



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No 25 December 2002

This is "Shipmates" sixth anniversary and this issue is dedicated to the three ships named "**Victoria City**".

In 1928 Reardon Smith's placed an order to their specifications with the well known shipbuilder William Grey of West Hartlepool for five steamers, sister ships, each to be of 4,700 GRT (thereabouts), for delivery in 1929.

One of these ships was named "Victoria City" and a sister ship to the "Vernon City" which was recorded in issue No.23 of "Shipmates".

The naming of the ships indicating Sir William Reardon Smith's dedication to the new liner service they had inaugurated to serve the North American Pacific Coast to the U.K. On her delivery in 1929 she joined a fleet of 35 ships trading world wide.

In the years before the onset of World War 2 she proved to be a reliable vessel and traded successfully, an asset to the fleet. On the commencement of hostilities with Germany in 1939 she was taken over and Time Chartered by the Ministry of War Shipping.

November 1940 found her in Jersey City loading a full cargo of iron billets and steel products for London. She sailed on the 17th November from New York Bay and proceeded independently for Halifax, Nova Scotia a North Atlantic Convoy assembly port. On the 21st November she sailed from Halifax as Vice Commodore Ship of the North Atlantic Convoy HX90 comprising of 32 ships. The weather encountered on passage was typical for winter N.A and doubtless with her cargo of iron and steel giving her a large GM she rolled heavily.

She was sighted on the 2nd December north of Ireland but was not heard from again. After the war ended it was learnt from German sources that she was sighted on the 2nd December by their submarine U99 under the command of Hinsch, straggling from the convoy and was torpedoed and sunk. The Master Captain Longstaff and his crew of 42 all perished

During May of 1943, Hinsch in command of another submarine was attacked and destroyed by allied forces, there were no survivors.



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



M.V. "VICTORIA CITY" (2)

Two new motor vessels joined the Reardon-Smith Line fleet in 1955, both of which were built by William Doxford and Sons Ltd. at their Pallion Shipyard at Sunderland the first of which was the above vessel, a open shelter deck vessel of 6,162 GRT. On completion of satisfactory trials and delivery she sailed from Sunderland on the 17th March, 1955 for Corpus Christi under the command of Captain Thomas Dixon, the Chief Engineer was Lionel Wainwright and the Chief Officer was David LG Jones.

She traded successfully until on the 14th of December of that year, when outward bound in ballast from Hamburg to Hampton Roads and when off the Ameland Islands she was unfortunately in collision with the Italian S.S. "Valentina Bibolina" Captain Dixon realized the gravity of the situation and that nothing could be done to save his ship from sinking, he gave the order to abandon ship. The lifeboats were swung outboard, lowered and the evacuation of the ship was accomplished in an orderly manner, the Captain and all his crew safely boarded the lifeboats and were picked up by vessels in the vicinity. Approximately twenty minutes after the collision the "Victoria City" sank below the waves of the North Sea. The Italian vessel, although badly damaged, was able make port. (Apparently this was the second collision she had suffered in the year.)

The vessel having sunk in relatively shallow water consideration was given to possible salvage, however even though an underwater inspection was arranged as soon as it was practical, it revealed that due to the strong tidal current the vessel had surprisingly silted up thereby making salvage economically impractical.

M.V. "VICTORIA CITY" (3).

The "Victoria City" was one of seven "Cardiff Class" ships of 16,644 Gross Tons built for the Reardon Smith Line between 1970 and 1972 by Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, Clyde Bank Division Shipyard. Four were delivered and entered service in 1970, one of which was the "Victoria City", and three in 1972. The ships were built with strengthened decks for carrying packaged lumber on deck and with specially reinforced tank tops for ore cargoes.

The majority of "Shipmates" during their service in R.S.L. will either have sailed on one of the vessels or be familiar with them. Also please refer to "Shipmates" Issue No.24 re. "Vancouver City".

An incident occurred only minutes after the "Victoria City" had been launched from the shipyard at Clydebank. When the attending tugs were maneuvering the ship into the fitting out basin she was swept by a strong gust of wind towards a passenger ship the M.V. "Blenheim" of the Fred Olsen Line which was berthed and fitting out in the basin. The quick thinking Captain of the tugboat "Strongbow" prevented a contact between the vessels taking place by placing his craft between the two vessels to act as a fender. The "Victoria City" was eventually safely berthed in the fitting out basin.

The M.V. "Victoria City" having completed sea trials off Greenock to the satisfaction of the attending R.S.L. technical representatives, the ship was delivered to the Reardon Smith Line whilst lying at anchor in the 'Tail of the Bank Anchorage' on the 24th December 1970. She sailed at 1700 hours, Christmas Eve, bound for the Mississippi River under the command of Captain O.J.T. Lindsay/ Chief Engineer J. Barnes.

In 1972 when the last of the "Cardiff Class" had been delivered the R.S.L. fleet comprised of 13 ships with an average age of 4 years, making the fleet one of the most modern tramp fleets in operation. Also there were two ships being managed for Transportacion Maritima Mexicana.

The "Victoria City" served in the fleet for 13 years, she was sold in 1983 to T.M.M. and renamed "Lacandon", Sir William Reardon Smith retaining the management.

Disposition of the R.S.L. fleet Christmas, 1972.

