



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.25 December 2002.

SPECIAL ISSUE.



M.V. "Santa Clara Valley"

M.V. "Santa Clara Valley". (Ex " East Lynn")

Built 1928 by William Doxford & Sons Ltd, Pallion, Sunderland as "East Lynn" for Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons, Ltd.. Sir William, being born and bred at Appledore, must have decided to call the ship after the river East Lynn which runs through the little town of Lynmouth, Devonshire. You remember, the little town that got flooded in the 1950's, when the rivers East Lynn and West Lynn overflowed their banks sweeping several people, houses and cars etc., out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Continued on page No.2.

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

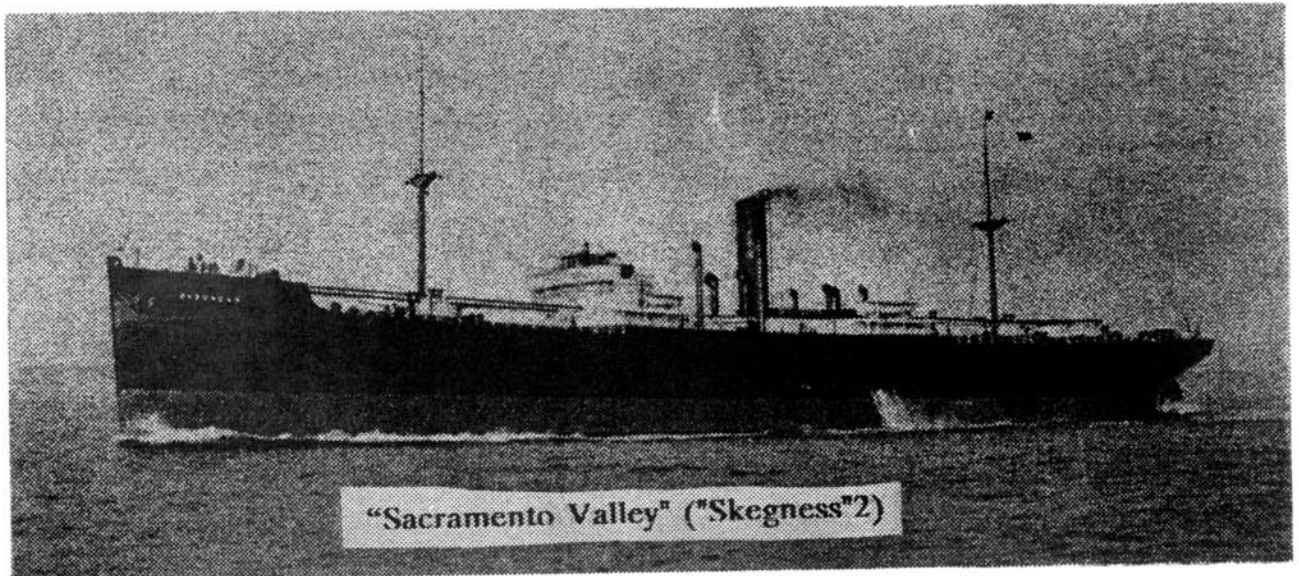


Continued from page No.1.

The **"East Lynn"** was 4,702 gross tons, and in 1928 was renamed the **"Santa Clara Valley"** most likely this name was chosen to suit the North Western American coastal trade. In 1941 on the 24th April the **"Santa Clara Valley"** was bombed and sunk by aircraft in Nauplia Bay, Greece. One member of the crew was lost. One of our members Mr. Daniel Brosnan was a survivor he is now 80 years old and lives in Cardiff. See his story on page No. 15.

"Siam City" Built in 1911 as the **"Winfred"** for Hamburg Bremer Africa Line, Germany was taken as a prize in 1919 and managed by H.Hogarth, Glasgow. In 1921 Reardon Smith took the ship into the St.Just Steamship Company, and was renamed **"Siam City"**. In 1927 she was sold to a Yugoslavian Company and renamed **"Gundulic"**. In 1934 the vessel was wrecked at Puerto Bueno, Chile and, in 1944 sold to the Chilean Navy who re-floated, repaired and renamed her **"Magallanes"** before going into service for the Chilean Navy. In 1955 the vessel was sold to a Chilean Company and renamed **"Springwater"**. The vessel was broken up in 1958.

"Skegness"(1). Built in 1900 as **"Polurrious"** and in 1917 the vessel was sold to Cornborough Shipping Line Ltd., renamed **"Skegness"(1)** in 1923 the vessel was sold to a Japanese Company and renamed **"Sappora Maru No.11"**. In 1945 the vessel was torpedoed and sunk by the American submarine U.S.S. **"Bark"** in the Pacific Ocean.



"Skegness" (2). Built 1924 at Workman, Clark & Co., Belfast for Oakwin **"Sacramento Valley"**. Steamship Co., a subsidiary company of Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons Ltd., went to St.Just Steamship Co., then to Reardon Smith Line in 1928 and in 1931 was renamed **"Sacramento Valley"**. The vessel was sunk by a German submarine on the 6th June 1941 west of the Cape Verde Islands. 3 crew members were lost.

