

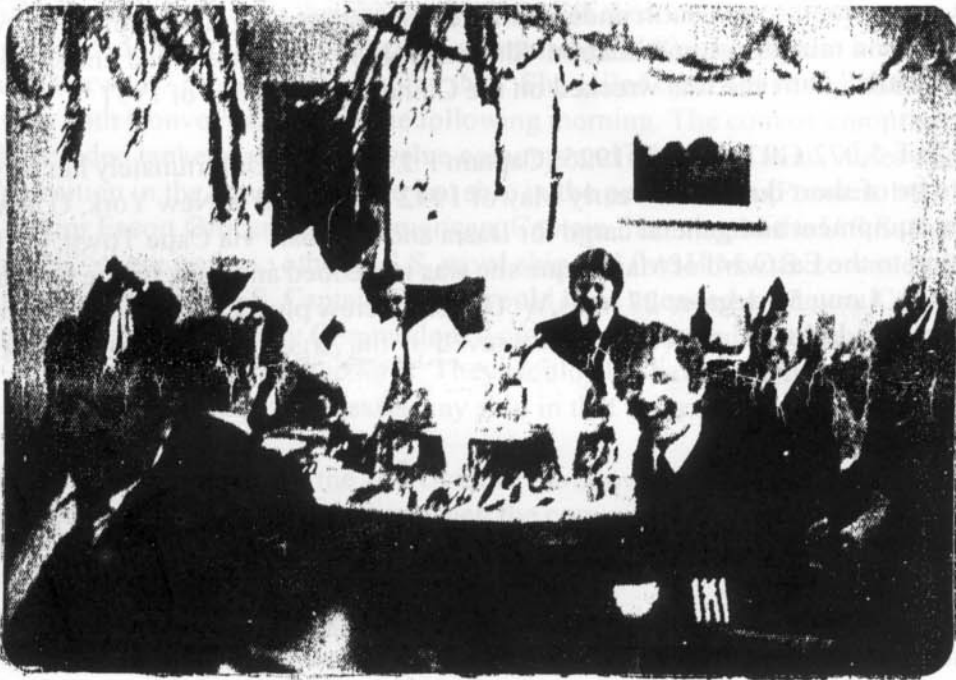


# SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No. 29 December 2003

*On board M.V. "CARDIFF CITY" AT SEA CHRISTMAS DAY 1976  
Passage Maputo to Baltimore*



*Chief Engineer Joe Fitzsimmons with the Christmas spirit*

**AULD LANG SYNE**



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



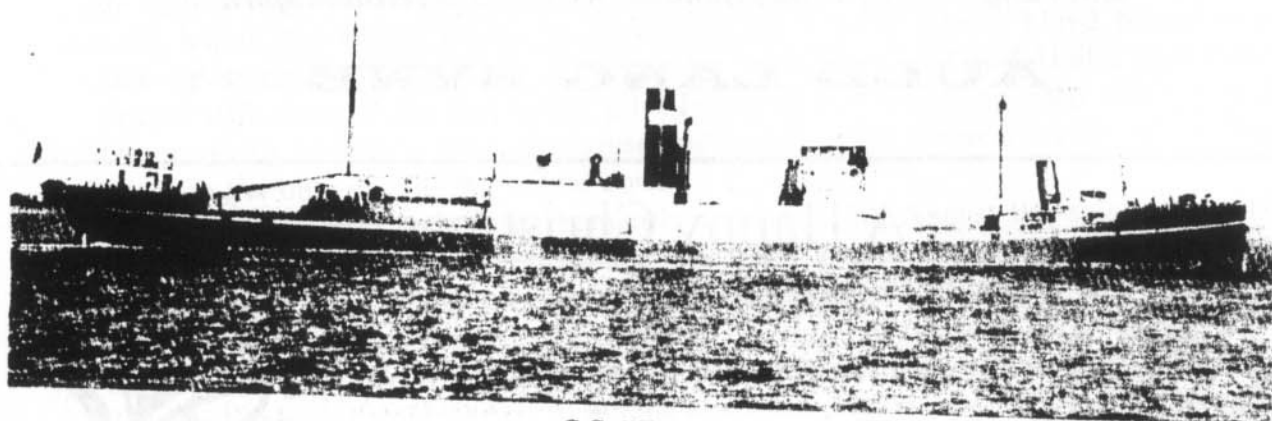
### The "Barr" Ships

In the first two years of WW2 the Reardon Smith Line suffered the loss by enemy action of 14 ships of their fleet and 8 ships which they were managing for the British Ministry of Shipping (later renamed the Ministry of War Transport). In 1941, as replacement tonnage for the losses sustained, the Reardon Smith Line purchased 4 ships from the Barr Shipping Company Ltd., of Glasgow, Viz:-

**S.S. "Barrhill"** of 4,972 GRT. When on passage from New York to London bombed by enemy aircraft off East Anglia and sank in position Lat. 52 degrees 50 mins.N., Long. 1 degree 46 mins.East. (Lost before entering Reardon Smith Line service).