"Atlantic City"	@ Ravenna.	"Victoria City" #	Kinuura to B.C.
"Chiyoda"	@ Rotterdam.	"Welsh City"	On passage Cairns to St. John N.B.
"Cornish City"	On passage Yokohama to Miami.	"Wilkawa"	@ Yokohama
"Fresno City"	On passage Harmac to Newhaven.		
"Indian City"	On passage Yokohama to Newark.		
New Westminster City"	@ Amsterdam.		
"Prince Rupert City" #	On Passage Vancouver, B.C. to Cardiff.		
"Tacoma City"	On passage Antwerp to Bridgeport.		
"Vancouver City" #	On passage Tahsis to Cardiff.		

R.S.L. Managed Vessels

"Maria Elisa" @ San Carlos
 "Sara Lupe" Yokohama to Los Angeles.

R.S.L. B.C./U.K./Cont. Service.

Reardon-Smith Line Reunion @ the "Queens Head", Ockbrook.
12th September 2002.

We are sure that the "Shipmates" who attended the Reunion will agree that it was a great occasion, enjoying meeting up again with past "Shipmates", partaking of delicious food and wine in a first class venue.

Congratulations to Captain Mike Jones with the help of Reg. Smith for their enthusiasm in undertaking to make the arrangements and organization to ensure that it was a success. That it surely was. Also to Mine Host Leighton Seabrook, his charming wife Joan and family for the facilities of their hotel, the choice of fare and the attention given to create an ambience never to be forgotten.

To those "Shipmates" who were unable to attend we offer our commiserations.

There were present at the reunion, approximately one hundred including wives and partners. The weather was beautiful, warm and sunny, enabling those who wished to sit at a table in the garden and 'swing the lamp' to do so. "Shipmates" attended came from as far apart as Australia, Vancouver, B.C., United States and the Gambia. Amongst the "Shipmates" were two great grandsons of the founder, Sir William Reardon-Smith, Bart.; namely John and Richard Reardon-Smith, ex Directors of the Reardon-Smith Line and of Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons Co.Ltd.

For the luncheon buffet, held in a large dining room, Leighton had prepared a large table decorated with a Reardon-Smith house flag draped from the edge of the table. The table was well laid out with numerous plates and trays on which there was a plentiful supply of mouth watering food. Serviettes were at hand endorsed with the company flag. A professional photographer attended who took a group photograph outside the hotel, copies of the photograph were available from the photographer.

To the "Shipmates" staying overnight in the Derby area and wishing to partake of dinner in the hotel restaurant there was an excellent varied menu.

Before the reunion was over there was great enthusiasm amongst the "Shipmates" for another one to be held. It was suggested that this should be held in the year 2005, this being the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Company.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Sunday, 9th November is Remembrance Sunday and the Queen will once again lead the Nations homage at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

"Shipmates" will remember with gratitude and pride the RSL seafaring and office staff who died in the wars of 1914/1918 and 1939/1945 and the many young men of the Reardon Smith Junior Nautical School who subsequently lost their lives in the Merchant Navy.

A wreath will be laid at the Merchant Navy Memorial, Cardiff, on behalf of surviving members of the RSJNS, in memory of school pals who died but their memory lives on for ever.

LEST WE FORGET

O.J.T.Lindsay

REARDON SMITH REUNION 2002

Over 100 guests attended the second Reardon Smith Reunion on 12th September last. It was almost eleven years since the first gathering was held in Cardiff Bay. This time the venue was at the "Queens Head", Ockbrook, near Derby, a central spot for most people. Host for the occasion was landlord Leighton Seabrooke, who had been a catering officer with RSL. Together with his wife and daughter and their staff, they presented us with a splendid daytime buffet, which was warmly received. Many of us stayed on until the evening and partook of some excellent meals from their amazingly extensive menu.

The task of organising the get together had been simplified by announcements in "Shipmates" and the "Ships Telegraph" as well as "Sea Breezes". E-mail was the main line of communication and saved hours of letter writing.

No small effort had been made by people to attend the reunion, and several had made considerable journeys to get there, arriving as they did, from as far a field as Australia, USA, Canada, and West Africa.

Though it would have been nice to have spoken with more people for longer, it was still a very pleasurable occasion to see so many old faces after such a long time. Mention was made of making the Reunion a regular event. It would depend upon the meaning of regular. I think if too regular you would lose the surprise and expectancy that the first and second reunions produced. John and Richard Reardon Smith were able to tell us that in 2005 it will be the centenary of the founding of the company, and I think that that would be a suitable occasion for our next reunion. Of course, there could be nothing to stop people having smaller and more frequent informal get togethers at the "Queens Head" whenever they wanted.

List of those attending the Reunion.