"Stromness". Built in 1902 as **"Poldhu"**. In 1919 went to Cornborough Shipping Line (RSL) and renamed **"Stromness"** in 1919 was sold to a Norwegian company and was called **"Bravore"**. In 1922 the vessel was sold to a Japanese company and renamed

"Sakaye Maru". The vessel was sold on to another Japanese company and called "Sakae Maru". In 1944 she was torpedoed and sunk by the American submarine "Bang" in the China Sea.

"Salient". Built in 1905 by Short Bros. Sunderland in 1935 was sold to the Leeds Shipping Co. Ltd. (Reardon Smith) but, the vessel never traded for the company and was scrapped 1935.

Note:- Cornborough Shipping Line. Oakwin Steamship Co., St.Just Steamship Co. & Leeds Shipping Co., were all subsidiary Companies of Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons Ltd..

Letters to the Editor.

I have very much enjoyed the various accounts of humour and horror that occurred on the RSL ships. I enjoyed my 13 years there.

In Issue # 20 Jon Hewson lists me as 3/O in 1961 on the 'Queen City'. I am aged for sure and think that I'm pretty smart on occasions. However, I don't think that I could have persuaded RSL to appoint me as 3/O prior to my apprenticeship at a mere 14 ½ years old!

We do keep in contact with Jon through business and so I shall have to remonstrate with him. I think Jon was Chief Engineer already when I first sailed with him – and me Chief Officer!

It all seems such a long time ago when I left the "Elena" in Mazatlan in January 1976 not to return to sea again.

We had been discharging some very interesting heavy lifts for a copper mine somewhere up on the Mexico / USA border. TMM and the Receivers had wanted me to remain to oversee the discharge in Mazatlan after everybody else had left some time previously in Ensenada. They even suggested that I stay to follow it through to final destination. A nice idea but I recall that the railways had won the contract for inland haulage and they had assumed that the shortest dimension was the base of each item. Sadly not true. They must have had the very devil of a job because there were some very large, very heavy (up to 90 Mtonnes) and most awkward shapes.

We had loaded this entire crushing plant in Kobe where the stevedores could only be described as professional. Mazatlan was quite different and we did the discharge with stevedores supplying the labour.

Fun to have all the officers involved operating the heavy lift derricks, communicating by the walkie-talkies. We were all on Mexican television too as it turned out to be quite an important development in the making.

I have often wondered over the years how they eventually managed to get it all to where it was supposed to be!

I left the sea for the lure of money to go to the heavily congested port of Jeddah with Gray MacKenzie. That, too, was good fun and hard work but very well paid!

The "Atlantic" arrived with timber and cement for discharge and had to wait for a very substantial period. I actually made trips out to the vessel with friends in the ship's lifeboat a couple of times before she was eventually brought in to the old and ramshackle cement pier.

We even located ship's spares in the auction area that had been sent to Jeddah and not identified properly nor claimed. At the dead of night we arranged to have them put on board bypassing all the Customs and Security. Had we not, they would probably be lying there still.

Jeddah was very heavily congested with some 210 ships waiting at anchor for berths when I arrived. Cement ships were waiting for up to 9 months for a berth – some were discharged at anchor with landing craft barges and others, the epitome of financial excess, were discharged by helicopters!

Keith Fulker was Master when she eventually came alongside and I have to say that I did enjoy quite a few pleasant interludes on board. We even managed to supply him with a few gallons of 'siddiki', the local moonshine, to keep them going!

Several other RSL vessels arrived under new Owners whilst I was there and it was somewhat sad to see the dilapidated condition in some cases – the old "Orient City" as the 'Maldiva Promoter' came in with bagged sugar, substantial quantities of which were wetted due to holes in the side!

I stayed in Saudi Arabia for a total of 19 years in Port management and then Ships' Agency leaving in 1995 to work in the Baltic Exchange on behalf of Saudi Interests.

Economic downturn resulted in that position collapsing but a new opportunity emerged to set up and run a surveying Company here in Yemen. It is most interesting and diverse. The ships arriving here are mostly old ladies, which generates business for us so I cannot complain.

The country is geographically interesting, the history fascinating, the flora & fauna a treat to behold and the people mostly friendly. At least I have not been kidnapped yet but I do present rather a large target here in Hodeidah being one of only nine Western expatriates amongst the 350,000 population and standing best part of a foot above the local populace.

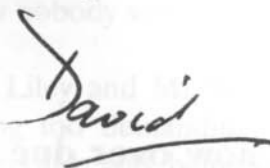
Some of the surveying situations could hardly be made up and I have to stop reminiscing for the 'good old days'.

Just imagine this situation where I was defending a substantial claim on a 25,000 DWT 'Fortune' type vessel for allegedly damaged steel. The local Court sent armed police to summon the Master, the Agents and the Surveyor to a hearing. The unshaven Master was wearing a vest; swimming trunks and flip-flops wondered if he should change into something more suitable. Before we were whisked away, he told the 2/O where he was going – which was about the only positive thing that happened on board. He had a total complement of 18 persons on board, including himself, 7 different nationalities and his Owners reckoned they were 3 men over-manned.

