



# SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.28 September 2003.

## St. Mary's Church, Appledore, Devon.



The photograph is that of the interior of this beautiful church, resplendent with its stained glass windows.

The church is close to and overlooks Appledore Water. In the graveyard facing the sea, the sea which is in the blood of the people of this ancient port and that of its close neighbour Bideford, are the graves of many seafarers from the locality. Amongst the graves can be found the headstones of a number of past Shipmates who we remember with pride.

This is the church where for several generations the family of Sir William Reardon-Smith worshiped along with members of another shipping family, W.J. Tatem. The church so loved by them that they installed magnificent stained glass windows to glorify the church and to commemorate their respective families.

With only a few exceptions Reardon Smith Ships were registered in Bideford, there being no Appledore Custom House, although in fact the Bideford Custom House actually was and still is in Appledore.

On the Appledore waterfront there is a roadside seat in commemoration of the late Captain W. Lawday of Appledore, who served at sea in the Reardon Smith Line becoming Master and then Senior Marine Superintendent at the Line's head office in Cardiff. During the time he served at head office he resided in Llandaff, Cardiff.

Issue No.28 is dedicated to S.S. "ALNESS"  
of the  
St. Just Steamship (RSL)

**S.S. "Alness" Gross Tons 3,683.**

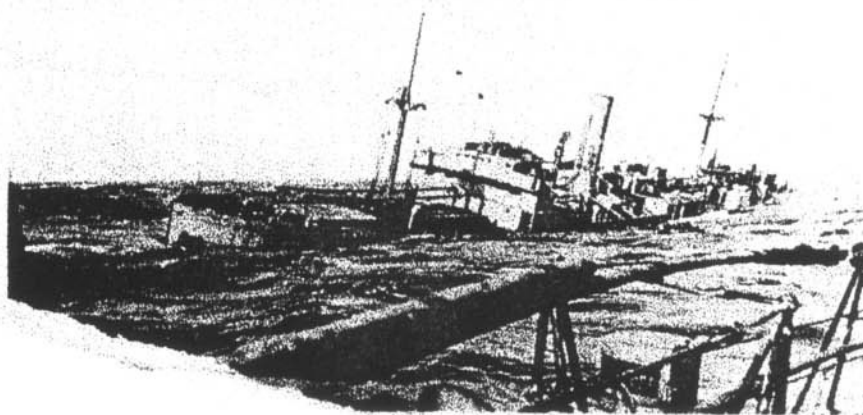
The smaller of five new steamships, built and delivered in 1920 to the rapidly expanding fleet of 'Smiths of Cardiff'. Four of the ships were placed in the St. Just Steamship Company (RSL) and the Alness in the Cornborough Shipping Line (RSL). Four years later she was transferred to the Oakwin Steamship Co.(RSL), then two years after that to the St Just Steamship Co.(RSL) and finally in 1928 to the Reardon Smith Line. In 1933 she was sold by the Reardon Smith Line to the Alexandria Navigation Co. of Alexandria, Egypt and was renamed the "Star of Ramleh".

For 13 years she served as a profitable unit in the RSL fleet , principally engaged tramping in the Atlantic and Mediterranean area in the grain and coal trades. She was sold during the depression and some of her officers, at the time fearing unemployment, stayed with the ship..

The Watts and Watts shipping company of London, managed a number of ships for the Alexandria Navigation Co.to whom the "Star of Ramleh" was placed for management for several years.

In 1940, losses due to enemy action were increasing quicker than replacements could be built and the vessel was purchased by the Ministry of War Transport and renamed "Empire Lotus" and allotted for management to Glover brothers of London.

She sailed, fully loaded, from New York in February 1942, bound for the UK, in what was to be her final passage. February of 1942 found the whole of the North Atlantic in an angry mood, with a procession of complex deep depressions sweeping across. The "Empire Lotus" encountered boisterous weather conditions on sailing and the conditions deteriorated and heavy seas shipped. Unfortunately the vessel was overcome by the severe weather and foundered.



The above photograph records the last moments of the "Empire Lotus" ex " Star of Ramleh" ex "Alness" before she foundered. Lifeboats can be seen in the photograph. Photograph kindly supplied by Mr. T. Major retired Technical Director, Sir William Reardon Smith and Sons Co. Ltd.

## Exercising The Freedom Of The City And County Of Cardiff.

At a special Meeting of the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff duly convened in accordance with statute and held on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2001, the Lord Mayor ( Councillor Russell Goodway ) in the Chair.