R. Baker	Mrs. Baker	O. Lindsay	Mrs. M. Lindsay	B. Boyer
J. Cann	Mrs. M. Cann	M. Rayner	Mrs. M. Rayner	C. Broad
W. Carr	Mrs. K. Carr	E. Morgan	Mrs. C. Morgan	J. Coleman
I. Crawford	Mrs. J. Crawford	J. Rees	Mrs. Rees	A. Crowther
T. Davies	Mrs. J. Davies	D. Ricketts	Mrs Ricketts	R. Davies
D. Eley	Mrs. M. Eley	N. Saunders	Mrs. C. Saunders	W. Davies
B. Godfrey	Mrs. J. Godfrey	M. Seamen	Mrs. . Seamen	T. Fuller
D. Grant	Mrs. H. Grant	M. Slayman	Mrs. Slayman	H. Gale
E. Hatcher	Mrs. C. Hatcher	R. Smith	Mrs. M. Smith	P. Gallie
W. Hopper	Mrs. C. Hopper	M.F. Staddon	Mrs. Staddon	D. Griffiths Jones
T. Haxell	Mrs. B. Haxell	I. Stewart	A. Boiling	K. Hart
P. Hemnell	Mrs. J Hemnell	I. Stutt	Mrs. D. Stutt	J. Howell
B. Hernaman	Mrs. L. Hernaman	F. Taylor	Mrs. M. Taylor	A. Jagers
M. Hurst	Mrs. Hurst	M.G.B.Thomas	Mrs. J. Thomas	A. Osborne
M. Jenkins	Mrs. C. Jenkins	K. Whitting	Mrs. Whitting	V. Pitcher
A. B. Jones	Mrs. C. Keats			
D.O.Jones	Mrs. J.O.Jones	J.P. Reardon Smith		J. Scott
M. E. Jones	S. Wightman	R.W.A. Reardon Smith		D. Simons
W.D. Jones	Mrs. A. Jones			W. Summers
A. Lightfoot	Mrs. R. Lightfoot			G. Swindells
E. Morgan	Mrs. E. Morgan	K. Atkinson		L. Taylor
G. Mapplebeck	Mrs. Mapplebeck	P. Bloomfield		R. J. Trigg

Captain Mike Jones organiser of the Reunion.

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explosions, it is my considered opinion that Capt Thomas wished his Apprentices to be alongside him, should anything happen to his "Quebec City". Our ship suffered an attack to the West of Ireland, when a lone long-range Luftwaffe plane attacked our line of convoy, he fired cannon shells at the Bridge & strafed the decks from his stern gunner turret. I have photographs of the funnel with four large cannon shell holes emitting smoke. Sadly on this attack, some catering staff were on deck outside the galley, and suffered serious injuries. Amongst the injured was the Engineers steward, I was immediately assigned his duties and, I hope that surviving engineers appreciated the first class service I accorded them.??!!

To return to the final and fateful voyage of the "Quebec City". We sailed from Tilbury in December 1941, proceeding up the North Sea with a helium balloon attached to a winch on the after-deck, bound for Loch Ewe to join a West Bound convoy to USA. Our orders were to load military supplies in New York, for delivery to Alexandria in Egypt.

The West Bound convoy was a large assignment of some 45 ships and, we apprentices were assigned Bridge watch/look-out duties, combined with gun-crew duties, studies and general every-day routine work & requirements of an Apprentice, all good general marine education. Hence the world-wide reputation that, if you were a Reardon Smith Apprentice, you were accepted in the Maritime world, as a great "Seaman".

The apprentices bridge activities were confined to Look-out and flag signals. Every ship had to hoist her Noon Position, Lat & Longitude, and all Captains wished to catch the eye of the convoy commodore, by being first to hoist his flags and noon position. There is a story of one ship hoisting an incorrect noon position, whereby the Commodore requested 2 minutes silence, as the Lat, Long position was indicated as St Pauls Cathedral, London.

The convoy proceeded West, under atrocious December/January prevailing adverse weather conditions of the North Atlantic Ocean. The German U Boats had assigned themselves to "Wolf-pack" attacks, and would attack day or night, surfacing in the convoy ranks and creating turmoil for ships & escorts. The "Quebec City" was proceeding on convoy station, when a depth charge was dropped, too close to our stern, resulting in damage to our stern tube. The commodore was advised of our damage and that we could not maintain the convoy speed, he gave a directive to proceed independently on a Zig Zagging course to New York.

We made the Ambrose Light vessel, independently, and proceeded to enter the New York Maritime reception area and, directed to proceed to Staten Island, for Dry-Dock repairs to our tail-end shaft

After 5 days, we were assigned to load military stores for Alexandria, Egypt. Our cargo was a great mixture, from Sherman Tanks, two harbour tugs and general supplies, including ammunition & shells. Our orders were to proceed from New York to Egypt, via Trinidad, Capetown for bunkers, independently and Zig-zagging. A long and lonely voyage but arriving at Alexandria without incident. We remained in the Eastern Medi for five months, based at Alexandria, supplying allied forces along the Lybian coast to Tobruck and Benchazi.

Orders were eventually received to load for UK, in August 1942, and we shipped a full cargo of cotton seed and bales of cotton material. We sailed for UK, with orders to proceed to Capetown & Freetown, to regroup for an escort convoy to the UK. The voyage was safe & successful, avoiding any enemy

Enemy contact, up to our arrival Capetown, this our final bunkering and store supply port, prior to our departure for U.K. via Freetown, where we would assemble with other ships to form a convoy.

Unbeknown to us and all other vessels sailing independently, Admiral Doenitz had despatched a task force of Four large U.Boats together with two supply U.Boats, with orders to proceed South and to operate off Capetown. The task force was named "Polar Bear" and, they were retain silence until South of the Equator. One of these U.Boats was the U.156, under the Command of Capt Werner Hartenstein.

The story of the "Laconia" incident is well known, from various publications and, which was a subject presented at the Nurenberg Trials by Doenitz, claiming that the Allies had committed a Maritime atrocity, by attacking the U156 when saving lives of the Laconia survivors. I have referred to this incident in my Book.

Sailing from Capetown under cover of darkness, we entered the South Atlantic in company with the friendly dolphins and barking sea-lions. We were routed to pass to the Eastward of St Helena, zig-zagging our course towards Freetown. After seven days, we were ordered to pass to the West of St Helena, with reports of enemy activities off the West African coast, then again to proceed West of the Ascension Islands. By this time our ship had picked up the SOS of the "Laconia" and, the open English message from the U,156, requesting assistance to help save lives of survivors in the water. This story is fully covered in my Book.

