty catching Cockie. Cockie was on the starboard wing of the bridge and the wheelhouse door had to be opened and Cockie coaxed into the wheelhouse. He was exhausted after his flight and reluctant to be caught. With the help of some bird food Mark finally got Cockie into the cage. Cockie, now safely in our care, we shouted a thank you to the ship's Radio Officer who was standing by the rope ladder on the ship's main deck, with the big dog. We sailed away bound for the "**New Westminster City**".

The sun had set and it was getting cold the wind had picked up and the sea was very choppy, we were now heading into the wind and the lifeboat was pitching and rolling. All of us in the boat were dressed in our white's only shirt and shorts and we were feeling the cold. The temperature had dropped considerably. After a rough passage to the "**New Westminster City**" we got alongside. With the wind blowing down the starboard side, the sea was quite rough. The lifeboat was pitching badly it was very difficult to get the lifeboat falls hooked onto the lifeboat, with the heavy weight of the chains at the end of the falls swinging around our heads, it took all hands to manhandle these, we finally hooked up and were lifted out the water.

Cockie was back safely in the Captain's cabin. Our reward for this

venture was a large tot of ship's rum, which we needed to get ourselves warmed up.

With the "New Westminster City" spending so much time at anchor at New Orleans and Bombay, and the ship's next cargo was to load salt at Aden for Japan, Mrs. Ward decided to fly home to the U.K.. After discharge at Shimizu and Moji, the vessel drydocked at Shimonoseki. We sailed again for Geraldton to load grain for Dublin. Captain Ward had problems with his eye sight. Captain Danny Lloyd joined at Geraldton and relieved Captain Ward, who sailed with us to Dublin as a passenger. During the 11 months Cockie lived aboard he played havoc with the furniture coverings, etc, in the Captain's cabin. Cockie left the ship at Dublin.

A while after Captain Ward returned home he went for an operation to have cataracts removed from his eyes. He then went to work in the Cardiff Office as a Deck Superintendent. Captain Ward O.B.E. joined the Reardon Smith Line in 1917 and was promoted to Master in 1937, he served in the company for 51 years. When I became Engineer Superintendent in 1964 I had the good fortune of going to ships with Captain Ward, who taught and guided me on how to do many Superintendents duties. He treated me like a son. He was a great Shipmate.

Alec Osborne.

Letters to the Editor.

Having read Dave Mockets account of his time in Jeddah I would like to add a few more words about my time on board the m.v. Atlantic which at this time was under the Monrovia flag.

I joined the vessel on Dec. 2nd 1976 as Electrical Officer, having spent a very uncomfortable night before in a house which the agent found as all the hotels were full of arabs waiting for their visit to Mecca (The Haj) We were crowded into one room about six of us, filthy bed linen and cockroaches crawling about the floor, so we spent the night playing cards, smoking and fending off the "cockies" not even a stiff drink on hand.

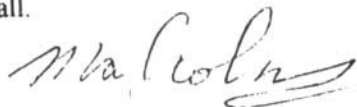
Next day we joined the vessel at the outer anchorage. When we eventually moved it was firstly to the inner anchorage. The customs officer (who I think was some relation of the agent) came on board and sealed the radio equipt and the bond. The seal our quick thinking catering officer Les Surrey stuck on with a weak flour solution, so we were able to peel this off many times to get at our "booze". Xmas and New Year was not as dry as we had expected. The only problem was getting rid of the empty beer cans when we were alongside, that we did by making holes in the cans and throwing them over board. The only other problem was stopping merry people wandering around the deck with their cans as all our drinking had to be behind closed curtains. Towards the end of the bond we ended up with some very old wine which we strained through a hankerchief, desperate times. When we did manage to sail I think all that was left in the bond was a bottle of peppermint cordial. I remember the "siddiki" which I thought tasted a little like Bacardi rum, it didn't quite take the enamel off the teeth but we were thankful for the extra supply.

When we did get alongside the cement having been stowed under wet wood, a lot of it had to be dug out. I don't think the helicopter discharge was a great success as the engines had to be stripped down every six weeks because of the sand and cement dust this from the broken bags. I think each lift was about 2tonne, still money was no object even tho' it was around \$60 a lift.

We were in Jeddah just over 3 months and then sailed for Ulsan Korea where I paid off on April 4th 1977. I must admit at one time I thought it would be the first time I joined and left a ship without going anywhere.

I enjoyed my stay in Jeddah, thanks to all the crew and officers I sailed with, altho' I don't think I would go through it again.

Best wishes to all.



Malcolm Bennington.

S.S. "Leeds City" (3)**POTI – GEORGIA**

Arrived at the entrance to this port and stood by awaiting pilot to come aboard. Many of the crew becoming disgruntled – as our cook had prepared our evening meal, as time was approaching 5.00 p.m.