It was moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition (Councillor Rodney Berman)

Resolved 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 growing prosperity to become one of Europe's most vibrant Capital Cities the Council confer upon the Merchant Navy's representative body The Merchant Navy Association (Wales) the privilege, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of Cardiff the Capitol City of Wales, on ceremonial occasions with banners flying and bands playing. And this is to certify that the Merchant Navy Association (Wales) is granted the said privilege, honour and distinction at a special meeting of the County Council held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2001. .

The Merchant Navy Association (Wales) were presented with the Freedom of the City and County of Cardiff on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2001.

Details of the event was submitted by one of our subscribers Mr. Alfred Thomas, ex Rcardon Smith Nautical School pupil, and was published in "Shipmates Newsletter", Issue N0.21.

### Merchant Navy Association (Wales) Freedom March 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2003

On a beautiful summer's day the Association members gathered to exercise our being granted with the Freedom of the City and County of Cardiff in 2001, the first city to grant such a honour in the United Kingdom, an event which has since been followed by several other United Kingdom sea ports.

1115am the guests took up their seats outside the main entrance to the City Hall.

1140am The Band and Association marched on to the City Hall forecourt and formed up.

1145am Lord Mayor Gordon Houston and Commodore Oliver Lindsay President of the Merchant Navy Association (Wales) inspected the Parade.

1200Noon Exercising the Freedom over 80 members of the Association including a past Lord Mayor of Cardiff and several councillors, accompanied by a Standard Party and the Comrades Corps of Drums, Aberbargoed marched through the City Centre with drums playing and banners flying, to the applause of several hundred spectators along the route



1210pm The salute and March Past. Followed by a Civic Reception and Buffet Luncheon was enjoyed by over 250 guests in the lower hall of the City Hall.

After the Buffet the Lord Mayor addressed the assembled guests

**Lord Mayor's Speech:-**

"Ladies and Gentlemen- It has been a great honour for everyone present here today to stand before you on such a memorable occasion, and from my own point of view, it has been a very humbling experience to salute you and your standards. This City owes a great debt to Merchant Seamen.

Cardiff is a historic maritime capital that prospered from the export, by sea, of coal and iron throughout the world, and as an island nation, there is no doubt that times in Britain would have been much harder without the bravery of our merchant fleet.

The Merchant Navy memorial at Tower Hill in London recalls the names of the 36,000 seafarers of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleet who died in both world wars and have no known grave but the sea. In the second world war alone the Merchant Navy lost over 2,500 ships. In all more than 46,000 men and women of the Merchant Navy perished at sea during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is why it is important that we pay tribute to the honour and bravery of the men of the Merchant Navy. A continuing contribution that will not, and should not, be forgotten, and, today, the City is once again honoured to pay special tribute to all those men and women who have through the ages, risked their lives on the sea. The Merchant Navy deserves a special place in our country's history. That is why Cardiff became the first City to honour the Merchant Navy Assn. with the the Freedom of the Capital City of WALES. We are delighted to welcome you back to Cardiff. The City salutes you. Thank you very much".

**Response by the President of the Merchant Navy Association**

"Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen. Lord Mayor, please accept on behalf of the City and County of Cardiff the thanks of myself and colleagues of the Merchant Navy Association, Wales, for allowing us to exercise our entitlement to march in your City, further it gives us much pleasure to be invited into this excellent City Hall to partake of refreshments.

We in the Merchant Navy Association, Wales, are indeed very proud to have received the Freedom of this City, Europe's newest Capital City.

The development of Cardiff and Shipping progressed hand in hand from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1920 Cardiff boasted 122 shipowners, owning 1.5 million gross tons of shipping. Cardiff had become the greatest steamship owning centre of the world. Through South Wales ports passed Welsh Coal, the majority of it to be loaded into ships owned by Cardiff shipowners to be carried all over the world to fuel the insatiable appetite of the world's industries. Cardiff ( Butetown ) became known all over the world. The ships were crewed mainly by Welshmen, they came from South Wales, from the towns and villages of West Wales and some from the North. They left their homes in peacetime and in war to voyage forth on Cardiff tramp ships, on voyages lasting from a few months but frequently one, two or more years, trading all over the world.

Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War there were many changes to both the industrial and the shipping patterns of Cardiff. Today there are only 2 ship owners remaining in Cardiff. There is a shortage of qualified M.N. officers and ratings and therefore ship owners have had to turn to foreign seamen to help crew their vessels. This shortage of qualified senior officers will have wide implications for the marine industry. Competition for the available qualified and experienced Masters and Senior Engineers comes from foreign flag ship owners, governmental and insurance ship/safety surveyors departments, marine cargo surveyors, pilotage and harbour authorities, nautical training colleges, meteorological officers and ship superintendents/operational managers etc.

