



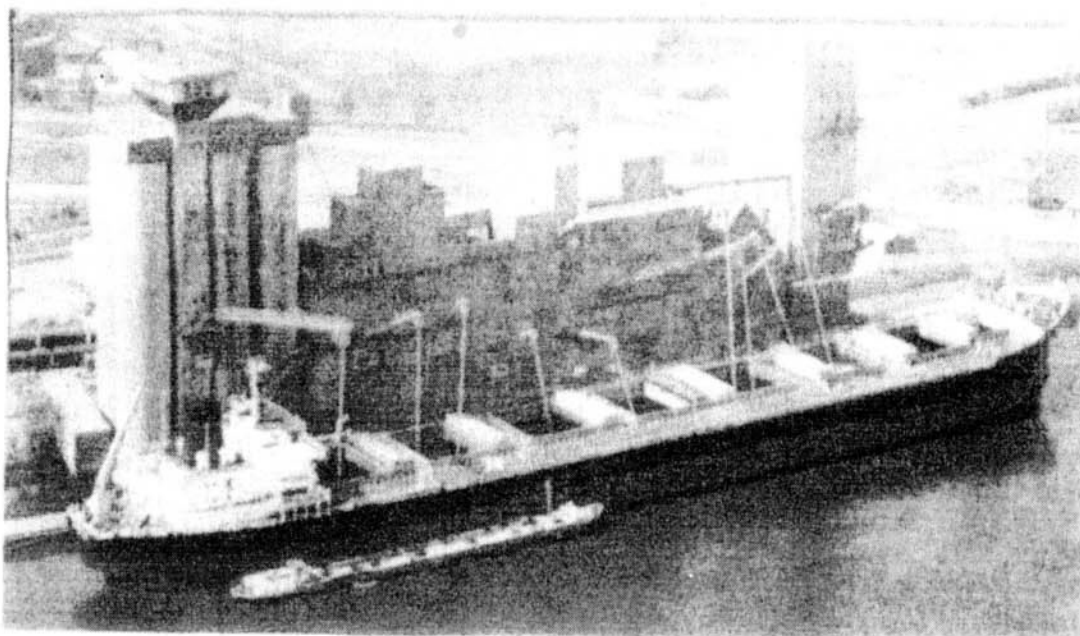
SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.27 June 2003.

This issue of "Shipmates" is dedicated to the following ships of the Reardon Smith Line, M.V. "Welsh City" 4, S.S. "Yarborough" and the S.S. "York City". The three ships were registered in Bideford, Devon.

M.V. "Welsh City" (4) Gross Tons 39,236



Discharging Wheat at Hamburg

Built to the order of the Reardon Smith Line Ltd by Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd. of Sunderland, this fine Panamax bulk carrier was delivered to Owners on completion of satisfactory sea trials in 1977.

With her identical sister ship the M.V. "Orient City", also delivered by the same shipbuilders in 1977, were the largest ships owned by the Line and were to be the last ships purchased by the company.

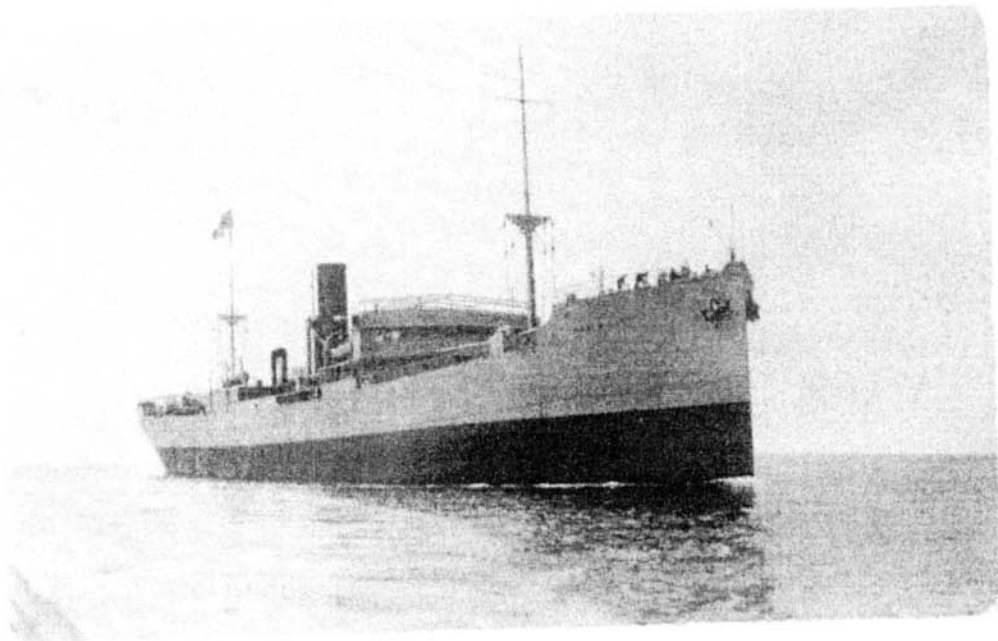
For her six successful years service in the company she was fully employed trading worldwide. Unfortunately in 1983 due to severe market/economic forces it was deemed by the RSL management necessary to dispose of the vessel. She was sold to Neptune Maritime Co. and registered in Monrovia to whom she continued to sail as a profitable unit in their fleet.