Whilst lying at that position there was suddenly a great surge of foam, a few feet astern, then from these depths a Soviet "sub" came to the surface and remained stationary on the surface, until the arrival of the harbour pilot's launch. But now as you were enjoying the Soviet regime – this pilot came aboard with two fully armed soldiers, one taking his position at the top of the rope ladder and the second "sharp shooter" positioned himself in the wheel house right behind the "guy" on the wheel. (No way out situation).

After the vessel arrived alongside the quayside, a very large, overweight Commissar, together with a very attractive "blond bombshell" lady came to the ship, and took up supervisory positions alongside hatch no. 4. This "comic outfit" then assembled all the existing crew, from the "old man" right down to the two deck boys, and all discharge books were presented to this "big wig". Then everyone, irrespective of rank, were called before "this great man" and their then present facial structure was compared against their photo in their respective discharge books. If your face did not comply with your photo picture, you were then got ready for the Siberian Salt Mines for many years to come. At this point everything on the ship was shut off, then the whole vessel was thoroughly searched from the top of the mastheads to the very bottom of the respective holds. This "glamour puss" then decided that the radio room be completely sealed off, and that all existing crew rooms were thoroughly searched, including your own personal attire. The writer was also amazed by the large amount of "Soviet subs" either being constructed or repaired. All the "dockers" on the quayside were large Amazonian sized ladies who, if you happened to say the wrong thing to them, would probably "split" you in half, if you said "boo" to them.

My second half could also relate my episode in Durban at the end of our "propellor" voyage from Vancouver, where we viewed the terrible destruction of a Scandinavian oil tanker moored on the other side of the Durban harbour. This fire occurred through an "on deck" electricity fault, and many crew members and shore firemen regrettably lost their lives in these circumstances.

The writer is also endeavouring to locate the tanker vessel's name, whilst recalling this piece of past history from the Scandinavian authorities in their various countries. The writer also recalls viewing the terrible views and scenes of this tanker's hull as she was being towed around to the scrap yard in Durban.

Charles Boyd.

New Member

Mr. Ralph Woodward is now a member of "Shipmates", he lives in Donvale, Victoria, Australia. Ralph served his apprentice with the Reardon Smith Line and sailed with them for several years he was on the "Australian City" with John Cann in 1965. Captain John Cann met up with Ralph again when John was Master of the "Vancouver City" in Newcastle NSW. Ralph was working for BHP. Ralph is also a friend of our member Peter Hemnell.

News From Members.

Our member Graham Griffiths, was working as Technical Manager for Acomarit Oriental Ship Management, (now part of V ships Group) for two and a half years in Singapore. He had the opportunity to return to a position in the U.K. He is now General Manager of Golar Management. Golar owns six LPG Carriers and manage four with four new buildings on order. The company will be involved only with LNG transportation which is a rapidly growing market.

Graham now lives in London.

In December 2001 Joe Fitzsimmons wrote to say that he was joining the "Queensland Star" for a voyage, Joe sailed on this vessel as Chief Engineer a few times. Joe and Carol have now moved to a new home in Largs, Scotland.

Our member Captain Terry Haxel wrote to say he is now 50 years old and resigned from the sea. He intends to do some surveying work or part time marine work. We wish Terry the best of luck.

Our member Mr. Charles Boyd was hospitalized from the 10th December to 22nd December 2001. We send him our best wishes and hope that he is now fully recovered. I thank Charles for writing a story about his experiences on the "Leeds City" (3) which is included in this edition.

Obituary

Our member Frank James Tinsley crossed the bar at his home in Barry on the 18th January 2002. The funeral service was held at Tynewydd Funeral Home, Barry on the 25th January. The following "Shipmates" members attended the funeral service Alf Thomas, Ted Powell, Captain Ed Harrison, , Commodore Oliver Lindsay and Alec Osborne.

Frank attended the Reardon Smith Nautical School, Cardiff, from 1945 to 1948 after which he became an Apprentice with the Reardon Smith Line. He joined the S.S. "Madras City" in April 1949. He then sailed on the S.S."Tacona City" and the M.V."King City" and left the Reardon Smith Line on 24th February 1953. On gaining his Second Mates Certificate he sought pastures new and had a varied sea career until he retired in 1994. He was the coxswain of the Barry lifeboat.

May we express our sympathy to his wife and family.

The last newsletter was late in delivery and some members received poor print on some of the pages, this was due to unforeseen circumstances. The last issue of "Shipmates" was numbered incorrectly, it was numbered 25 but should had been No.21. This issue is back on course No. 22. I apologize for this mistake.

Urgent more stories are required for "Shipmates". *Editor.*