Sir Winston Churchill, a much quoted man of our time, once said "We are a seafaring race and we understand the call of the sea. We feel confident that the proud tradition of our island will be upheld wherever the ensign of a British Merchantman is flown".

It is upon these very men that the City of Cardiff has bestowed its Freedom.

Thank you Lord Mayor. I wish you my Lord Mayor and all present an enjoyable afternoon and a safe journey home". ( O.Lindsay )

**RE. "SHIPMATES" Issue No.27**

With reference to a letter on page 14 of the above referring to M.V. "Devon City" under the command of the late Captain Brice D. Thomas, O.B.E., loading in Cardiff in 1950. A Tribute to this worthy gentlemen, whom I was privileged to know, was published in "SHIPMATES" issue No25.

In the same letter was a mention of closing down of the generators in port and also regarding storing ship in Cardiff.

Pre. World War 2 it was quite common for vessels especially motor ships to close down at night when no cargo operations or ship repairs were taking place, and all ship's cabins/accommodation with this in mind were fitted with bulkhead brass oil lamps. However, after the end of hostilities in 1945, Great Britain's balance of payments were in a critical state. Consequently a directive was issued to all British ship owners to endeavour to save U.S. Dollars. This entailed saving of fuel, keeping money spent on repairs and stores in USA ports to a minimum and also cash advances to crews in hard currency areas to be kept as low as possible. It may well have been that many seamen at the time were unaware of the restrictions, or after the passing of over 50 years possibly faded from their memories.

Storing ship-----It sometimes can occur that Voyage Articles are opened on the same day that prior arrangements have been made to ship stores for the forthcoming voyage. Perhaps, not always convenient but possibly unavoidable by the circumstances appertaining at the time. One can appreciate that with a new crew joining, signing on and settling down, a few extra hands for storing is most welcome. For a ship in Cardiff with the Head Office close to the docks what could be better than a few office staff to assist the ship's crew, giving them an insight into shipboard life and new working experience, a day away from the office desk must have been a bonus. The weighing of the stores avoided inadvertent errors or loss and was to the benefit of all concerned in good management.

**Memorable Church Notice Boards.**

This evening at 7pm there will be hymn singing in the park. Bring a blanket, and be prepared to sin.

Pot Luck supper, Sunday at 5pm. Prayer and medication to follow

Don't let worry kill you off --- let the church help.

Tonight the topic of the sermon will be "What is Hell?". Come early and listen to our choir practising.

**S.S. "Leeds City" Rescued survivors of the Cardiff owned "St. Elwyn"**

At about 2359 hours on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1940, the S.S."Leeds City" was proceeding towards Greenock and experiencing gale force wind and heavy seas when a dim light was sighted by her lookout. It came from a lifeboat in which there were sixteen survivors of the "St Elwyn" of the Saint Line, which had been outward bound to Santos with a crew of 38 and 5 passengers and apparently torpedoed and sunk by enemy submarine at about 0630 hours a few days earlier.

The "Leeds City" stopped her engines and made a lee for the boat. There was a very heavy swell and difficulty was experienced getting the survivors on board, due to the violent heaving of the boat. One man got half way up, lost his grip on the line and fell back into the sea between the lifeboat and the ship's side. The Bosun of the "Leeds City" jumped from the deck into the boat and managed to haul the man into the boat and then onto the deck of the "Leeds City".

When the "St. Elwyn" was torpedoed and sunk, one of her lifeboats had been destroyed and one life-raft smashed as it was being cut adrift. one lifeboat got away with 17 souls on board, one of which died in the boat from wounds and the others were in poor shape, suffering from exposure and cold having been scantily dressed, hardly suitable for the North Atlantic in winter. Everything possible was done aboard the "Leeds City" to make the survivors comfortable until the ship anchored in the Clyde on the 6<sup>th</sup> December where they were all transferred to hospital for treatment. The above account of the rescue of the "St Elwyn" survivors is an extract from the R.S.L. Newsletter No.35 of December,1972. (O.J.T.L.)

### How it all began - My first voyage

In the last couple of editions of "Shipmates" there have been accounts from old hands of their first encounters with the Company, so I thought I might add my recollections.

I suppose it all began back in the summer of 1948 when as a boy of eleven I was taken by my father down to the London Docks to visit on board the Reardon Smith vessel, the m.v. "HOMER CITY"

My father, a chartered shipbroker who had his place of business on the Baltic Exchange in the City of London, numbered the Reardon Smith Line among his clients, and had been invited by the Line to a luncheon on board the above vessel. The "HOMER CITY" was lying in the Surrey Commercial Docks (alas all gone now), discharging a timber cargo from the Canadian West Coast.