S.S. "Yarborough" Gross Tons 3,077

This tramp was built of iron in 1900 by the well known shipbuilder William Grey Co., Ltd. of West Hartlepool and at her launch was named "Yarborough". Prior to being purchased by Sir William Reardon Smith in 1919, this mature lady had previously been owned under the same name by three different British shipowners. In that year Sir William had formed an additional company, the Cornborough Shipping into which the "Yarborough" was entered without change of name. She served in the company until 1924 when she was sold to Japanese shipowners and renamed "Saisho Maru". In the spring of 1945 whilst still owned by Japanese shipowners and sailing under the Japanese flag she was mined off the Wuman sha in the approaches to Shanghai. A casualty of war.

S.S. "York City" Gross Tons 6,397

In 1922 the company, St. Just S.S. Co. (Sir William Reardon Smith and Sons Ltd) took delivery of two new ships which were built to their own specifications, to sustain the rapid expansion of their fleet. One of which was the "York City" built on the Wear by the noted shipbuilders J. Thompson & Sons of Sunderland. Like all RSL ships she was registered in Bideford, the birth place of the first Sir William. She proved to be an asset to the fleet and traded world wide for fifteen years until she was sold in 1937 to Greek shipowners and renamed "Nicolaou Ourania". In 1941 whilst in Suda Bay she was sunk by Axis air attack. In 1943 she was refloated by the Germans to sail again under the name of "Nikolaus", however, not for long, later in 1943 she was sighted in the Mediterranean by a British Submarine and torpedoed and sunk



The above photograph was taken in 1922 when she was returning to the Wear after conducting satisfactory pre delivery sea trials.

Mr. John Reardon Smith kindly submitted the following maiden voyage performance records of the "York City"

Date	Passage	Light/ Loaded	Days on Passage	Average Speed	Av.Daily Consumption	Coal/ Oil Fuel
May, 1922	Tyne/ Bahia Blanca.	Light	26	11.3K	37.0 Tons	Coal
October, 1922	Dairen/ Vancouver,B.C.	Light	21	11.2K	23.7 Tons	Oil Fuel
Novb. 1922	Vancouver, B.C./ Rotterdam.	Loaded	43	9.8K	23.4 Tons	Oil Fuel
Feb. 1923	Norfolk Va./ Danzig.	Loaded	22	11.0K	36.0 Tons	Coal

The Channels

Definition:- A euphoria fever that grips every seafarer, from captain to cabin boy, when a voyage is nearing its end and home pleasures are beckoning. Some seamen can disguise the symptoms better than others but no one is immune. No medication is required.

Vancouver, B.C. (Port of Ports)

With Reardon-Smith's pre. WW2 large fleet of ships trading frequently to B.C. ports and more often than not calling at Vancouver, B.C., the red funnel with black top with the large black "S" became well known and respected in the port

Between the world wars a number of young men from British Columbia joined Reardon-Smith's as deck apprentices eventually obtaining B.of T. certificates and after which joining the B.C. ferry services or other Canadian marine services. When the S.S. "Leeds City" was in Newport, Mon. in 1940 there were amongst the apprentices two from British Columbia..

It was only to be expected that a few of the crew of the ships developed friendships with local ladies and a few officers emigrated to B.C., married there and settled down happily in one of the worlds beautiful and finest environments

In the late 40's / early 50's many a game of ten pin bowling was played by R.S.L.ship's officers against a team of young ladies from the office of David Spencers department store in Hastings Street. This department store was later to become E.T. Eatons eventually shifting to Grenville Street. The "Flying Angel" was popular and R.S.L. was always made very welcome. I cannot remember the Padre's name but I do remember he was always accompanied by a rather large shaggy dog.

Many of the older members of "Shipmates" will remember the late Captain Haley the Commonwealth Marine Surveyor at Vancouver.