On the 19th Sept 1942 (a Saturday) I had been on day-work since leaving Capetown and, was late having lunch, resulting in a late bath at around 1530 hrs, when at 1546 hrs, there was an almighty explosion almost directly beneath the cadets bathroom, knocking me on to the wet siippery bathroom deck. When I came to, the room was full of acrid pungent dark cordite smoke, which had come in through the porthole. I made my way to the teak door and found it twisted and unable to open, my only other escape was through the single and very small porthole.. Whilst struggling to squeeze my body through, I could hear the funnel whistle sounding the abandon ship signal, by this time, the ship had listed to starbd some 40 degrees and the sea was rushing down the starbd gunwales, as the ship was still making way.

I duly arrived at my boat station, port lifeboat, wearing just my lifejacket and, to my concern I noted that the starbd lifeboat was missing. I later learned that there was a mishap in the launching and, the boat had unhooked itself prior to anyone getting aboard, it was now waterlogged and drifting well astern.

Capt Thomas gave the order to launch the port boat and, when boarded to proceed to rescue the starbd boat, as we could all not survive in just one boat on the meagre water & rations, we were some 1000 miles from the mainland of Africa, whilst the Ascension Islands were only about 350 miles to the Sth of us, but far too risky to attempt find in a small boat. Within two hours, we had recovered swamped lifeboat and, returned it to the Quebec City, which by this time had settled and was upright.

Whilst sorting ourselves out in both lifeboats, the U.Boat surfaced on our port-side and ordered us to go alongside. Capt Thomas identified himself then the U Boat Capt addressed us. "He apologised for having torpedoed our ship, but war is war and he said, that he hoped we would make a safe landfall and that we would meet again in a more peaceful world. He then discussed with Capt Thomas what best courses to make landfall." His final words to us were, "Please now cast off and drop well astern, as I am going to sink the ship by shell fire." Goodbye.

The weather was light Northeast breeze, slight sea with cloudless blue sky and ambient temperature of 88F. Forty six crew members, sitting in two 15 year old lifeboats, watching the final hour of our already disabled ship, being shelled. Every shell fired received a cheer and, it took 76 shells for the fine old lady (our home) to finally succumb when, the stern and ammunition locker exploded.

The ship slowly commenced to flood, one could hear the individual watertight bulkheads explode, as the stern disappeared with the bow rising gracefully, until vertical. Then quietly, the ship went vertically down with little or no noise, leaving just a bubbling expanse of white foaming water. Strangely, there was no flotsam or even a lifebelt to be seen, just clear water. We observed the U.Boat diving on a westerly heading and, disappear from sight, we were now totally alone, with nightfall almost upon us.

Watches were allocated to individuals, sails were hoisted and we attempted to keep together during the night, by means of a length of rope. As the night progressed, the wind increased & became squally, resulting in our connecting line becoming an hinderance to the forward movement and, was cast off. At sunrise we were alone, the Captains boat was not to be seen and was not to be seen by us again. (Thankfully they were rescued at sea some 9 days later.)

(Second Day) Chief officer John Sloane & Third Officer Berty Moffatt now prepared to assess the overall situation, rationing of stores & water, also calculating the number of days required to sail the known 1000 miles between us and mainland Africa. Our rations worked out at 2 ozs water, 3 times per day, morning ,noon & evening, plus pemmican cube & a sickly horlicks tablet. There was not much room for 22 men to stretch out and, it was decided to jettison the Perkins motor engine, which sadly was unuseable, as the carburator was being repaired aboard, when we abandoned ship. Also in the panic, we lost our "Yellow Box" emergency radio transmitter, last seen floating astern.!!!

The first few days were something of an adventure, even to having a swim to cool off in the mid-day sun,, but after 5 days some found it difficult to lift themselves into the boat, the order was given to cease swimming. The lifeboat days became monotonous and repetitive, sunrise & sunset, with occasional rain squalls, which we welcomed and, would quench our thirst with the rain running down our faces, even though it was salt -tainted off our hair & faces.

Nine days on, one could observe quite a change of individual temperament, I noticed especially that past heavy smokers were having nicotine withdrawals, when the pooled remnants of sodden cigarette packets dried out, the tobacco was fondly mixed to roll a cigarette, when smokers had the opportunity of one puff per person.! One deep inhalation was enough to see half the cigarette disappear, which caused bad feeling to others awaiting their turn.

11Days on, orders were given to clean out the boat, good psychology by John Sloan, this kept one busy. A small hair combe was found under the boards which drew a lot of attention, everyone wished to combe their hair and Beards.

12 Days on, I spotted some twigs and green leaves passing the bow and picked some up. This was our first sign of land cultivation, giving us hope that we were closer to land than anticipated, as the leaves were quite fresh on the small branches. There was great excitement and the boat suddenly came to life, but just for a short period.

14th Day, Whilst on early morning watch, prior to sunrise, I noticed a mist ahead, something I had not seen before. Then as the sun rose & burned up the early morning mist, the horizon became clearer and, I could see what I thought were thin tall Palm trees. I was about to shout "Land Ahead" but thought twice, If I was

wrong !, it could have been instant death!!, however, 20 minutes later, I could see stretching out ahead of me, port & stbd sides, the foreshore of a part of mainland West Africa. My shout of "Land Ahead" brought the boat to life and , for a short brief period, I was the hero.?! but quickly forgotten. I was promised a bottle of champagne on arrival UK!!, it must be good vintage now, as I am still awaiting.