We won the day and then there was urgency for her to sail. She went at almost midnight with three men forward and two men aft, which included the officer! As she was leaving, the flare of the stern hit one of the quayside cranes and that introduced a few more hours of fees!

Happy and varied days but I think that I would rather be tending to the compost in the garden than dealing with the similar stuff that abounds here!

Best Regards



David Mockett

NOTICE

Now Shipmates have received your subscription we need more short stories one or more pages would be appreciated.

New Member

Steve Broderick is now a member of "Shipmates". Steve was a Deck Cadet with the Reardon Smith Line. Fifteen years ago while sailing as Second Officer on the M.V. "Tula" with Captain Bob Baker he met up with Tracy the Bob's daughter. They married 9 years ago and have two children Emily and Jack. Steve lives in Bristol and works for a Marine Insurance Company.

Members News

I have had a letter from a Captain Jackson who was writing on behalf of Mrs. Betty Lester to say that she has given up her home and will be accommodated in a care home. Mrs. Lester who is 88 years old does not wish to receive her copy of "Shipmates" any longer. He wrote to say that Mrs. Lester is reasonably well and I replied to him to say that we send Mrs. Lester our best wishes.

Mr. Bert Lester was Chief Engineer with The Reardon Smith Line .

Captain Bob Baker writes to say that he is semi retired and doing some work for C.H. Willie of Cardiff.

Our member Captain Peter Bloomfield who lives in Houston, Texas, telephoned to say that he has had an operation for cancer of his pancreas and is now fully recovered and been given the all clear to go back at work.

Merchant Navy Memorial.

A 25 foot sundial was unveiled on the 9th October 2001 in the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, in memory of the 32,000 British Merchant Seamen who lost their lives in the Second World War.

On 27th September 2001, World Maritime Day a memorial was unveiled at the International Maritime Organisation Headquarters, London, in memory of the worlds seafarers. It is a 10 ton bronze sculpture of the bow of a cargo ship with a sailor standing on the bow. The statue is 7 metres high.

Notice.

£3 The subscription for the year 2002 is now over due,

will members who have not paid please send in their money .

No other reminder Notice will be issued.

Thank you to all the members who gave a donation above the subscription fee towards the running of "Shipmates".

The King & Queen City

The write-up in the 19th Issue on the Queen City brought back memories of fifty years ago, for I had only rejoined R.S.L. for two days when I was sent to Glasgow for a refit of the Homer City, the main item there was to fit fresh water cooling to the main engine and generators, which lasted about six weeks, then straight to Doxfords for the building of two ships, to be named as above. I understood that the Palace had been consulted about the names, which were agreed, but later R.S.L. were told that such names could not be used again.

With the loss of so many lives at sea during the war shipping companies were having a job to man their ships and didn't have staff available for supervising the building of new ships, so that I was the first inspector that Doxfords had had since the war. With the huge drive for production during the war, and with new vessels sometimes being sunk not long after leaving the Yard, standards had slipped.

The building of the hull and engines was already underway when I arrived so the standard requirement that there should be good clean rivet holes, with proper countersink, and plate edge preparation and gap should be correct before welding, and with many other standard requirements, progress slowed up so that for the first six months I had a hard time, but by then other inspectors were arriving at the Yard so matters considerably improved.

My first visit to the Engine Works was quite disastrous. The bedplate for the first engine was finished and in place, with the 20 ton crankshaft hanging overhead ready to lower into place. In this position I checked the five main bearings with a small ball headed hammer ex Lloyds, and found on three bearings, the white metal was not adhering to the steel body. There was quite an uproar, with management being called in, plus the Lloyds surveyor, all of whom had no other option but to agree. By this time the top and bottom end bearings were checked and another four bearings condemned. This brought the metalling of bearings to a standstill. Hoyts the white metalling suppliers were called in, and a correct method the remetalling process evolved. This took about three weeks, and a similar loss of production in the Engine Works. I had served the last year of my apprenticeship in Doxfords and had been very happy there. I was on good terms with foremen, chargemen, and workmen, but now nobody would speak to me and if they saw me coming, turned away.

Mr Liley and Mr Watson questioned me very closely, suggesting that perhaps I was being too demanding. I could only reply that Lloyds fully agreed, a new metalling procedure was being devised, furthermore word had got around about the bearings and superintendents from other companies were arriving to check their engines. A very difficult time.