It was a beautiful day in the spring of 1952 when the S.S."Madras City" (Captain Leebetter) berthed at Ballantynes Terminal, Vancouver to load a full cargo of wheat for Avonmouth. Captain Haley accompanied by RSL agents Dingwall Cotts were on the wharf awaiting the vessel's berthing

The wing hatchboards at all hatches had been opened prior to berthing to ventilate and to provide light for the marine surveyor to survey the erected shifting boards and feeders and general hold cleanliness. The lime washed tanktop gleamed in the sunlight making the contrast with the black presomet painted hull and bulkheads more startling. Captain Haley accompanied by the Chief Officer (myself) commenced the survey at No.1. The surveyor's examined the grain fittings and then turned his attention to the 'Hat

boxes" and tested their suctions, finally turning his attention to ship's sides and bulkheads remarking " *Yes, I can see the point of Smiths policy of painting the steelwork black, I cannot tell if there is any coal dust from your last cargo on the sides, frames and bulkheads. Also for your removal of the lower half of the spar ceiling, that makes it more difficult for me to see into the box beams*" After completion of a thorough survey of all holds, the ship having passed, Captain Haley issued the certificate of compliance to load grain in bulk. Meanwhile the Ministry of Agriculture surveyor conducted a hold survey to ensure the vessel was free from insect infestation, and fit to load food cereals, issuing the necessary Certificate of Compliance on completion.

O.J.T.L.

* * * * *

Below is another reference of Sir William Reardon Smith (Baronet) the founder of the company for his sea service while employed by W.J.Tatem & Co. of Cardiff.

**This document was kindly submitted by
Mr. John Reardon Smith.**

Copy of Reference from Messrs W.J.Tatem & Co.

Private

To whom it may concern.

We the undersigned have pleasure in certifying that Captain W.R.Smith has been in our employ as master of the Steamers "Lady Lewis" & "Shandon" from July 22nd 1897 to December 9th 1900 during the whole of which time he gave us every satisfaction and we strongly recommend him as a most trustworthy, sober, industrious and capable shipmaster to anyone requiring his services, we understand he is leaving our employ with a view to obtaining a shore berth and may say we have known him for several years and would have pleasure in replying to any inquiries made respecting him.

(sgd) W.J.Tatem & Co.

Welsh City memories.

I was instructed to stand by the Welsh City at Govan in 1968 about three months before the ship sailed. I was no stranger to the place, having done the maiden voyage of the Australian City in 1964. The standing by period was filled with journeys to Scotland and time spent in Cardiff setting up the planned maintenance system. Eventually we sailed on trials, these lasted longer than expected due to engine troubles.

The engine room team was:

C/Eng. T. Sukienik, 2/Eng. R. Shannon, 3/Eng Eddie Morgan, 4/Eng G. Hughes, two first tripper juniors and a cadet. The Electrician whose name I can't remember was a first class guy. In fact they were all first class including the Ruston's fitters who sailed with us during the next 13 months.

The senior members of the deck complement were: Master, Joe Thornhill; Mate, Tony Lightfoot; 2nd Mate, Robin Stuart; R/O, Dick Gibbons.

We proceeded to France to load grain and had to change the starboard main engine camshaft as an opener in the loading port. However we were not dismayed and pressed on with the voyage. We sailed from breakdown to breakdown for the next five months, finishing in London. I went on leave for a week over Christmas and Rustons made some modifications to the engines and Renks to the gearbox.

We set sail on the second voyage with a few changes in personnel.

C/Eng. Eric Poingdestre, 2/Eng. R. Shannon, 3/Eng. G. Hughes, 4/Eng. Ian Jones and the attendant juniors, cadet and electrician.

When Arthur Thompson told me that the new fourth engineer was a first tripper named Jones I remarked that it must be either Tom Jones or Anthony Armstrong Jones. However off we sailed for another 8 months of entertainment on the sea.

One of my strongest memories of that voyage resulted from a Ruston's modification to the piston ring pack which resulted in a very large increase in lub. oil consumption. We were in a situation where we would run out of oil unless we changed the ring pack on one of the engines. Rather than remove all the cylinder heads and pull all the pistons, I made a long eye bolt, (Doxford style) that went through the fuel injector port and screwed into the piston crown. With the aid of this tool we removed each bottom end on the port engine and lowered each piston, in turn, into the crankcase far enough to change the oil control rings. That was the easy part. There was no lead-in on the bottom of the liner bore so getting the rings compressed and back into the liner was a work of art that caused a few bleeding fingers.

We continued on our round the world trip via the Persian Gulf, Phillipines, Hong Kong, West Coast of the USA, Panama Canal, East coast of the USA.

I remember on the East coast the attending superintendent, John Wheaton, hired a television set for the ship so that we were able to watch the astronauts first landing on the moon.

It was a hard time but we just about managed to maintain our sense of humour and carry on till it was over. We eventually paid off in Immingham.

I think the least used item of equipment was the planned maintenance system for the main engine. There was nothing planned being done on that piece of plant.

When I left the ship I went ashore to work for 10 years and didn't meet my shipmates during that time. However, I spent a lot of time, when I returned to the sea, with some of the team from the Welsh City.