Five hours later, we met our first and most welcome human being, a tall slim West African fisherman approached us in his fishing canoe. We eyed each other warily, he spoke first saying, "We are Christians.", we asked what country, he replied "Liberia", that was the extent of his English vocabulary, but sufficient for us to welcome him aboard. The shoreline was still some three miles away and we wondered if we should make it before sunset, the decision was made to go for it, with the help of other fishermen, who came aboard and started to row for the shore.

As we approached the steep shelving shoreline, we could see the waves pounding on the beach, throwing up a misty white foam & spray, we were all aware of the dangers in landing, through such a turbulent 15-20 ft high surf!! Just prior to entering the surf, I was passed an old RAF blue scarf, hand knitted by some dear lady for the armed forces, and told to wear it and go ashore with dignity.!! (you will recall that I left the ship with no clothes) On landing on the beach, the local fishing village were all out to welcome us. Quite frankly, I felt a little overdressed with my RAF scarf around my waist as a Bikini, as the majority of the village population had little or no clothes, lots of beads & cowry shells

Landfall was around 6.p.m and the natives showered us with water and fruit, we drank & drank gallons of water, eating bananas and coconuts, bearing in mind we had experienced no bowel movement since leaving the ship, 14 days ago. The first night we slept on the beach, with a little fire to keep away any prowling leopards or other jungle animals, our tummies began to rumble late at night, suffering from the over indulgence of water and fruits. It was a very uncomfortable night but a most welcome relief to us all.

Following morning John Sloan met with the "Head of Village", who was the legal & lawful representative of the LIBERIAN government for the area we had landed. He had framed certificates with red official seals and, the signature of his President of Liberia. An agreement was agreed that the British Government would re-imburse the cost of our board & lodging, whereby we were allocated "B&B" with the villagers in their bamboo huts. I was housed in a village half a mile from the main village.(out in the sticks) together with two AB's, who had kept me warm on the cold wet nights aboard the lifeboat.

Two days of village life, it was decided to have a "Think Tank", what was our forward planning, we could not remain here for ever, but we in general we no strong enough to attempt walk the journey to the nearest Town or civilisation. The "Think Tank" was put into operation and, we decided to make an SOS on the golden sandy foreshore, with palm leaves. We had to request permission from the village chief to strip the palm leaves, as the coconuts would dry up without the shade of the palm leaves. He permitted One leaf per tree, and we build an SOS twenty foot long & wide. It was outstanding on a golden sandy foreshore.

Next morning, the SOS had vanished, the village goats had devoured the succulent leaves, so we repeated the exercise and requested the goats be locked up during darkness. This was agreed, but the leopard entered the village next evening and took his pick from the compound of goats, resulting in the survivors finding their way to the SOS. We rebuilt the SOS and arranged a 24 watch for security, which was successful, we did not have to rebuild our SOS.

We gleaned from some of the villagers that aircraft frequently flew off the coast in a Southerly direction, this gave rise to our thoughts of a possible RAF coastal patrol out of Freetown. Our SOS might well be seen one day!! We settled down to village life quickly, everyone was very friendly, especially the children despite some had never seen a White person, we had landed some 300 miles south of the Capital town of Monrovia. Whilst Northern Nigeria was cultivated with rubber plantations, Southern Liberia was Jungle where we landed.

Whilst at the village, there was a death, a birth and a wedding, also disciplin controlled by the "Village Chief" who represented his President by maintaining law & order. One could not pick bananas or cocoanuts without his permission, or cut down a tree. It appeared they were living a cooperative life of working and sharing everything. When the fishermen landed their catch daily, the village would meet them on the beach and, the catch would be shared out amongst all the families, some of the catch was put aside for selling to other villages further in land.

The drone of an aircraft off-shore, on the 5th morning of our village life-style, brought great excitement to all, we all waved palm leaves to attract attention and, having past our position, we saw the plane turn & bank towards the coastline, sweeping back north over our heads, it had our RAF markings. The pilot dropped small brass canister, which contained a message, "Presume you are survivors, we will return in the morning", then he was out of sight.

Following morning, the whole village were out on the beach, all eagerly awaiting the return of the aircraft. We heard the drone of the engines before we sighted it, it came in low and shot another message down, requesting that we clear the beach as he was to drop two very large containers on parachutes. One landed on the beach, the other in the palm trees. When all was safely recovered, we opened them and found plenty of supplies,(tinned food) also bread. There was also a message stating that HMS Spaniard was on its way to rescue us. (from Freetown)

That evening, John Sloan invited the village to our share table, everyone enjoyed themselves, ending with a sing-song around the camp fire. With two containers of supplies, the second evening we held another banquet, knowing that HMS Spaniard should now be with us within 24 Hrs. Surprise surprise!!, villagers from other villages were arriving to enjoy a free supper, we made them all welcome and, once again ending in a singsong. I doubt whether any of us survivors slept much that night, all awaiting the arrival of HMS Spaniard.

Come the dawn, a small village boy came running to our Hut shouting, "Battleship" and pointing seaward. When we arrived on the beach, we observed the "battleship" about a mile or so off shore. HMS Spaniard was no other than an Old Hull trawler, converted to act as boom ship in Freetown, she was a very welcome sight. They flashed us a morse lamp message, requesting the senior officer come out in a canoe and discuss evacuation of all survivors. John Sloan had us all lined up and said, "Men, this is how you do it", he was last seen sitting in the middle of a fishing canoe with two paddlers, being pushed through the heavy pounding foaming 15 foot breakers. We all held our breaths, the canoe eventually surfaced seaward, alas! only containing the two native paddlers. Minutes later the sea breakers returned John Sloan to where we were standing. Bless him, tattered and disheaveld, he stood up and said, "Men, that's not how you do it."