I met the Captain (I believe it was a Captain Dixon), given a pair of binoculars and shown up on to the monkey island. There I spent a pleasant couple of hours prior to lunch, examining all the ships and their funnels that were in sight from my vantage point. I remember there were many and the rattle and bang of the steam winches working on the vessels around us indicated the wealth of cargoes being handled in that one part of the London dock system.

I was called down to lunch in the officers' saloon and I was very impressed by the sight that met my eyes there. Immaculate white table cloths and gleaming silverware on the sideboard and the dining table. Plush cushions along the forward bulkhead on a settee and standing at attention by the far bulkhead, three very smartly dressed Indian stewards in white high-buttoned jackets, dark blue trousers. Each steward wore a wide cummerbund or sash neatly tied around the waist.

The Captain and his guests duly arrived, about eight or nine of them including my father and we all sat down to lunch. I remember the meal started with brown Windsor soup, followed by choice of curried dishes (all too hot for me, I was told), then a roast dinner which was presented to us on silver serving dishes by the stewards. A salad and cold meat course followed, then a delicious dessert with a choice between a fresh fruit salad and ice cream or baked Alaska. Cheese and biscuits with coffee and cigars duly followed.

Throughout the whole meal various wines were served. Not to me though, I had to make do with orangeade. Port and brandy accompanied the cigars. I remember one of the guests remarking "If RB could see us now?" I wondered whom "RB" might be – some years later I was to find out!

My father told me later, that among the guests were important people from various charterers who were also on my Dad's books, as well as the grand Pooh-Bahs from the PLA and the local Chief of H.M. Customs. He also told me that the man who had referred to "RB" – a little round fat man in a blue pin stripe suit was Captain Ford, a

Reardon Smith superintendent. Little did I know that that gentleman would have a massive influence on my life in few years time?

I was entranced by the splendour and magic of it all. Even later on in the afternoon, when I was taken on a tour of the engine room, I was most impressed by the shining brass and metalwork, the hiss and thump of various pumps and the immaculate state of everything including the boiler room where an Indian donkeyman was tending a small boiler which was supplying the domestic needs of the "HOMER CITY" while in port.

Years passed. I completed my education at Holloway Grammar School in 1955 and having passed my 'A' level examinations in Pure and Applied Mathematics and Physics, I applied to join the Royal Navy on a short service commission. Interviews, medicals and various tests followed both at RAF Hornchurch and the Royal Naval Air Station at Lee-on-Solent. The final hurdle was the Selection Board. Nineteen candidates had started out, by the time we reached the Selection Board, only nine of us were left and only one of those nine passed the final Board and was accepted into the Royal Navy. So I was sent back home to await my call-up for National Service.

My father suggested that if I was still keen to go to sea, he might be able to get me accepted as an apprentice with one of the shipping companies he did business for. So that's how I came to join Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons, signing my indentures as a deck apprentice on the 17 October 1955. Two days later with my seabag packed full of all the gear that was on the list supplied by the Company, I found myself sailing out of Parkeston Quay, Harwich on the ferry "Konigen Wilhelmina" to the Hook of Holland, in company with five other first trip apprentices. I can only remember the names of some of them – Tom Sawyer from Hull, Johnny Read from Swansea and Ginger Rothery from Cardiff.

When we arrived in Rotterdam, we were all taken down to the docks where two of the Company's ships were lying berthed bow to bow at the coal berth. They were the "VANCOUVER CITY" and the "HOUSTON CITY". Our instructions were that all of us were to report on board the "VANCOUVER CITY" where the attending Company Superintendent would decide which of the two ships we should join. We struggled on board the "VANCOUVER CITY" with all our gear and found our way up to the Captain's quarters.

There we found the Super, and my mind flashed back to that day seven years previously when the little round gentleman had said "If RB could see us now?" Yes, It was Captain Ford again. He had us all stand in a line, all six of us. He walked up and down the line. Then he stabbed a finger at Sawyer, Read and myself and spat out "You three get over to the "HOUSTON CITY" – the rest of you can stay on board here. Go on you three, get over the "HOUSTON CITY"! So with those few words Captain Ford decided my future for me. His decision to send me to the "HOUSTON CITY" meant that for the next 39 years I would stay at sea. The reason will become clear as the story unfolds.

Tom Sawyer, whom we soon nicknamed "Yorky" and Johnny ("Swansea") Read and myself, soon to be given the nickname "Charlie" took ourselves along the quay to the "HOUSTON CITY's" gangway.