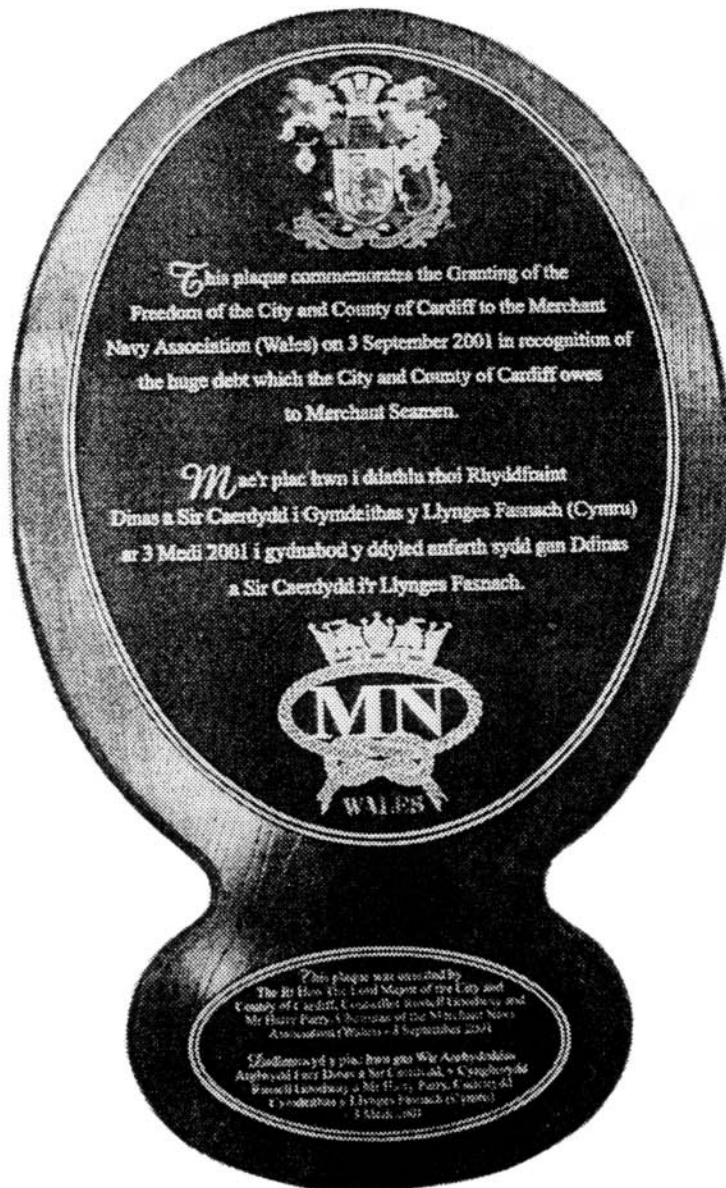
With crew accommodation amidships and big improvements in officers accommodation compared with our prewar ships the building of these fine ships went on and the officers who were to sail in the King City arrived. Captain Bryce Thomas a cheerful likeable man, but after the first pleasing look around, it was obvious he was quite unhappy and would give no reason for this. Presently the young third mate

nervously approached me, saying that Bryce was very superstitious, wouldn't for example use the word "pig" it had to be curly tail or something like that. He was superstitious about "green" and our wheelhouse and chartroom were painted a light green. Repainting them in white restored all Bryce's good humour

So the ships sailed, somewhat delayed in delivery, and this writer very much under a cloud with both Doxfords and R.S.L. Surprisingly therefore when I was sent up to Doxfords again for the building of the second group of ships I was received in both shipyard and engine works with great goodwill, brought about apparently by succeeding superintendents continuing complaints, so that Doxfords, both shipyard and engine works completely reformed their work systems, to the benefit of both themselves and shipowners.

Tom Major.

FREEDOM OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
FOR THE MERCHANT NAVY IN WALES.



A PICTURE OF THE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE MOUNTED ON A WALL IN THE MARBLE HALL AT THE CITY HALL, CARDIFF.

A Day to Remember

Monday 3rd September 2001 was only the second time that Merchant Navy Day had been recognised, but for Merchant Seamen in Wales it was much more than that... It was the day that the City and County of Cardiff honoured the Merchant Navy in Wales with the Freedom of the City. This occasion was the culmination of representations started some years before by the late Bill Henke and the Merchant Navy Association Wales. You may say, fifty-six years after the end of World War Two, "it's about time". Nevertheless, better late than never!

The day started at about 11 o'clock when hundreds of Merchant Seamen could be seen making their way up the steps to the Assembly Room in the City Hall of Cardiff.

By fifteen minutes before the ceremony was about to begin all of the four hundred seats laid out had been occupied and many people were standing at the back of the room.

At 12 o'clock precisely heralded by a fanfare from the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Symphonic Brass, Merchant Navy Standards entered the room and took up their positions. After which entered the Lord Mayor, Councillor Russell Goodway, Mr Harry Parry, Chairman of the MNA (Wales) and the Chief Executive, followed by representatives of the Church, and other Civic Dignitaries.

The audience stood while prayers were offered for the City and County of Cardiff by the Mayor's Chaplain, and the Reverend Ken Jordan offered prayers for the Merchant Navy Association, Wales.

The Lord Mayor then addressed the meeting and spoke of the huge debt, which was owed by the City and County of Cardiff to the Merchant Navy, which played a fundamental role in the growth of the City's prosperity today.

The leader of the opposition, Councillor Rodney Burman also addressed the meeting.

The Resolution granting the Freedom of the City to the Merchant Navy Association Wales was read by the Chief Executive "that in recognition of the huge debt which the City and County of Cardiff owes to the Merchant Navy which played a fundamental role in the City's growth and prosperity to become one of Europe's most vibrant capital cities, the privilege and distinction of marching through the streets of Cardiff, the capital city of Wales on ceremonial occasions with banners flying and bands playing conferred upon the Merchant Navy Association Wales".