**S.S. "Barrgrove"** of 5,222 GRT, built in 1918. She luckily survived the war. During the summer of 1945 she spent some months in Penarth under going repairs and making substantial improvements to the bridge, officers and ratings accommodation. She was sold in 1947 and sailed under the Panama Flag as the "Garaufalla" until she was wrecked on the China Coast in June of 1951

**S.S. "Barrdale"** of 5,072 GRT, built in 1925. (Captain F.J. Sterling) Unfortunately her service in the RSL fleet was to be of short duration. In early May of 1942 she loaded in New York, U.S.A., a full cargo of military equipment and general cargo for Basra and Aberdan via Cape Town. On the 17<sup>th</sup> May when passing to the Eastward of Martinique she was torpedoed and sunk by the U-156 in Lat. 15 degrees 15 mins. N., Long. 52 degrees 27 mins, W. Of her 44 crew plus 7 DEMS gunners, regrettably one of her gunners was killed. The survivors were saved by the Argentinean registered ship "Rio Iguazi" and landed at Pernambuco.



S.S. "Barrdale"

(A. Duncan)

Photograph by kind permission of the NATIONAL MUSEUM & GALLERIES of WALES

**S.S."Barrwhin"** of 4,998 Gross Tons, Built in 1929.

The final voyage of this ship commenced in Cardiff when her Master, Captain T. Dixon opened the Articles of Agreement for the crew at the Cardiff Shipping Office on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1942. Also recorded on the Agreement were 5 DEMS ratings and 2 army gunners from the Maritime Regiment, a total complement of 54. All crew to be on board for 0700 hours, 16<sup>th</sup> September.

On the Agreement, amongst the officers there was Chief Engineer N.N. Stubbs; Chief Mate R.E. Shilstone; Second Engineer F. Redfern and Second Mate J. Reardon Smith. Most of the ratings were from the Cardiff "Pool", many of which resided in Cardiff.

She was armed with a 4 inch anti submarine gun and a 12 pounder mounted on the poop, 2 Oerlikons positioned on the bridge, two heavy machine guns, 4 depth charges and 4 parachute and cable rockets as a defence against low flying aircraft.

On sailing from Cardiff she proceeded to Milford Haven to join up with other vessels to form a North Atlantic convoy bound for the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S.A.

Having loaded in the U.S.A. a full cargo comprising 7,400 tons of grain and military stores for Oban, the "Barrwhin" proceeded to Halifax, N.S. She sailed from Halifax on the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1942, to join up with Convoy HX212 on the following morning. The convoy comprised 45 merchant ships, which included tankers, sailing in twelve columns and extending to six miles wide. The "Barrwhin"s position in the convoy was the last ship in the port column (Pennant 14).

The Senior Escort Officer was an American, Captain Fitz, aboard the U.S.S. Coastguard cutter "Campbell", there was one other U.S.S. naval ship and five H.M.C.S. corvettes. Prior to the convoy sailing from Halifax, N.S. Captain Dixon would have attended a Convoy Conference in which Captain Fitz and the convoy Commodore would have met the Masters of the ships and discussed the sailing and convoy procedures. They would also have been requested that the last ship in each column to act as rescue ship to assist any ship in that column that had been hit by the enemy and to care for their survivors.

Up until the early evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> October the convoy proceeded without incident, experiencing typical North Atlantic weather, when the convoy was overtaken and passed by three vessels sailing together, with all their lights on, an investigation by one of the convoy's escort ships identified them as Swedish and bound for Gothenburg.