Roger Shannon

In the March "Shipmates" on page No.4 some lines were not printed which I now highlighted

Stanley Deeming 4th Engineer "New Westminster City".
MY SECOND TRIP ON "NEW WESTMINSTER CITY"

We were preparing in Hull for another trip to Russia and this meant Murmansk the only port open. During my leave my younger brother, aged 19, prevailed on me to find him a berth at sea, since he was also in a reserved occupation. I was not too happy after Sir W R Smith agreed to take him as a Junior Engineer and I regretted my actions when my mother and father insisted on telling me how much responsibility I had to accept! They only had two sons! I impressed upon them how safe we would be after the last trip, but how I suffered! From the second day we were attacked constantly by Submarines, Planes, German Destroyers and Torpedo Boats. After each watch I would learn of our losses, and regularly I would see myself, ships in the convoy being torpedoed, as well as being attacked by planes only a short flight from their own bases. On two occasions I saw planes in the bad weather misjudging and diving straight into the sea, and I do not think it was due to anti-aircraft fire.

This was the convoy in which HMS "Trinidad" fired a torpedo which unfortunately through some fate turned and struck the ship killing about 23 sailors. There was a book called "The ship that torpedoed itself". At some stage the convoy dispersed and we did get alongside in Murmansk safely. A few of us went ashore but because of the Air Raids we were eventually turned back only to find that the ship had been hit and I believe most of the "dems" gunners killed. Our accommodation was in a bad way but all the Engineers safe! **The Chief Engineer, Mr Charlie A'Court asked for a volunteer to go down with him to sink the ship since we were loaded with ammunition etc., so I went down with him and with a big "Mundy" Hammer (over half cwt) I smashed several of the pump crankcases to flood the engine room.** We soon left after this "demolition". Sometime afterwards I heard that the Chief got a "George Cross" and I got a mention in despatches. Strangely a short time after I received a cheque from some insurance company for £15 for my efforts!

Trying to get organised I was sent round with about 30 of the crew to a hotel "The Bear Hotel", with a 7 foot tall stuffed bear in the foyer. I asked for food and drink for us all, trying to explain the circumstances and after a long wait was given a glass and a carafe of water! They were not very welcoming but they seemed impervious to death in any form, and for all I know they had very little to give. I think they would have treated the Germans as well.

After sorting ourselves out and knowing that it would be some time before we could get home groups of us were given comfort and every help from the ships in Murmansk, whatever nationality. Every kindness. I well remember the ship that gave me a cabin and the crew who were Chinese, - the steward who knocked on my door each morning with a big smile and welcome "Wakey, Wakey, Blekfast".

Eventually all the Officers were put aboard the "River Afton" and the firemen and crew taken on the "Empire Cowper" and the "Harpalion". After enduring the same problems every day on the way home with constant air attacks we arrived safely in Loch Ewe N W Scotland. I believe that the other two ships with our crew aboard did not get safely home!

We were delighted to get on "terra firma" and were taken on a small coach with a motor cyclist outrider for safety through countryside to the commencement of a small narrow gauge railway at "Auchna sheen" before reaching civilisation at Inverness, then London, and finally home to Birmingham.

My brother and I were both safe, and after my marriage in May and a short survivors leave we joined the "Leeds City", still with the Reardon Smith Line !!

After the ship was bombed in Murmansk, the Admiralty sent my mother and father a cable "THE SHIP ON WHICH YOUR SONS ARE SERVING HAS BEEN IN ENEMY ACTION AND THERE IS NO FURTHER NEWS!"

Luckily after a few days I discovered a barbers shop and he sent a cable saying "BOTH SAFE" for 3 cigarettes. Nothing ever further from the Admiralty.

Stanley Deeming M.B.E.



Staffordshire
County Council

Corporate Services

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Mr T.S. Deeming MBE
Honorary Alderman
'Willows'
Meadow Rise
Barton under Needwood
Staffs

My Ref: 1/PO

Date: 7 November, 2002

Dear Mr Deeming,

Merchant Navy Day

I refer to your letter of 23rd September 2002 and previous and subsequent correspondence between yourself, the Director of Cultural and Property Services and members of the County Council.

On consideration of the points put forward by you and the support given by my Members, together with the undoubted importance of the contribution made by the Merchant Navy to the wellbeing of this Country, I have now reviewed the County Council's policy mentioned to you in previous correspondence.

The County Council is now in a position to confirm that the Red Ensign will be flown from the top of the Shire Hall in the Market Square, Stafford on subsequent Merchant Navy Days.

This will bring the County Council in line with the policy adopted by the Stafford Borough Council and will properly recognize the public's wish to commemorate the contribution of the 36,000 seaman who gave their lives in keeping the supply lines open during World War II.

The County Council does not have in its possession a Red Ensign and would appreciate your assistance in sourcing one of a suitable size to be flown from this prominent position.