The "HOUSTON CITY" was built in 1942 by William Doxford & Sons Ltd. of Sunderland and was a motor ship of 7,262 gross tons. She was a flush decked vessel with no raised foc'sle head, and was powered by a three cylinder RBJ Doxford opposed piston oil engine.

The three of us found our way on board and asked the gangway watch where the apprentices were quartered. We were directed to the boat deck and there we found an accommodation house on the after end of the boat deck, aft of the engine room skylight, and above the ship's galley.

The senior apprentice, one John Thomas was waiting for us. And we had a nice surprise when we entered the house. We all had separate well-appointed cabins, four cabins for four apprentices. Our own messroom with a temperamental steam boiler and our own bathroom, with one shower, two wash-hand basins and two toilets. Palatial quarters indeed.

Apparently the extra accommodation had been built to accommodate naval D.E.M.S. gunners during the Second World War, and after the War, it was supposed to house the Bosun, Chippy and two donkeymen. Somehow, this was never implemented and the accommodation was given to the apprentice boys. I've always believed that Captain Alfie Ward had a hand in having the accommodation allocated to the apprentices rather than the P.O.'s. Alfie always had a soft spot for the apprentices.

My cabin was at the fore end of the house and had two forward facing portholes. Looking out of either porthole, I could see straight down the engine room, if the skylights were open. Forward of the ER skylights was the big funnel and beyond that No.3 hold and the bridge house.

My cabin had a single bunk with two drawers under, a desk with a fold down lid and three drawers under. I had a tall locker with a footlocker at the bottom and on the other bulkhead a settee with a hard horsehair filled long cushion.. When I think back to those days and that accommodation, I believe it was better accommodation than I had as Master on board the TMM crappy car carriers like the "AYA II" and the "TEZPOTECO"

On our first day on board we changed into working gear and were told to report to the Bosun working in No.2 Hold. Luckily we had the senior apprentice to show us where No.2 Hold was!! No sooner had we climbed down the long hold ladder to the tank top of No.2 Hold, when someone up on deck yelled "Smoko!" so we climbed all the way back up again for a cup of tea. But before we could make one, we were sent along to the pantry amidships to receive our rations of tea, sugar and one tin of condensed milk as well as some Board of Trade jam. The Chief Steward, Mr. Adams who we learnt rejoiced in the



nickname "The Living Skull" was a mean skinny faced man who kept a secret bottle of rum buried deep in the flour bin in the store room

The Master was Captain Douglas Boucher, a fair enough sort of man, not that we saw much of him anyway as we took all our meals in our messroom. The Mate was T.W.D. (Dan) John, a bit quick to rant and rave at us but quite harmless really and liked nothing better than to have three apprentices on his 4 – 8 watch at sea, so he could regale us with stories of daring-do.

The Second Mate was a ginger bearded wet hand from Cardiff, Charlie Erskine who, when sober did the most wonderful rope work. On a later voyage with him on the same ship, in the Queensland port of Townsville, we had to wheel him back to our ship in a wheelbarrow from on board a Danish East Asiatic Line vessel where he had spent three wonderful drinking days with the drunken Danish crew and was only turfed off when the Dane was due to sail!

Our Third Mate was "Mr. Desmond" as he insisted of being called by us low life, but he was really still an apprentice himself sailing as an uncertificated watch officer. You could do that in those days. No STCW 95 in the fifties !

The Radio Officer was Patrick Sleightholme, from Sunderland. About 5feet in height he was the butt of many jibes by the bridge officers who delighted in warning him when he came into the dark wheelhouse at night "Mind you don't poke your eye out on the telegraph handle Sparks!" to which his response was always the same but unprintable here!

The Chief Engineer was dear old Jack Partington , the Second Engineer was John Dutton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer was Bernard and the 4<sup>th</sup> was Donovan. I have already introduced you to The Chief Steward. The ship was crewed by a Bristol Channel Pool crew both on deck and below with 'Doc' Woodcock as Ship's Cook. The total ship's company including us four apprentice boys numbered 42 souls. For a five-hatch ship with 10 x 5-ton SWL derricks, no heavy gear and wooden hatchboards and tarpaulins she might be considered as a trifle overmanned by present day standards.

At the end of our first day on board, we were knocked off at 4.30pm so that we could supervise the filling of the fresh water tanks which were situated on the monkey island for the amidships staff, on the boat deck for the engineers, stewards and ourselves and on the poop for the sailor and donkeymen. Fresh water was pumped up twice a day from the engine room but there was never enough to go round for bathing at the end of a day's grind and you often had to resort to filling a bucket at the semi rotary hand pump situated outside the galley door.