Eventually, we were all delivered safely aboard HMS Spaniard. As we hit the deck, a cigarette was placed in your mouth and a tot of rum placed in your hand. Looking back to the shore, we could see all our dear friends waving us farewell, there were many tears in our eyes, knowing that we would never again meet these friendly natives of Liberia, who had helped us in our hour of need, with B&B African village style.

Two hours after departure from the beach, action stations alarms were sounded, we were informed that their sonar had detected a target. Two depth charges were dropped, after which, the Capt informed the ship it was a false alarm. We were now stopped and all were looking at the variety of fish floating after the depth charges, then the Capt said, I will give you all a treat tonight, "Fresh fish for supper, together with chips". We launched the jolly boat and recovered sufficient fish to last us two days.

The Capt received instructions to land us at Marshall and transfer us to an awaiting torpedo boat for quick delivery to Freetown. I do not recall our arrival at Marshall and transfer to the torpedo boat. When I awoke, I was down in the sick-bay of HMS Carnarvon Castle, at anchor in Freetown, I had been delirious for 48 hours suffering from Malaria. My left leg was heavily bandaged and hoisted up high. Later, when the doctor came to my bed, I asked about the malaria, he replied the Malaria we can handle, but the infection in my left leg had spread up to my thigh, so there was a race on to apply boiling hot poultices to reduce the infection and avoid gangrene. (During abandoning ship, I had torn my foot on a jagged plate, it was deep to the bone. I kept it clean, daily, in sea water, however, 9 days in the jungle village, with no bandages, it became infected., walking on dirt tracks. etc)

We sailed independently for the UK and with the fast speed of the "Carnarvon Castle" I felt safe and comfortable in my hospital bed, be it on the waterline deck. When I later asked my fellow apprentice and lifelong friend, what had happened to me, he replied they had lashed me to a bench under the port torpedo of the Torpedo boat, "You were safe there and could not move". It was good to have good friends to care of me.

We eventually landed at the Tail of the Bank, on the Clyde. We were all given £5, which had to be signed for four times!!, then off by train to Glasgow Central to face a 24 hour train journey to Swansea. On arrival Swansea, I entered hospital the next day. I soon fully recovered and reported for duty, my next ship was the "Anglo African", who was Captain? That's right, one William Caradog Thomas, OBE. Captain John Sloan was rightly awarded the "MBE" for his leadership in the lifeboat.

David C Jones

The above story is a condensed version of the book written by our member Captain David Jones which is called :-

"THE ENEMY WE KILLED MY FRIEND"

To obtain the book see details on page No. 14.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE CAPTAIN BRICE D. THOMAS, O.B.E.
1892 - 1978

To all who were privileged to have known him, Captain Brice Thomas was truly a gentleman. He was a son of the sea; his Cardiganshire roots were deep in the tradition of his calling. Those who had sailed with him recognised him as a complete Master of his ship. On shore he was of a quiet retiring nature. He had a good word for everyone. The writer remembers the first occasion seeing a Captain in the office.

It was during the middle thirties at Merthyr House. On entering the Accounts Department he greeted everyone, even down to shaking hands with the humble junior as well as the Chief Accountant - truly the mark of a gentleman whose greatness blossomed in his humility. That incident remained with the writer as an example of something worth emulating.

No greater tribute can be paid than to say Captain Thomas was a Christian gentleman, who practised the basics of his Welsh Non-conformist background. We can surely say that his passing at the age of 85 will leave the world a poorer place for his departing. He will live long, however, in the memories of all who, down through the years, were privileged to have known him.

Captain Thomas joined his first ship as a Deck boy in 1906. After serving "before the mast" for eight years he obtained his Second Mate's Certificate in Cardiff at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. He joined the Reardon Smith Line in January 1915.

January 1915 was to be the beginning of a long and devoted service to our Company which was to last until his retirement in 1953. He was appointed Second Officer in 1915 on the S.S."Jersey City", Chief Officer in 1917 on the S.S."Atlantic City", and was promoted to Master in 1919 on the same vessel.

Some of the Company's present staff, anxiously looking at the today's promotion ladder, will view such a rapid rise rather enviously, but war conditions are not a true picture of normal promotion prospects, and Captain Thomas's meteoric rise to Master was not unusual in those hectic days.

The following thirty-four years saw Captain Thomas in command of thirteen of the Company's vessels, finally retiring at the end of his career in February 1953 at the age of 60.

A quiet, rather retiring man under normal conditions, Captain Thomas had the reputation of always being in command of his vessel and beware anyone who ever had the audacity to question his authority. At the same time, he was always fair and just in his dealings with his ship's staff and was highly respected by those he met on shore, not least by the Head Office staff he would meet on his visits to the Cardiff Office.

As one would expect, his years as Master were not without their exciting moments and probably the early days of his command of the M.V."Atlantic City" which lasted from January 1941 to August 1947 is a period he would have remembered as well as any.

The vessel loaded a part cargo of coal in January 1941 with equipment and munitions stowed over the coal, and sailed from the Clyde in convoy.

The following day, the vessel was torpedoed off the north coast of Ireland. The torpedo entered the ship under the bridge in No.2 hold, burrowed itself in the coal and exploded. Severe damage was caused to the ship and she sank heavily by the head. That evening as darkness descended, the destroyer which was standing by,

deemed it unsafe for anyone to stay on board and Captain Thomas and his crew were taken off. When dawn broke the next day, the "Atlantic City" was still afloat.