At 2000 hours, 27<sup>th</sup> October, there were three violent explosions within minutes of each other, the S.S. "Frontelac", S.S. "Sourabaya", and S.S. "Gurney E. Newlyn", Convoy Nos. 12, 21, and 23 respectfully, had been torpedoed and now the battle had commenced. The three torpedoed ships dropped out of the convoy and the S.S. "Bic Island" No.24, left the convoy to act as a rescue ship. U-436 commanded by Kap.Lt. Gunther Seibicke taking advantage of the sea conditions had successfully penetrated the convoy, having trimmed his boat down he approached from the weather side taking advantage of the difficulties of the ships port side lookouts detecting the U-boats low profile in the swell and breaking seas. The U-boat attacked again at about 0300 hours, 28<sup>th</sup> Oct., torpedoing the Norwegian whale-oil factory ship S.S. "Kosmos 11" of 16,966 GRT, who in addition to her crew of 68 had on board 20 Norwegian M.N. officers taking passage from the USA to Scotland to join the Royal Norwegian Navy and 48 Greeks apparently being transported from the USA to Great Britain. The Master of the S.S "Barrwhin", Captain Dixon immediately dropped astern of the convoy to render assistance to the stricken vessel which was on fire

***The following is Captain T.S. Dixon report to the Admiralty of the saving of survivors from the S.S. "Kosmos 11", the torpedoing and sinking of his own ship the S.S. "Barrwhin" on the 29<sup>th</sup> October in position Lat.55 degrees 02 mins.N., Long.22 degrees 45 mins.W. by the German Submarine U.436 :-***

## QUOTE

- (1) "We sailed from Halifax, N.S., bound for Oban with a cargo of 7,400 tons of Military Stores and Grain. We were armed with one 4 inch gun, one 12 pdr., two Oerlikons, two twin Marlins, two Pig Troughs, 4 Depth Charges, 4 P.A.C. Rockets and Kites. The crew numbered 54, including 5 Naval and 2 Military Gunners and we also had on board 60 survivors ex "KOSMOS 11". 24 of the crew and passengers are missing, 12 from my ship including the Chief Engineer and 2<sup>nd</sup> Radio Operator and 12 from the "Kosmos 11" All Confidential Books and Wireless Books were kept in weighted boxes in the Chartroom and Wireless Room respectively and went down with the ship. Degaussing was off.
- (2) We sailed from Halifax N.S. on October 20<sup>th</sup> and joined up the following morning with Convoy H.X.212, taking position as rear ship of the port column, the convoy being formed in 12 columns.
- (3) The convoy then proceeded without incident until at 2000 on the 27<sup>th</sup> October when attack by U-boats developed. The attack took place on the port side of the Convoy and the s.s. "**FRONTELAC**" No.12, the s.s. "**SOURABAYA**" No.21, and the s.s. "**Gurney E. NEWLYN**" No.23 a tanker, were torpedoed within a few minutes of each other. These three ships dropped out of the convoy and No.24 dropped out as a rescue ship. The convoy was then ordered to do several emergency turns and these were carried out until until 0230 on the 28<sup>th</sup> October. By this time the S.S. "**Kosmos 11**" was well out on the port wing and she turned round to come up astern to her proper station but was torpedoed on the way. This ship was struck on the starboard side amidships and caught fire. I dropped astern of the convy to assist the "**KOSMOS 11**" and stood by to pick up survivors. All her boats were lowered quickly by the Greek evacuees on board who apparently lost their heads and abandoned ship without orders. I picked up 32 men from these boats while a British Corvette picked up the rest. Meanwhile the crew remained on board the "**KOSMOS 11**" and by 0545 they had succeeded in getting the fire under control and the ship got under way again. She signalled to me that her compass was damaged and asked if I would stand by and give her a lead. This I agreed to do and we proceeded together escorted by the Corvette when at 0600 the "**KOSMOS 11**" was again hit by a torpedo, this time on the port side. After this the ship sank rapidly and knowing that she had no boats I closed the wreckage and picked up 28 survivors. After making a thorough search I left the vicinity at 0915 and proceeded to rejoin the convoy having on board a total of 60 survivors.
- (4) The survivors from the "**KOSMOS 11**" told me that they had sighted the submarine and had opened fire on it. They also said that two torpedoes were fired at them for this 2<sup>nd</sup> attack, as they saw one pass underneath the ship without exploding.
- (5) At 1100 I decided I would try and regain my convoy station and continued with the Corvette "**ROTHESAY**" as escort. **HMS**"**ROTHESAY**" remained with us until 2300 when there was a further attack on the convoy which was ahead and she was ordered to rejoin it at full speed. I saw a tanker ahead of me in flames and lots of rockets and snowflakes so I decided to keep clear of the convoy. I altered course away and continued during the night without incident and at 0800 on the 29<sup>th</sup> a suspicious object was sighted on the horizon. At 1115 the gunner reported sighting the conning-tower of a submarine about 200 yards astern which submerged before he could open fire. I immediately sent a sighting signal on the W/T and R/T, Manned all guns, posted extra look-outs and continued zig-zagging at full speed.
- (6) At 1804 on the 29<sup>th</sup> in position 55 degrees 02 minutes N., 22 degrees 45 mins., W. steaming at 9 knots steering an Easterly course and zig-zagging we were struck by a torpedo. The weather was