With my first evening in a foreign port to hand but with no money to spend, I thought I would pay a visit on board the "VANCOUVER CITY" to see how Ginger Rothery and the other new boys were getting on.

Once on board, I climbed up to the boat deck only to find there was no accommodation house where ours stood on the "HOUSTON CITY". After asking a crewmember where the apprentices were quartered I was directed to the "side casing". This was amidships on the starboard side but at tween deck level. I found a dimly lit alleyway at the far end of which was a door. When I opened the door and ventured in, what a hell-hole greeted my eyes. The room was fitted with six bunks, one table and four chairs and some tin chests. I heard a sob and looked up to the top bunk to my right and there was poor old Ginger covered in coal dust with a face like a seaside minstrel. Two white lines ran down his cheeks where his tears had washed away the coal dust. There were three other apprentice boys in the same room – they all bunked together and after making my number I beat a hasty retreat ashore and back to the luxurious quarters on the "HOUSTON CITY"

And there you have it – if Captain Ford had pointed his stubby finger at me and said "You, Boyer stay on the "VANCOUVER CITY " I would not have carried on at sea I am sure. So Old Captain Ford was instrumental in me spending the next 39 years at sea, 31 of those directly employed by the Reardon Smith Line and the other eight years with Cardiff Ship Management.

We sailed from Rotterdam on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1955 straight into a howling gale with further adventures to recount another time. We loaded Soya beans at New Orleans, then through the Panama Canal to Japan discharging at Kawasaki and Osaka. We then sailed in ballast to Albany in West Australia to load wheat for Barry. We apprentices fitted all the shifting boards and feeders while on the ballast passage to Australia, where we arrived on the 19 March 1956 just exactly 5 months to the day I joined the "HOUSTON CITY"

I still have my first Account of Wages which showed I had a wage of £8 6s 8d per month. Total wages for the voyage totalled £41 13s 4d plus £11 6s 6d in overtime and £15 as a bonus (Company Christmas Bonus).

Total earnings £67 19s 10d. I paid off with £25 14s 4d which the Shipping Master gave me as a Money Order to go straight into a Post Office Savings Account.

In Barry, I finally met Mr. R.B Smith and it all turned out to our advantage. Prior to sailing from Albany, the Mate had told us to give him a list of anything we needed for the next voyage. We were fed up with the cranky steam boiler in our messroom, so very daringly we put down an electric kettle for our messroom. Dan John nearly had kittens when he saw it on our list but must have forgotten to scrub it off the Stores requisition because when we arrived in Barry, and were all sitting in our messroom after docking in Barry Docks, when in rushed this enormous mad man in a blue serge suit and Anthony Eden hat bellowing like the foghorn on the Kyle of Bute. "You little buggers, an electric kettle " You'll only break the b-----d. That's out for a start!". RB must have jumping up and down on the dock just waiting to get on board as the ship came alongside so he could lambaste us for having the cheek to order an electric kettle. When the storm had subsided and RB had left, bellowing at all and everyone within earshot, we looked at each other and said "Well, it was worth a try"

The next day, we had a repeat performance from the one and only Captain Ford who cursed us up and down for ordering an electric kettle. "Sorry Sir," says our senior apprentice, "But it is scrubbed out anyway. Mr. Smith has cancelled it,"

I thought Captain Ford was going to explode "What!" he yelled "RB has scrubbed it has he, well I am putting it back in and you will get your kettle" And off he went bellowing and shouting just like RB had done the previous day. That was how I first learnt that oil and water sometimes didn't mix and never did as far as RB and Lionel Ford were concerned.

We got our kettle!

Oh Happy Day!

There will be more in a later edition of SHIPMATES

Captain Bryan (Charlie) Boyer.

Below is an original copy of the actual performance of the S.S. "Atlantic City" (2) in 1922/23. This was submitted by John Reardon Smith.

SIR WILLIAM REARDON SMITH & SONS LIMITED.

ACTUAL PERFORMANCES OF STEAMERS UNDER  
NORMAL CONDITIONS. 1922-1923.

Date, Year,	Passage.	Light (inc. Part Loaded) or Loaded.	Days on Passage.	Av. Daily Speed. Knots per hr.	Av. Daily Cons.	Oil &/or Coal. Nature of, or where supplied.
S.S. "ATLANTIC CITY".						
May. 1922.	Colombo/ Aielalife.	Light.	17	10.7	33.8	Welsh.
June. 1922.	Southampton/ Buenos Aires Ris.	Light.	24	10.6	23.3	Oil. Mexican
March 1922.	Port Said/ Bremerhaven.	Loaded.	16	9.7	34.3	Port Said & Algiers.
May. 1922.	New Orleans/ Antwerp.	Loaded.	20	10.2	24.2 Oil	Mexican Pet. Co.