Mr Harry Parry, Chairman of the Merchant Navy Association Wales received from the Lord Mayor the Honorary Freedom of the City and County of Cardiff. Mr Parry then signed the Freedom Roll on behalf of the Merchant Navy Association, Wales, following which he addressed the meeting on behalf of the Merchant Navy Association and read an extract from the poem "Merchant Seamen" by Edward Carpenter. Mr Parry then presented a painting to the Lord Mayor, as a gift from the Merchant Navy Association, Wales. The painting depicted a convoy appearing out of the mist! The artist was Mr Harold Howells, a member of the MNA.

The Lord Mayor and Mr Parry then unveiled a commemorative plaque, which will be placed on permanent display in the Marble Hall.

Following the hymn "Eternal Father Strong to Save" the Welsh National Anthem and the National Anthem the Civic Party left the Assembly Room and proceeded to the front of the City Hall where the salute was taken by the Lord Mayor and Mr Harry Parry on behalf of the Merchant Association Wales as some one hundred and fifty to two hundred of the four hundred merchant seamen took part in the march around the City.

This concluded the formal proceedings, and all those in attendance were invited to join the Civic dignitaries and take refreshments in the Assembly Room which were supplied by the City and have a drink at the bar, which was hosted by the Merchant Navy Association, Wales.

It was a day for remembering and meeting old friends, a day to reminisce and contemplate those who were no longer with us. Above all, it was a day to be proud of having served in the Merchant Navy!

All in all, truly, "A day to remember".

"Quebec City" (2) and U-156. A Supplement by Cyril Hudson .

I read with interest the article by Commodore Oliver Lindsay of the loss of the "QUEBEC CITY" (2) in the No. 18 issue of "Shipmates". This was not the first wartime incident she was involved in, on the 3rd December 1940 she was attacked and damaged by German aircraft gunfire in the North Atlantic off the Irish Coast.

The courteous Captain of the U-156 which sank the "QUEBEC CITY" (2) was Lieutenant Werner Hartenstein, holder of the Knight's Cross, one of Germany's most successful U-Boat commanders. The U-156 was a produce of A G W Weser, Bremen a type IX C submarine, commissioned 4th September, 1941 commanded by Hartenstein from that date until 8th March 1943. On the submarine's 5 patrols, Hartenstein sank 19 (97, 190 grt) ships and damaged 3 others. There was one dubious affair which involved the U-156 while on her 2nd patrol, with all her torpedoes expended she attacked the American tanker OREGON 7,017grt with her 105mm deck gun. There was another U-Boat which was never identified which was also active in the attack on the OREGON in the Caribbean on 28th February 1942. When the crew were attempting to launch the port side lifeboat they were machine gunned, killing 6 of them, including the Master: Ingvald C Nilsen.

On 20th August 1942 the U-156 departed Lorient with 3 other submarines forming the Eisbar group, which in early September was ordered to operate independently. In the South Atlantic on 12th September, Hartenstein torpedoed a ship which caused wide reaching repercussions. When he surfaced he discovered to his amazement he had sank the Cunard troop transport LACONIA 19,680grt with 2,732 people aboard, including 1,800 Italian prisoners of war. What followed was one of the most dramatic rescue operations in the history of sea warfare.

After calling for help to any nearby ships over an open radio channel, other German, Italian submarines and 3 Vichy French naval vessels became involved in the rescue operation. At one time the U-156 herself had 260 survivors aboard, however 4 days after the sinking while towing 4 of the LACONIA'S lifeboats and flying a four square metre large Red Cross flag, guns unmanned she was attacked. An American Liberator bomber flew over, returning shortly afterwards and on 4 runs released 6 bombs. One bomb caused a lifeboat to capsize and one bomb exploded against the U-156 causing considerable damage. Hartenstein put the 55 Britons and 55 Italians still aboard into the remaining lifeboats and sailed from the scene to do some repairs. To his credit Donitz did not call off the rescue operation, even when early the next day another of his submarines U-506 was attacked by aircraft. She had 142 survivors aboard at the time, and managed to dive to 195 feet the bombs causing no damaged. Later the same day submarines Flag Officer issued an order that all rescue of survivors from any sunken ship was to be discontinued. Only Captains and Chief Engineers would be captured for interrogation purposes. This "No Survivors Rescue" became known as the LACONIA ORDER and was used by the British prosecutors at the Nuremberg War Crime trials as a command to murder. However the international military court did not proceed with this interpretation. Following the sinking of the LACONIA the U-156 resumed her patrol and on the 19th October the QUEBEC CITY (2) was in Hartenstein's periscope view, and with torpedo and gunfire she was sunk. So perhaps Captain Thomas was lucky when he was invited aboard by Hartenstein to view some charts, but not taken as a POW and allowed to return to the lifeboat. Maybe the U-156 Captain had second thoughts about any more survivors aboard his submarine. With the recent order fresh on his mind he returned to Lorient 16th November 1942.