fine and clear and visibility good. There was a heavy swell and moderate sea with wind North East force 4.

(7) The torpedo struck on the port side in the deep tank midships. It was a loud explosion and a lot of water and debris was thrown up. No flash or flame was seen nor was there any smell from this explosion. The vessel commenced to settle slowly so I gave the orders to stand-by to abandon ship. I noticed that No.2 port boat had been wrecked by the blast of the explosion. I told the Wireless Operator to send a distress message out but noticed that the aerials were down and I do not think any message got away. The crew commenced lowering the boats and as No.1 starboard boat was being lowered the forward fall was let go and the boat crashed and swamped. I could not ring the engine telegraph to "Stop" owing to their being out action so the engines were still running and there was still way on the ship when the starboard lifeboat was lowered. There were 10 men in it and only 5 were saved after she swamped. At 1850 a 2<sup>nd</sup> torpedo struck the ship in about the same place on the port side, again a large column of water was thrown up but there was no flash and the ship commenced to sink rapidly, I then ordered all the crew to abandon ship immediately. We had two boats remaining, in the rush the forward fall of No.4 boat was let go and the boat hung by the after fall, throwing the occupants into the water, eventually the boat fell and was swamped. The starboard lifeboat got away successfully with about 50 men in it, this number being well over its complement. I was the last to leave the ship and abandoned in this starboard lifeboat. We pulled clear and at 1852 the ship sank, turning right over on her port side and sliding quietly under

(8) The crew were now scattered about on 5 rafts, 1 lifeboat and 2 waterlogged boats. The port lifeboat in a swamped condition with 5 men in it was last seen 2 hours after the ship sunk after which we lost touch with her and I imagine her crew were drowned. As it was a dark night I flashed my torch in order to keep the survivors together. A number of the crew had their red lights on and all had lifejackets.

(9) At 0230 on the 30<sup>th</sup> October two Canadian Corvettes which were on their way from St. Johns to Londonderry sighted the red lights and torches in the water and steamed over to us. One corvette lowered nets and we all climbed aboard whilst the other corvette screened her. 42 survivors were rescued from my ship and 48 from the "Kosmos 11"

(10) The two Corvettes continued on their course to Londonderry and landed us on the evening of Saturday 31<sup>st</sup>. October, 1942"

**UN-QUOTE**

The two Canadian corvettes mentioned in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the foregoing Captain T.S.Dixon's report, were HMCS "Kenogami" and "Shediac". The "Kenogami" stopped to pick up the survivors from the S.S."Barrwhin" whilst the "Shediac" kept patrolling near by in an endeavour to keep any enemy at bay. That night, 90 souls were saved from the sea, tragically 12 of the crew of the "Barrwhin" died and also 12 from the survivors of "Kosmos 11"

Aboard HMCS "Kenogami" the survivors were well looked after and cared for, on boarding they were given hot food and drinks and their sodden clothes replaced by dry. For which the survivors were most grateful

During the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> October all the survivors were disembarked in Londonderry, some on stretchers to waiting ambulances. The Captain of the "Kenogami" bade each Survivor goodbye.

*A letter was received by Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons Co., Ltd. from the Office of the Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, Admiral Max Horton, I quote:-*

*Gentlemen. The gallant action performed by the Master and Crew of the "BARRWHIN" has been brought to my notice by the Senior Officer of the U.S. Escort of the convoy of which she was part. It is particularly gratifying to know that the Captain and Crew of this ship remained behind and did all that was possible to assist in the rescue of another crew in very rough weather, although it was not primarily their duty to do so.*

*I would be obliged if you would convey my sincere thanks to them for their assistance on this occasion and to express my regret at the unfortunate loss of this ship together with 12 of the crew whilst returning to the convoy which she had left under such commendable circumstances." Un-quote*

**Note** U-436 was sunk on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1943 by the Frigate HMS "TEST" and RIN Corvette "HYDERABAD"

### **Merchant Seafarers War Memorial (1997)**

This memorial commemorates the Merchant Seamen who sailed from the ports of Cardiff, Penarth and Barry during the Second World War, Never to return.