*Yokohama*  
*" Frisco*

*11.4*  
*11.3*

—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—

After spending 4 years at Trinity House pre-sea school in Hull I was eager to get away to sea. My first trip, in February 1973, was in the 'Sara Lupe'(ex Cardiff or Houston City), which I joined in Yokohama along with all the other ship's officers. She was a lovely traditional 5 hatch general cargo ship of the sort rarely seen these days. My second ship, the 'Gela' was of the same ilk and I am thankful that I experienced time on these two vessels, as after that (apart from the Cornish City) it was all bulk carriers until I left RSL in 1977.

The captain on the Sara Lupe was Bryan Boyer, Chief Officer was Mike Bellamy and my fellow cadets were Ian Stuart and I think Jeff Hurst. I thoroughly enjoyed my first trip at sea. We loaded general cargo, including many CKD's for Mexico and brought back mainly baled cotton. I used to be amazed that there was anything left useable in the flimsy plywood boxes (CKD's) after they had been mauled by fork lift trucks and wrenched out of their tight spots in the hold. Numerous boxes would burst open and a dozen bent bumpers or dented panels would spill out.

An unusual deviation to the Sara Lupe's normal discharge ports took us to Shanghai. Photography in the port area was still forbidden at the time and we had a guard at the bottom of the gangway. However a big effort was made to show us what progress had been made in China since the cultural revolution, an organised trip to a local school and a play (which bored the pants off me) comes to mind. A Western face was a rarity and we were openly stared at and even followed while walking in the street. I did 5 months on the Sara Lupe before we were all flown home from Mazatlan in Mexico.

I then had 3 weeks leave before joining the Gela (ex Arlington Court). She was trading between Europe and the East coast of Mexico and Gulf of Mexico. On the first return trip to Europe we had to divert to Halifax for engine repairs, I think it was a cracked liner, and I was seconded to the engine department for the duration of the repair which I quite enjoyed. Two incidents still stick in my mind about that trip. We had loaded alfalfa at a berth somewhere above New Orleans called Sty Wharf. It was a very old and dirty jetty with a delapidated conveyor loading system. Shortly after leaving there the captain did his weekly rounds (Captain O. Lindsay) and as he walked out of my cabin, he said to me "you know lad, your cabin reminds me of Sty Wharf". The Chief Steward and Chief Engineer (Dave Litson) followed him out and as the Chief Officer passed me (I can't remember his name), he said in a low voice " it's not actually that bad, there's just a bit of dust down the side of your wardrobe" !

The other incident I think I will always remember is when we were loading coir at Progreso (Mexico), at the end of a very long pier. The Chief Officer asked me to measure the depth of water over the stern and then to take the after draft and report back to him. The depth of water was 16 foot, and the after draft was 16 foot ! I regret to say that the significance of this information did not sink in until the Chief Officer dashed past me from his cabin and on to the jetty to stop the loading. After running in No.1 and 2 double bottoms the loading was resumed.

While taking my 2nd Mates ticket in Hull in 1976 the RFA Black Rover paid a visit and held an open day to which myself and a few others availed ourselves. It was this visit that was responsible for me joining the RFA in 1977. I stayed with them for 11 years and served in the Falklands during the conflict on the tanker RFA Bayleaf.

After leaving the RFA I did a trip with Stephenson Clarkes, a trip with Beta Maritime, some time on cross channel ferries and a couple of years in OIL on supply and anchor

handling vessels. I then joined the VLCC Ailsa Craig which was in the process of being converted to a FSO (Floating Storage and Offloading) and stayed with her until she was operating in the Emerald Field, East of Shetland.

In 1992 I started work as an SBM Pilot in Nigeria. This involved berthing tankers of up to 320,000 deadweight to an SBM about 15 miles offshore, acting as loading master during the loading operation and then taking the vessel back to anchor to await the documents. I found it quite interesting and challenging, and the rotation was 6 weeks on, 6 weeks off.