Yours sincerely,



Member Services Officer for and on behalf of
The County Clerk and Chief Executive.

Information provided

P.S. Copy sent to A. Osborne



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Middle watch in the Med ...1943

A black night and a flat calm. The old tramp ship's bow wave was an arrowhead of glowing phosphorescent water; the long wake a gleaming shaft of bubbling light stretching out astern. From way back it pointed straight as an arrow to our quiet, darkened ship.

We were in a small convoy, loaded with ammunition for the troops defending Malta. Our position was tail ender in the starboard column. The big four-inch anti submarine gun squatted squarely below me on the poop. I couldn't see the duty gunner.

High above and forward of the four inch, I was perched in the twelve-pounder AA gun nest. The lovely old gun was date stamped 1914. But we were assured by our equally ancient DEMS Chief Petty Officer... that it still worked. And it didn't really matter that it was designed before aircraft were invented or that it was deadly against cavalry.

I squirmed down under the parapet to light my strictly forbidden fag, confident that I couldn't be seen from the bridge. Sensible enough to squeeze my eyes tight shut against the match's flare I puffed contentedly for a precious moment. It really was only a bare moment. I swear.

Then I cupped the cigarette in my fist, opened my eyes and squinted aft, over the rim of the gun nest.

There was an enormous, silent, black aeroplane there. It had followed up our glittering wake; engines off, it was gliding down now on to its target. I grabbed and pulled on the dangling firing lanyard. The gun had been left, as usual, cocked at about forty-five degrees, pointing over the stern, with one up the spout. There was an almighty bang and I fell down senseless, on to the gratings.

I shook my head, got up, and looked aft. The big plane was gone and bits of lighted stuff were falling in the water behind us. The other ships had started firing now but I don't know what they were shooting at. Shutting my eyes again I ejected the hot shell case and fumbled a new round in to the breech. "Rule number one Reload Instantly" old Guns had screeched at us. I couldn't see any other targets when I looked around once more. Carefully dibbing out my ciggie on the wooden grating I flicked it high over the stern. I had found two other butts under the grating. I don't think they were mine but to be on the safe side I disposed of them similarly. Then the rest of the gun crew, still half asleep, were pouring over the parapet in to the nest to join me. And we took our places at the gun, properly, and in accordance with the Chief's tattered old training manual.

Well, I thought, I guess I'm one up on them already.

Déjà vu delay.

It was my first trip to sea as an apprentice; on an old tramp steamer in 1941. She was a Reardon Smith ship out of Cardiff and in convoy... until the weather had scattered us

We were battling an Atlantic storm which I had foolishly mistaken for the end of the world. Sixteen and scared completely witless, I had jammed myself with elbows and knees into my narrow, sodden bunk. No question of sleep... Yet I was exhausted. I really just wanted to live another day.

I must have slept tho', because I certainly had a dream. It was a dream which is still vivid in my mind sixty years later.

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You know those pictures of Napoleon reviewing his army at Borodino or some such battle? He's posing on a hill... hat cocked crosswise and hand tucked in his jacket. Head thrust forward, he is looking out across the valley and his massed troops.

Well, it was sort of like that.

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In my dream I stood stiffly to attention, fingers to the peak of my braided uniform hat in salute. My cap was blue but it wasn't navy uniform.

Unlike the little General's scene, there were dust dry hills in the distance, and a huge empty gorge yawned before me. I was dressed in a rather smart khaki uniform, all shiney buttons and medal ribbons and epaulettes.

And then, with a mind numbing roar a flight of three big shimmering silver metal aeroplanes swept past before me. They were actually below my eyelevel, and I could make out every detail of these strange aircraft. They had no engines or propellers at all that I could see but made a terrible screeching noise.

Well, I thought, now that is some sight..... and all in my honour of course! I flipped my hand down to complete the salute and swung smartly around. My "troops" were there all the time.... They had been, lined up behind me!

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My ambition had always been to go to sea. My aim ;to be a Navigating Officer, maybe even Master ,of a fine merchant ship. The Royal Navy didn't interest me.

Unlike my mates at school I had no time for "trains and planes and automobiles."... even their united hearts desire, the gorgeous Motor Bike, just left me cold. All I wanted was to go to sea..... and I didn't see why a war should stop me.

And it did'nt.

After the war I joined the Royal Air Force and by 1971 found myself stationed at RAF Nicosia in Cyprus. We celebrate the Queens Birthday with a parade. I think it's on the 11th of June.

My Squadron was well down the pecking order of seniority. Fourth in the long column, we were swung way out to the very edge of the Parade Ground. I could only just hear the Parade Commanders shouted orders, but brought my men safely to a halt at the edge of the dusty plateau. A couple of clever movements and I was around the front of the files of men who had faced left.