The Allied merchant fleet was suffering severely at this time from submarine attacks. The "Atlantic City" was an inviting target for any stray 'U' Boat. Aid in the form of a tow was unlikely to materialize for some time if at all. The destroyer's Commander was in a quandary. He felt the only answer was to sink the "Atlantic City", a floating hulk and a danger to any convoy passing that way, but Captain Thomas in his most indomitable manner persuaded the Commander, much against the latter's will, to allow him a few volunteers to re-board the ship in the hope that she could be saved.

A quick check after re-boarding showed bulkheads intact and engine room dry. The engines were started very gently so as not to put undue strain onto bulkheads in way of the flooded compartments. Slowly she moved towards the Irish Coast and some twenty-four hours later she was beached in Buncrana Bay. The forward draft was more than forty-two feet and the water was washing in over the fore deck - not hard to imagine in a ship with a fully loaded draft of twenty-six feet!

A few weeks later the vessel was escorted to the Clyde and several months after that she sailed for the Middle East fully repaired and with Captain Thomas in command throughout.

For his devotion to duty and his bravery he was awarded the O.B.E which was so richly deserved.

Source Unknown

Obituary

I have had the sad news that our member Captain John Duncan Norie crossed the bar on Thursday 12th September 2002. Capt. Norie was a Cadet at Reardon Smith's School in 1929-1932, and was in fact Chief Cadet Captain during that period.

Some time ago Captain Norie sent me the following story quote:-

"In 1932, when I was Cadet Captain the future King George VI and his Queen, then Duke and Duchess of York, visited Tiger Bay to open a seamen's home, and sat at a small table in the centre of the hall, with the local Shipowners and dignitaries on the dais behind. The Cadets were ranged in a long column with myself at the head alongside the Duke. It was my job to take a large silver salver around the dais and collect donations from them assembled, which I did before returning to my allotted position. As I did so the fan fare from the small band, which played "God Save the King". My left hand balanced the tray, while my right hand went in salute. Over went the tray, with a fearsome crash. My face red with embarrassment, down went I to retrieve the envelopes my face within two feet of that royal couple. I shall never forget the smile of understanding sympathy on the Duke's face, which made me slave his slave for life; and I have no doubt at all this incident made what otherwise would have been a deadly dull chore bearable." Unquote.

We send our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Norie and her family.

Our new member Fred Taylor from Grimsby writes to to say that his mother crossed the bar on 22nd September. Fred's mother used to visit the vessels he was sailing on, she visited the "Tacoma City" when that ship came to Cardiff to discharge forest products. We send our deepest sympathy to Fred and his family.

I am sorry to write that Commodore Oliver Lindsay's Grandson Thomas Clark crossed the bar at the age 15 years old. Thomas has been suffering for a rare type of cancer for two years and spent many months at the Middlesex Hospital in London and his local hospital. While he was in the Middlesex Hospital he set up an Appeal now called the "Thomas Clark Appeal" which has raised up to the present above £20,000. This is to provide a computer system to enable children patients in hospital to commute with their school, so they can continue with their studies while having treatment at the hospital.

Thomas won a Princess Diana Award for setting up this Appeal.

Thomas used to enjoying reading Commodore Lindsay's "Shipmate" newsletter.

We send our deepest sympathy to his mother Christine, his sister Charlotte, Commodore Lindsay and his wife Margaret on their sad loss.

New Members

We welcome aboard Captain David Jones from Swansea who joined the Reardon Smith Line as an Apprentice in 1939 and after his apprenticeship he served as 3rd Officer until 1946. He left RSL to join Elder & Fyffes progressing through the rank to Command. He was appointed Marine Superintendent and finally Marine Director/General Manager of Fyffes Group Ltd.. He was an Apprentice sailing on the "Quebec City" when that vessel was torpedoed by U boat 156 on the 19th September 1942 off the West Coast of Africa. Captain Jones has written a condensed version of his book in this issue which is on page 5 to 11, about his survival in the lifeboat and while waiting to be rescued in West Africa. The book is called "The Enemy We Killed My Friend". Anyone wishing to purchase the book please write to :-

Captain D. Jones, "Brierlea", 55 Southgate Road, Southgate, Pennerd, Swansea, SA3 2DA, the price including postage is **U.K. £9.72 ; Europe £10.06 ; Rest of the World £11.54**

Alan Nicholl has introduced Mr. Jim Lynch to "Shipmates" he sailed with RSL as Third Officer in the 1960's, he then went to Aramco, of Saudi Arabia then a stint in Dubai. Jim now lives in Thailand.

We welcome aboard Trevor Edwards from Crowthorne, Berkshire. Trevor e-mailed the South Wales Echo asking them to inquire if they could find two of his old shipmates that he sailed with in the 1950's when he was deck apprentice with the RSL. The Editor sent him an application form and he is now signed up with us.

Paul Hewman who changed his address and got taken off the mailing list is now back with us again.

Captain Mike Jones has spoke to Mr. Stanley Deeming MBE who lives in Barton-Under-Needwood, about "Shipmates" and we now welcome him aboard. Stanley was an engineer who served on the "New Westminster City" (No.1), he joined her 12th August 1941. Him and his brother were both sailing on the "New Westminster City" when she was bombed and sunk by German aircraft at Murmansk on the 3th April 1942. They were both survivors. Stanley also sailed on the "Leeds City" as 4th Engineer in 1942. We are sorry to know that his brother crossed the bar 2 years ago

On the following page are new members who joined "Shipmates" at the Reardon Smith Line Reunion held at "The Queens Head", Ockbrook, on 12th September.