Starting in 1994 I had the most memorable 2 years of my life. I had bought a steel yacht hull in 1982 (just after I married) and spent the next 9 years (in my leaves and spare time) fitting it out. I handed in my notice at the back end of '94 and we set off to cross the Atlantic. I had two children by now, a boy aged 10 and a girl 9. We crossed by the usual trade wind route (stopping in Madeira and the Canaries) and made a landfall in English Harbour, Antigua. It was July 1996 when we arrived back in the UK, having visited many of the Caribbean islands, transited the Panama Canal (twice) to visit Ecuador and Peru, and then North from Panama to the Bahamas and Florida. We had planned on being away two years so were back in time for the eldest to start at secondary school, but we couldn't have managed much longer as we were just about broke. Fortunately I managed to slot straight back in to my previous job in Nigeria, where I am to this day. I sold the yacht about a year after we returned, and nearly two years since I bought the ex Cory Towage tug 'Lowgarth' which was laid up on the River Weaver, just off the Manchester Ship Canal. She has spent all her working life in the Bristol Channel area and has assisted numerous Reardon Smith ships over the years (I have all the old deck log books which make interesting reading). She was built in 1965, is 96 foot LOA and has a Ruston 920hp 7 cylinder main engine and 2 Gardner 40 kva generators. It took four and a half days to bring her round to Ipswich and the engine didn't miss a beat. I would like to try and work her commercially, and leave my job out here, but there is a still about a years work left to do on her to bring her up to an acceptable standard. Any retired RSL officers (particularly engineers) who are having difficulty filling their time - just give me a ring ! Or of course I would be pleased to hear from anyone else who might remember me.

My home address is - 31 Berkeley Close, Ipswich, IP4 2TS. Tel 01473 434097, fax 434098, email - [rigg@ntlworld.com](mailto:rigg@ntlworld.com)

**Mike Rigg.**

---

### **Mistakes**

On the order forms for Tony Crowther's book "**The Memories**" a mistake was made for his e-mail address, The correct address is:- [tcmarcon@shaw.ca](mailto:tcmarcon@shaw.ca)

I also make a mistake in Newsletter No. 26 I gave you the wrong e-mail address for Malcolm Bennington, the correct address is [maolito@btopenworld.com](mailto:maolito@btopenworld.com) Malcom would be only to pleased to hear from you.

**My apologizes to both members.**

**For the members who ordered the book of photographs "The Memories", Tony had problems with his printer also been away from Vancouver doing marine work. Most members have now received their books. We express our thanks to Tony for all his hard work to produce the books. I for one think its great.**

7, Taynton Grove  
 Netherfield Park  
 Seghill  
 Cramlington  
 Northumberland  
 NE23 7TX  
 ENGLAND  
 Tel/Fax 0191 237 3945  
 E-mail:- k.atkinson@tiscali.co.uk  
 2nd January 2003

Alec Osborne,  
 24 E Heol Hir  
 Llanishen  
 Cardiff  
 CF14 5AE  
 Tel. 029 20 757409

Dear Alec,

Shipmates

While reading through a history of Hartlepool I found the construction of

1880	Brantford City	C. Furness
1881	York City	"
1882	Boston City	"
1882	Durham City	"
1883	Ripon City	"
1883	Newcastle City	Furness
1884	Lincoln City	"
1884	Gothenburg City	"
1885	Washington City	"
1890	Halifax City	"
1890	Calcutta City	"

When Christopher Furness bought the Withy shipyard and later established the name of Furness Withy I found

1909	Caterino	Furness Withy
1909	Rossano	Furness Withy

1906	City of Cardiff	R. S. L.
1908	City of Leeds/Leeds City	R. S. L.

According to Heatons R.S.L. history it was changed during construction so that future ships would all have the City suffix. Surely by this time Christopher Furness had laid claim to that and Ellermans the Prefix.

Regards



Ken Atkinson

## R.S.L. Football Teams Of The Past.



"Indian City"(3)  
football team 1950

Back row right Capt. Todd Sloan and Ch.Engr. Frank Griffiths left.

The Team back row L. to R:- Jack Wright AB, Taffy OS Goalie, Tom Eddy AB. Middle Row:- Rocky OS, Apprentice, Mike Thomas 3rd. Mate. Front Row:- Deckboy, Deck Boy, Johnny Gill Junr.Engr. Donald Jack 2nd Mate Jimmy Jackson 4th Engr.

From the Editor.

"Indian City"(4)  
football team 1976.



Brian Hill wrote in the last newsletter No.28 about the football team where he was a player on the "Indian City" (4). Brian also sent the two photographs. The team played Ishikawakajima Harima Industries (I.H.I) Shipyard, Yokohama, in 1976. 2 games were played, in the 1st. game "Indian City" team won two to one. The 2nd. game was a bit different I.H.I. won by almost a cricket score.

Photo of the team:- Some of the players Pete Baverstock Ch. Officer who was goal keeper in the black shirt. P.J.Pendergast 3rd. Engr. 3rd left front row. Brian front row far left. If any of our members were in the team please let me know.

### Bottom Photograph.

Brian (right) and Pete Pendergast (left) coming off the field at half time.



If you have photographs of a ships football teams please send them to the Editor.