The U-156 left her base on 16th January 1943 to operate in the Western Atlantic and Caribbean with no sinking on this patrol. Then on 8th March she was moving East on the surface about 330 miles East of Barbados when disaster struck and her luck ran out. The U-Boat's lookouts must have been extremely lax, even some of the crew were sunbathing on deck when a USN Catalina of VP-53 (Lt.E. Dryden) made a classic attack, coming from behind some clouds he dropped 4 Torpex bombs from 100 feet. U-156 broke into 3 parts and sank immediately, though 11 of her crew, most likely the sunbathers were seen in the water. A lifeboat and food were dropped, though a thorough search the next day found no survivors. The loss of the "QUEBEC CITY" (2) had been avenged.

Cyril Hudson

"MV PRINCE RUPERT CITY"

I read with extreme interest, the article from Brian Boyer, relating to his joining of the "PRINCE RUPERT CITY" at Basra in September 1971.

I was also on that vessel at that time, as Engineer Cadet, but left it in Basra.

We loaded grain in the St Lawrence Seaway (Quebec, I believe) and at that time we weren't aware of the discharge port, only that it was somewhere up the Persian Gulf. The Master, Captain Thornhill, was concerned about the heat affecting us and insisted that we all purchase suitable headwear in Quebec prior to sailing, for protection from the midday sun!

We arrived at the Shatt-al-arab anchorage and joined all the other vessels waiting to go alongside for discharge. We'd only been there for a short time when lifeboats from all the other ships came alongside wanting to exchange films. Some had already been there for months and we were told to expect a long wait. At first Captain Thornhill would only allow us on deck for short periods and definitely not in the midday sun (and wearing our hats?), but eventually he relented. The weather changed daily from oppressive heat with high humidity to sand storms and the like.

Eventually we were told that we would be paying off there and as you can imagine there was great elation. The day arrived and the new officers arrived, looking very weary from their long arduous journey. We all thought we knew what to expect for our trip home, by the comments made from those just joining, but the big difference was that we were going home.

A "launch" took us to the landing pier and then we had to sit around and wait, outside the Post Office for our "transport" to arrive to take us to Basra. Captain Thornhill and the Chief Engineer, Len Taylor, had a Mercedes car to themselves and Len was particularly pleased about this. The rest of us piled into some form of van/mini bus with all of the luggage precariously tied to the roof. Were we going through a desert with this lot??

The journey seemed endless and of course very hot and after an hour or so we came across a car with the bonnet in the air. It turned out to be the Mercedes of the Captain and Chief Engineer which had broken down! They both got into our vehicle and Len in particular was very quiet??

After arriving in Basra we had a meal of lamb curry in a local hotel before boarding the plane to Baghdad and then onto London the following day, all without mishap.

Terry Davis

MEMORY BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS - "SHIPMATES"

Over 60 persons have so far have expressed an interest in supporting and purchasing the book that I plan to produce, so as a result, I have already started working on it. In fact, I have already received about 100 photographs from 11 persons. It is intended that it will be your book - I will just be putting it together. The way I will put it together is that all the participants will be indexed by their surnames and the book will just flow like that. ie. "From the collection of Tony Crowther" - followed by each of his photos and text underneath - then on to the next person in the same way. So to get things moving along please send me your old photographs right now. - I will scan them and send them back airmail to you shortly thereafter. Pictures can be any size, colour or black and white. Don't worry if they are a bit faded etc. I can probably improve them somewhat. If possible, please put a number on the back of each picture then write out the brief text on a separate sheet alongside the number. Try to remember to put the ship name, date and persons in the photo. Also, mix them up a bit with ship and people photos - whatever you think would be of interest to other shipmates. A lot of pictures taken inevitably have one or more persons holding a can of beer! Nothing wrong with that but try and mix it up a bit so that we also have a good selection of "No beer pictures" - we don't want people to think that's all we did at sea! Also, I thought about 15 pictures would be about right for each person but some have less and some have more. Just send whatever you are happy with but bear in mind I will probably have to do a bit of editing as I feel necessary ie. if someone sends me 50 then I will have to pick out what I think are the best ones - could be 15, but could be more depending how it looks in the big picture so to speak. Also, I will be happy to receive pictures either on a cd in jpg, formatted to be viewed on any computer or via the internet to my e-mail address which is

tcmarcon@aol.com

My plan is to produce this book by the middle of next year so I am asking that all photos should be sent to me as as soon as possible but latest by the end of January. Anybody who cannot meet that deadline because they are away working at sea or overseas, is excluded from that deadline and they should just send them to me when they are able to, say before the end of May 2002. We want to include everybody that wants to be included and that includes relatives of shipmates who subscribe to the newsletter and may have interesting RSL pictures.

Please mail to:

Tony Crowther
 P.O.Box 96045
 3080-11666, Steveston Hwy,
 Richmond,
 B.C. V7A 5J4
 Canada

"SHIPMATES" year 2002 Calendars are still available from Tony at £6.00 each, write to the same above Canada address.

Bee-Keeping – Indian Style!