Mr. Ken Atkinson who was Cadet Engineer with Ropners joined RSI. as Junior 4th Engineer in August 1973 sailed on the "Welsh City"(3) "Atlantic City", "Port Albernier City", "Fresno City", "Devon City" and the TMM ship "Atlantic". He then joined Jepsens London & Bergen sailing as 2nd and Chief Engineer until 1985. He then went to Eagle Star now Zurich as an Insurance Surveyor.

Mr. Clark Bond who served with the RSL, he lives in Stornoway also joined us.

Captain Richard Davies who was also a Reardon Smith Line man, he lives in Penarth and is now working as a Cardiff and Barry pilot

Mr. Martyn Eley who was with RSI is now with the Maersk Line working out of Malabo on the "Maersk Dispatch" for Amerda Hess. He lives in Blantyre, Scotland and his wife Margaret sailed with him on the "Maria Elisa" and "Sara Lupe". they have two sons David and Nathan and one granddaughter Rebecca.

Eddie Morgan who served his apprenticeship as an Engineer Cadet with Reardon Smith Line and sailed on many ships progressing through the ranks to Chief Engineer, he left in the 1980's. Eddie lives in Burry Port and is employed in that area.

Mr. Andrew Jagers who was with RSL he lives in Bangor, Northern Ireland.

Grapham Mapplebeck who was with Reardon Smith Line he is now living in Canberra, Australia and is Principal Adviser, International Maritime Safety & Environmental Strategy for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority

We welcome aboard Mr. Nick Saunders who lives in Bath.

Mr. Fred Taylor sailed with Reardon Smith and he lives in Grimsby.

Mr. Danny Trigg who joined Reardon Smith Line in the early 1950's, becoming a long serving Chief Engineer with them until they went into liquidation. He then served with Cardiff Ship Management on TMM ships until he retired.

Captain Keith Whitting who was Chief Officer and Master with Reardon Smith Line left the company and went to Australia in 1982. He is now employed by the Australian Marine Safety Authority as a Surveyor based at Adelaide.

I wish to remind you if any Shipmate wishes to contact another Shipmate, then please write to the Editor who will forward the letter onward.

If you article is not published in this newsletter it will be included in one of the newsletters to follow.

Editor

Letters to the Editor.

Following Tom Major's excellent article may I add some comments.

Mr Church I think was Technical Director with Ropners based in Darlington.

My first ship the Romanby of 1957 was fitted with the traditional LB Doxford and one job was changing valve plates in the scavenge pump. With your legs wrapped round the rod & the piston descending towards you it was a good job I had a limited imagination. The Wandby of 1959 was a typical cut price test bed with turbo blowers and scavenge pump (a belt & braces concept). The Thirlby of 1961 had progressed so far that the turbo blowers could be left to cope. If the muck was not enough there were two Scotch boilers next door to keep you warm My Father with pre-war & war experience collected me from the latter & said it looked sufficiently similar to make him feel at home. Other examples of how far it had evolved were if it was raining in the engine room you looked for the snaking top cylinder cooling hose. The side rod

top keep nuts required a 14lb hammer to slacken which was not a problem unless you were slightly built like my brother cadet who when moving the hammer head behind him followed it for three steps. On the Wandby standing on a plank inside the crankcase to remove the piston rod nut the third & myself took it in turns to slacken the nut using a 56lb hammer (1/2 an anvil). I have only seen one more sledge hammer that size and would have liked to have met the man who tightened it and asked him if he had ever heard of metallurgy. The cylinder lubrication system automatically required the junior to carry an oilcan to the pump & fill it up with the exhaust trunk keeping your head warm.

I then spent some time with B & W's & Sulzer's and realised how far Doxford had lost the plot. Having said that I have heard some horrible tales of twin opposed piston B & W's.

Ken Atkinson

Below is a list of ships that were in the Reardon Smith fleet 80 years ago in 1923 which was kindly submitted to "Shipmates" by Mr. John Reardon Smith.

St. Just Shipping Company.

"Atlantic City"	"Great City"	"Norwich City"	"Madras City"
"Bradford City"	"Homer City"	"Orient City"	"Truro City"
"Cornish City"	"Indian City"	"Paris City"	"Union City"
"Devon City"	"Jersey City"	"Quebec City"	"Valcan City"
"Eastern City"	"King City"	"Royal City"	"Welsh City"
"Falls City"	"Leeds City"	"Sian City"	"York City"

Cornborough Shipping Company.

"Alness"	"Dungness"	"Skegness"	"Yarborough"
"Bragness"	"Hurlness"	"Watsness"	

Leeds Shipping Company.

"Bradavon"	"Bradburn"	"Bradclyde"	"Bradovey"	"Bradlyne"
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Unity Shipping Trading Company

"Meropi"

Oakwin Shipping Company

"General Botha"	"General Lukin"	"General Smuts"	"Rioi"
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THE CHANNELS

I have started packing, for I am near that blessed shore
 where I have a host of memories and I have kin and friends galore
 I hope they remember me and I hope that they will tell
 my true love I am coming home and to wait down in our dell.

Hurry onward aged rusty ship, and when we reach that lee
 I will plough and sow and reap the land and no more sail the sea.

E.J.Hatcher 1947.