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We looked out over the Gulley, as it was known, far out at the end of the main runway of Nicosia airfield. What a brave sight; all those quiet men standing there in the sunshine at attention. And we wore light khaki drill, the summer uniform of the Near East Air Force, with just our blue RAF headgear to remind us we had'nt really joined the Army.

Straining to hear the next distant..... but all important command
"General Salute!..... Present ARMS!!"

As I brought my hand smartly up to my cap something went pop in my head.
That silly old dream was back after thirty years!

.....

The CO had cleverly been squinting out of the corner of his eye at the fast approaching aircraft. He wanted to time his cry to arms exactly to the moment that they swept splendidly past us.

They were of course, as we had expected, the beautiful sleek Canberra aircraft of our very own No.39 Squadron.

Jet aircraft of course,.....without propellers and with engines buried deep in the wings.....and that earsplitting screeching noise.

Going to the head of my troops I marched them off,..... not to Moscow.... but to a well earned midmorning cup of tea

Bob Britton, Australia

Capt. Tony Crowther's Book of "Shipmates" Photographs.

Volume one of Tony's book is now on sale it consists of 76 pages- 38 double sided sheets (size 8.5 X 11 inches) 304 pictures. 32 people connected with RSL contributed photographs and we thank Tony for all his hard work and effort to produce this excellent book. An order form is enclosed with this newsletter. Those who have not ordered through e mail, full details are given on the form.

In the late summer of 1976 *Indian City* arrived in Japan to discharge a cargo of coal from Mobile Alabama. Soon afterwards, serious saltwater corrosion was found in the crankcase, necessitating a lengthy drydocking in Yokohama. Going ashore in Japan in the 1970's was an expensive business and, popular though the ship's bar was, it did not take too long for a certain amount of boredom to set in.

Ishikawajima Harima Heavy Industries (I.H.I.) handled the protracted repairs, and relations with them and the agents were most cordial. One way or another, I'm not sure how, a football match was arranged between the ship and the dockyard staff. We took this more seriously than you might imagine, and even undertook training sessions organised by the Third Engineer, the formidable P.J. Prendergast, whose company I enjoyed throughout the trip. Like most RSL Officers, his first love was rugby, and he was certainly built for it (one of my first mistakes on joining the ship as Radio Officer was to take the soccer results and neglect the rugby). Training was necessarily short, and none too taxing after a month or so at sea but blessed with a youthful set of both deck and engineer officers, from the mate downward, we soon achieved a passable standard of fitness. We were also fortunate that two of the Indian crew were quite skilful footballers. This combination allowed us to field a full side plus three substitutes, and these proved very useful when the more mature members of the team ran out of steam.

The match was played on a bone hard pitch used, I think, for athletics and baseball, and entirely bereft of grass. This didn't matter much, as our Japanese opponents were far too polite to tackle fiercely and we soon realised there was no need to upend them (not that that stopped us to begin with). Indeed catching them was the biggest problem. I don't, in all honesty, remember that much about the game itself except that half time seemed to take ages arriving and full time an absolute eternity! However, what we lacked in fitness we made up for in weight and were, as Alan Hansen might put it, difficult to knock off the ball, so the teams were quite evenly matched. Satisfyingly, we triumphed 2-1. The opposition were invited back onboard and we enjoyed a very pleasant evening in each other's company.

Matters should have ended there, and perhaps we should have known better. Those who know Japan would recognise a trick up the sleeve and the need to save a little face, but late into the celebrations and much the worse for wear we didn't, and all too readily agreed to a rematch. This time our opponents were ready for us and fielded a team of high school players who knew a thing or two about football. I lost count when the goals against ran past five and, as I remember, we just prevented a 'cricket score' defeat. Still, perhaps training had slipped a little by then. With honours now even we politely declined a best of three and they, for their part, had the good sense not to take us on at rugby.

Brian Hill, Faunton

I wish to thank all the members who sent in contributions for this newsletter, "but" we need more stories to keep "Shipmates" going, so please help the Editor.