In the 1970's, the Company's two big bulk carriers, the "ATLANTIC CITY" & the "INDIAN CITY" were on long term charters loading iron ore either at the port of Murmagoa, on the west coast of India or at the Malaysian east coast ports of Dungun or Rompin.

From February to September 1968, I was serving as Chief Officer on board the "ATLANTIC CITY" under the command of Captain Joe Thornhill. Captain Thornhill, will I am sure, be well remembered by all who ever sailed with him. A tall powerful man, every inch a British shipmaster and not inclined to suffer fools gladly! No Christian names were ever used by Captain Thornhill – it was "Good morning, Mr. Mate or Mr. Boyer." 'Master under God' really was a phrase coined especially for the Captain Thornhills of the Merchant Navy.

At Murmagoa, the big bulk carriers initially loaded about 27,000 tons of iron ore while lying alongside the quay at the old bulk handling plant. Then because of draught limitations at the berth, the ships then had to shift to the outer roads and there load the remaining 18,000 tons using ship's gear from barges lying alongside.

In the Indian Ocean, the southwest monsoon prevails from late May till the end of September. Strong southwest winds and heavy seas prevail over the northern Indian Ocean during those months.

In the southwest monsoon weather and sea conditions at the outer anchorage in Murmagoa Harbour, are too rough, for large vessels to lie safely at anchor while completing their loading.

Loading then reverts to the Malaysian ports until the fair or northeast monsoon returns in the autumn and this season of light winds and calm seas in the Indian Ocean means the vessels can resume their voyages to Murmagoa.

On my first trip to Murmagoa in February 1968, we had completed loading our 25,000-ton parcel of iron ore lumps alongside at the bulk handling plant and the time had come for the "ATLANTIC CITY" to shift under main engines to the anchorage.

The shift was ordered for 1300 hours and shortly before that time, I reported to Captain Thornhill that we were ready to move. The Captain ordered me to take up my station on the forecastle head ready to let go the bow lines once the Indian pilot came on board..

On my way forward, while walking along the main deck, I was met by the Deck Serang and his men coming back towards me.

"Stand by Serang," says I, "We are going to shift ship to the anchorage."

"Oh, no Malim Sahib," pipes up the Serang, "Too many bees on foc'sle head."

With the Serang following a long way behind I went up the foc'sle head ladder and sure enough, there right in the eyes of the ship, was a huge swarm of bees clustered round the base of the Suez Canal davit. I could hear a warning humming noise emanating from the swarm, and the Serang was quite sure that they would not take it too kindly being disturbed by our actions while letting go the lines. I was certainly inclined to agree with him.

"What's the delay Mr. Boyer?" came Joe's voice, roaring out of the loudhailer on the bridge – Joe was getting impatient. I couldn't call him on the talk back phone as that was close to the bee swarm, so I had to walk back down the 400 feet of foredeck to shout up to

the bridge what we had found.. Big Joe was not amused and to this day, I am sure he felt that I was instrumental in inviting the bees to join our happy band. As we all know, it did not pay to argue with Captain Thornhill, especially if any delay was going to interfere with his afternoon nap!

I explained the situation to the Captain as best I could and invited him to come up on the foc'sle head to see for himself. He did not deign to avail himself of the opportunity to view the problem at first hand.

He ordered me to go ashore and call the Agents and explain to them what was delaying our shift.

Later in the afternoon, with our vessel still tied up alongside and the bees still in residence of the foc'sle, I was called to the Captain's cabin. There I found Joe together with our agent and a skinny, spindly shanked Indian gentleman, complete in Nehru hat and Ghandi dhoti.

"This is Mr. Battercharjee" announced Joe, "he is a bee keeper and will remove the swarm of bees for you, since you seem unable to sort out the problem yourself." (See what I meant about Cap'n Thornhill.). "You are to afford him every co-operation and I expect the operation to be completed as soon as possible, so that we can complete the shift before the southwest monsoon arrives." Since the monsoon was still three months away, you will realise that Cap'n Joe was missing his afternoon beddy byes very much and since I was the nearest, I got it in the neck!

Mr. Battercharjee and I together with the Deck Serang, his men and a small boy who had mysteriously appeared from somewhere – (assistant bee-keeper?), made our way for'd. We climbed the ladder to the foc'sle head very carefully and sure enough the bees were still there and the swarm had, if anything, grown considerably in size!

I asked Mr. Battercharjee what, if anything he needed to deal with the swarm.

"Bring me a bucket please, with some kerosene (paraffin) and a handful of jute (cotton waste)."

"Ah!" thinks I. "I know what he is going to do – he is going to make some smoke and make the bees drowsy, so that he can put them in a box and Bob's your uncle!"

I gave the Serang the necessary order and shortly afterwards he came back with a bucket containing a few pints of paraffin and a handful of cotton waste which he gave to the small boy who then gave it to our bee-keeper.

Mr. Battercharjee brought out a large U.S. Amy Zippo lighter, which he lit up, then he ignited the cotton waste and crept close to the humming black ball of bees with the Serang and yours truly close behind him.