The VERNON CITY and U-172 By Cy Hudson

I enjoyed reading the two stories about the 1943 sinking of the VERNON CITY in the June, 2002 and March 2003 issues of "Shipmates". and I would like to add some more information to them. As stated the VERNON CITY was built by William Gray & Co. of West Hartlepool at their Sunderland shipyard not at Hartlepool which was their main shipbuilding yard. It is not a well known fact that Grays had two shipbuilding facilities. In 1917 four prominent British ship owners, Sir John R. Ellerman, Sir William Gray, Lord Inchcape, and F.C. Strick formed the EGIS Shipbuilding Company. (The name is an acronym, derived from the first letters of the surnames of the Company's founders). The new partnership acquired a 15 acre site on the South bank of the Wear at Sunderland which was laid out with four 440 foot berths also a 460 foot fitting out berth. However, even before the first ship was completed, the EGIS Company was absorbed into the reconstructed company, William Gray Company (1918) Ltd. The first ship completed was the GOLCONDA in 1919 for the British India Steam Navigation Co. Glasgow, and the first ship built for Reardon Smith at Sunderland was in 1927 the LEEDS CITY (3), the ship I sailed on in 1946. The following ships were QUEBEC CITY (2) (1927), KING CITY (2) (1928), NEW WESTMINSTER CITY (1) (1929), PRINCE RUPERT CITY (1) (1929), TACOMA CITY (1) (1929), VERNON CITY (1929), and the VICTORIA CITY (1) (1929). Both shipyards used consecutive Yard numbers as no doubt all the materials used in the construction of the ships were ordered by the main office in Hartlepool. This may have added to the illusion by historians that Gray Shipbuilding only had one yard. The last ship of the 34 built at Sunderland by Grays before the yard closed in 1930 was the THETIS for the Greek shipowner E. Hadjilias.

U-172 a Type IX C submarine was built by AG Weser, Bremen and commissioned November, 1941, commanded until October, 1943 by Lieutenant Carl Emmermann, Knights Cross with Oak Leaves. He went on 5 patrols sinking 26 ships (152,779 grt) including 10 British ships, the ATHELKNIGHT, ORCADES, ALDINGTON COURT, LLANDILLO, CITY OF PRETORIA, SILVERBEECH, HARMONIC, VERNON CITY, BENLOMOND, and the FORT CHILCOTIN. When Cadet Hodges of the VERNON CITY was questioned aboard the U-172, "What was the name of your ship?" and he replied that the ship sunk was the SANTA CLARA VALLEY. It is doubtful that Emmermann believed him, because he later reported the ship he had sunk was the CORNISH CITY. Though in fact the CORNISH CITY (3) was not sunk until about one month later, 29 July, 1943 by U-177 (Gysae) off Cap Sainte Marie, Madagascar. On 22nd November, 1943 the U-172 left her base at Lorient, France under a new commander Lieutenant j.g. Herman Hoffmann. On 12th December when 1,000 miles NNW of the Cape Verde Islands, U-172 while refueling from U-tanker, U-219 (Burghagen) were detected and attacked with depth charges by aircraft from the US Naval Support Group led by the Escort Carrier USS BOGUE and five destroyers. Both U-boats submerged and the U-219 succeeded in escaping though U-172 was damaged. With a hunt that lasted until the next day, finally U-172 was forced to the surface by the five destroyer's depth charges and with their gunfire sank the U-172. Her commander and 45 crew were picked up. So it is fitting that the U-172 was destroyed by US Naval Forces because 11 American vessels had been her victims.

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Bibliography:

- Axis Submarine Successes 1939-1945 by Jurgen Rohwer:
- U-Boat Operations of the Second World War by Kenneth Wynn:
- Shipbuilders of the Hartlepoons by Bert Spaldin:
- "Sea Breezes" Magazine, January - July 1980

The Stowaway.

I read a story in a newspaper about a man who went to Cherbourg on a ferry boat with his friends for a stag party and stayed overnight in Cherbourg. After a large drinking party the man returned to the ferry for the return trip to Portsmouth but unfortunately went to sleep in one of the toilets. The ferry had docked in Portsmouth reloaded and sailed for Bilbao before the man awoke. It took 5 days to do the round trip. This story reminds me of the time when I joined the "**Madras City**" as Third Engineer while she was in drydock at Newport, Mon., in the middle of November 1952 with the usual foggy cold miserable weather.

The crew signed on, on the Monday, all the catering staff were from Newport. The "**Madras City**" was due to sail at 04.00 hours on the Wednesday for the USA to load a grain cargo for Yugoslavia. On the night before sailing the young stewards went ashore for their last night before leaving the UK and a few drinks with their pal who was the Engineer's steward's friend. They all came back to the ship for a final drink and a chat in the stewards cabin where they all fell a sleep. The ship sailed at 04.00 hours. When the stewards were called to start their work in the morning the Engineer's steward's friend found himself in the middle of the Bristol Channel bound for Baltimore, U.S.A., and there was no turning back. This lad had red hair and he lived in Newport, and worked in a steelworks. He was now classed as a stowaway. All stowaways have got to work their passage, he was given the job of helping the Engineers steward with his duties. To keep him going the officers gave him some clothing, and supplied him with cigarettes and some beer for doing their odd jobs. He was quite beneficial for the Engineers, our accommodation was kept very clean, it was like having two stewards. On the "**Madras City**" the Engineers had their own mess room which was quite a large room situated inboard with an alleyway on the portside leading to the Senior Engineer's cabins. A long dining table ran port to starboard and the Chief Engineer Mr. Tommy Gray sat at the head of the table on the port side, this was the shortest distance the chief to walk for his meals. During meal times the stowaway worked in the mess room pantry which was adjacent to the mess room on the starboard side, and he spent this time collecting the hot meals from the galley and washing the dishes, etc..

When we arrived in the USA the stowaway was in deep trouble because he was not entered on the ship's crew list which had been posted to the US immigrant authorities from Newport, South Wales, he would be classed as a person entering the country illegally. It was the time that Senator Joseph McCarthy's men were in full force and anyone entering the country without the correct papers etc., was assumed to have some Russian connection. The immigrant guards came onboard and intergated every crew member, also a short arm inspection, much, to all the seamen's disgust. The stowaway was locked in the ship's hospital, a hatch board was placed up against the hospital porthole and an armed guard was stationed at the door 24 hours a day, his meals were brought to him. One day he was taken ashore for integration which involved police cars with sirens going and red lights flashing leaving the ship and also on his return. He spent several days confined to the hospital and luckily for him a Bristol City Line ship was due to sail from Baltimore for the U.K., and he was put on board that ship. It took him about 30 days to do the round trip.

Alec Osborne.

New Members.

Mr. H. Parry from Birkenhead joined the Reardon Smith Line in 1941 as a deck Apprentice and he gives his story about serving in the company on page No. 16

We welcome aboard Mr. Ben Bennett from Cheltenham. Ben joined the Reardon Smith Line as a deck Cadet in 1973 and served until 1982. He sailed on the "Maria Elisa", "Devon City", "Bibi", "Tacoma City", "Port Alberni City" and "New Westminster City". He also sailed on the "Irish Larch". He left the sea and is now a building contractor in landlocked Cheltenham.

Obituary.

We have had the sad news that Stewart Johnson crossed the bar on the 9th April at the age of 53. Stewart worked in the purchasing department at the Reardon Smith head office. He was the grandson of Douglas Smith who was Director and Chairman of the company until 1961. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his Stewart's two daughters, Graham his brother and family.

Other News.

Capt. Ian Crawford from Newport writes :-

Capt. David Toon:- In December while working ashore Capt. Toon suffered an accident to his left foot which resulted in his hospitalization and surgery to remove part of his foot. He is presently at home and is recovering well and hopes to be fully mobile recover in the near future.

My school friend, James Roberts, and I went down to Cardiff in April 1940 to be interviewed by Mr. Liley for an apprenticeship for Reardon Smith Line. We were both accepted and our indentures were duly signed.


It was in October that James Roberts joined the Victoria City which was sunk on his first voyage – all hands were lost.

I had to wait until February 12th before I got my first ship, the S/S. Sacramento Valley, built in 1924. The cabin had six bunks, one table and two wooden benches and one drawer to store our gear – not very luxurious. It didn't take me very long to find that luxury wasn't in Smith's dictionary, only hard work, nose to the grindstone, all for £60 for 4 years.

On my first sailing to Pepel (Freetown) we loaded iron-ore for a U.K. port. We anchored in Belfast lough to await orders – when they finally came through it was for Cardiff. We discharged the ore and loaded coal for Freetown and a Bofa Gun was fitted to be manned by Army Gunners, 7 in all, so accommodation was built for them aft. About a week before we were due to arrive in Freetown orders were changed for Permabuco – however a couple of days later, 6th June 1941, Friday 2.45 a.m. we were torpedoed (2) one in the stokehold and 1 after end Port Side Engine Room, killing Mr. Long, 3rd Engineer and two Somali Firemen. I was on watch at the time having done a 2 hour stint on the wheel (12-2). When I went to the galley to refill the kettle and put some coal on the fire – I was a bit fortunate. The galley was situated between the stokehole and engine room – it sprung the galley door open practically drowning me in water and coal which came from the side bunkers. The port lifeboat was shattered. We launched the starboard lifeboat and two jolly boats. There were 30 of us in the boat – with the 2nd mate, Mr. Parkinson in charge, and there were 5 persons in each of the other two boats. We were about 600 miles west of Cape Verde Island. We were nearly 3 days in the lifeboat and were picked up by the M.V. Caithness. After a week we landed in Freetown and then a month later we boarded the S/S Modessa. B.I. passenger cargo vessel, eventually arriving in Liverpool late July 1941.

I sailed on the following ships as Apprentice, Barrwhin, Imperial Valley and the S/S Botlean and as 3rd and 2nd Officer I sailed on the Anglo Indian, Anglo African, Bradford City and finally the Leeds City.

I left the Company in August 1948 joining the B. and I. Cross channel ferry and cargo service until 1956 when I joined the Liverpool Port Health Authority and in 1964 the Manchester Port Health Authority until my retirement.



H. O. Parry,
Birkenhead,
Wirral.