Suddenly, without any warning, old Battercharjee bungs the burning waste into the bucket of paraffin which immediately catches fire and before I could say "Here. What's going on?" he threw the whole flaming mess over the swarm of bees.

He then spun on his heels and headed at a great rate of knots for the foc'sle head ladder. The great black ball of bees exploded into a million angry buzzing insects intent on one thing and one thing only – Revenge!

Together with my Serang and the deck crew, we all headed for the same ladder as Battercharjee and headed off down the foredeck towards the after accommodation.

Battercharjee had the legs on all of us (He'd obviously done the same thing before and was in better shape for the 100 yard dash!).

As I reached the safety of the accommodation storm door, I remembered that Mr. Sukkienick, our Polish émigré Chief Engineer, had shut down the air conditioning and consequently all doors, portholes and windows in the accommodation block were open. I rushed inside the accommodation, screaming at the top of my voice "Shut everything, shut it now – the killer bees are coming!"

We got everything shut and only a few hundred bees got inside. All of them seemed intent on wreaking their particular form of vengeance on me. Of Mr. Battercharjee, there was no sign. He was reported by the gangway watch as seen heading in a cloud of iron ore dust and small pebbles up the quay and out of sight.

Now I had to report the fiasco to Cap'n Joe, who needless to say, blamed me for the whole affair.

You ask why was the air conditioning turned off? Well, if any of you remember dear old Sukkie, you will know why – but that's another story for another day!

Captain Bryan Boyer

Continued from page No.2.

"Santa Clara Valley" Mr. Daniel Brosnan's story was published in "Shipmates" issue No.13 but for the benefit of the members who joined "Shipmates" after that time I will print his experiences again. Quote "During The Greek campaign the "Santa Clara Valley" sailed in convoy in March 1941 from Alexandria to Piraeus in the company of the "British Science", "Costa Rica", "Rawsley" and others. Escorted by anti-aircraft cruisers "Calcutta" and "Carlisle". While on passage Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. The vessel received news that a squadron of Stukas 87's aircraft had landed at the Dodecanese Islands. The convoy came under continuous attack from both Italian level bombing in consort with dive bombing by Stukas aircraft, it was virtually decimated. We arrived at Piraeus, where the "Clan Fraser" had blown up while discharging cargo and the port was unworkable and closed. We were ordered to leave for Nauplia Bay and to discharge horses and mules with 2000 tons of ammunition at that port, a tall order, but the odds were against us and were too great, on passage the **"Santa Clara Valley"** was bombed by aircraft and went down with the red duster flying at the gaff and guns firing. A tribute to Captain Lennie". Unquote.

Merchant Navy Memorials.

A 25 foot sundial was unveiled on the 9th October 2001 in the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, in memory of the 32,000 British Merchant Seamen who lost their lives in the Second World War.

On 27th September 2001, World Maritime Day a memorial was unveiled at the International Maritime Organisation Headquarters, London, in memory of the worlds seafarers. It is a 10 ton bronze sculpture of the bow of a cargo ship with a sailor standing on the bow. The statue stands 7 metres high.

Can You Believe It.

Reporter David Graves writing for The Daily Telegraph who was onboard the H.M.S "Illustrious" reported, Quote" On the stroke of 9 am yesterday the red Ensign was raised above the bridge roof on the aircraft carrier "Illustrious", and the union on the bow was lowered." Unquote. Her Majesty Navy must be running out of white Ensigns.

Party Time.

This Christmas Party photograph was taken in Kobe in 1970. Left to right:-
John Wheaton attending ships in Japan. John was Engineer Superintendent with Reardon Smith Line and Reardon Smith Exploration. He crossed the bar in 1978.
Captain A. Tsukamoto was the Manager of Nippon States Marine Agency, Kobe, which became Nippon Maritime Agency. These companies were the agent for the Reardon Smith ships. He crossed the bar in the 1990's.
John Lee was Chief Officer at the time this photograph was taken. John came into Reardon Smith Line from Charles Hill of Bristol. John became Master and then Hull Superintendent, then Master again until the company went into liquidation. He then went Super and finally Manager of Cardiff Ship Management. John is still in Bristol.
Captain George Harvey was from Belfast and joined the Reardon Smith Line in April 1928. He was promoted to Chief Officer in 1941 later Master. He remained with the company until he retired in the 1970's. In November 1993 at the age of 83 he crossed the bar. Mrs. Harvey is a "Shipmate" member and still lives in Co. Antrim.
Bertie Lester joined the Reardon Smith Line in September 1930. He was promoted to Chief Engineer in 1943 and he served in the company until he retired. He crossed the bar when he was 93 years old in 1999. Mrs. Betsy Lester lives in Southampton.
Mr.T. Sanekata was a ship agent and worked for Nippon States Marine Agency, Kobe, which became Nippon Maritime Agency. Mr. Sanekata branched out on his own and formed the Tokai Marine Enterprise Company, and was agent for Reardon Smith and Transportacion Maritima Mexicana ships. In the late 1980's Tokai Marine Enterprise went out of business. I have no news of Mr. Sanekata.

Editor