Artist – Brian Fell

Cardiff Bay and Butetown provided a high proportion of Merchant Seamen. The Sculptor used his skill to "seam" together the sculpture's two distinct features- the beached hull of a ship and a timeless face. The surrounding interpretive mosaic carries inscriptions and portraits of local wartime seafarers from the Butetown History and Arts archive.

The foregoing article records the sinking in 1942 of the S.S. "Barrywin" with the tragic loss of 12 of her crew. It is to such men that this Memorial has been erected, in an appropriate site next to the Pierhead building in Cardiff Bay.

Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2003 at 1100 hours a Remembrance Service was held at the above Memorial. The Revd Canon Graham Francis, Honorary Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers, Cardiff officiating. The music was by the Cardiff County and Vale of Glamorgan Youth Brass Band. About 100 people attended the service which was surprising considering that it was such a cold morning.

Wreaths were laid by the following:- Lord Mayor of the City and County of Cardiff; Vice Lieutenant of the County of Glamorgan; Presiding Officer for the National Assembly of Wales; Captain of H.M.S. "CAMBRIA"; Graig Shipping PLC; Reardon-Smith Nautical School; Merchant Navy Association (Wales); Russian Convoy Club( South Wales Branch) and in addition there were several Floral Tributes.

O.J.T.L.

## The School of Maritime Studies Wales ( Llandaff).

Having to attend another training course meant another trip down to Warsash Maritime Centre, Southampton last year. Leaving Swansea and passing the turn off for Cardiff brought back pleasant memories of my apprenticeship at the Reardon Smith Nautical College, from 1976 to 1978 and courses for Second engineer and Chief engineer in the 1980's at the Llandaff College. It was all so different then, with the excitement of the opening of the School for Maritime Studies Wales on the Llandaff campus in 1977.

Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret was to open the new college and part of the day was to be taken up with a visit to the training vessel, Mageritta II in Cardiff dock.

During the last few weeks the training vessel had been worked on to make her presentable to her Royal Highness. HMS Llandaff was to visit Cardiff on her farewell visit before being decommissioned and scrapped, as a thank you for the work on the training vessel we were to get a trip on HMS Llandaff.

The merchant navy memorial service was being held as well as the opening of the college and my mother and father had travelled up from Swansea for the day. I was standing at the entrance to the Cathedral with other Reardon Smith Line cadet's (Gary Mackenzie, Derek Knox, Christopher Lee, Martin Lockwood and Timothy Savage). It was of a great deal of embarrassment to me when a gentleman came up to me and remarked how proud he was of our turn out. Like a fool I enquired why and he introduced himself. I was standing in front of Mr C. R. Chatterton (Chairman). I felt very foolish having not recognised him at all.

I had seen my mum and dad as I went into the cathedral and was to meet up after the service with them and have a lift to the Reardon Smith annexe at Fairwater. Due to the heavy traffic and the fact my father had parked a fair distance away from the Cathedral I was late getting back. The day happened to be my day on the duty roster and I was late reporting for duty. No amount of protests from me got me off the hook.

My punishment for being late was to take a weekend duty, which just happened to be the day when we were to go on the trip on H.M.S Llandaff, I missed out on that as well.

The Nautical College in Llandaff is long gone and the building has been changed out of all recognition. The annexe in Fairwater appears to be the same, but is now the UWIC Campus instead. With no college in Wales I find myself on the road to Southampton instead.

**Michael Owens Swansea**

### "Shipmates"

"Shipmates" has been in circulation for 7 years. When the late Captain Tim Lawson started the newsletter as Editor he set the annual fee to £2 per year. He did all the photocopying free of charge. When I took over as Editor the newsletter had to be printed by outside printers and we were lucky to find a subsidized printer who did the printing at a reasonable price. This printer is now gone out of business and we must now go to printers who charge the standard rate. We are also now producing a 16 page newsletter. Due to this increase in expenses the Treasure Captain Oliver Lindsay and myself decided to raise the annual fee to £5 for U.K. members and £8 Overseas members to meet the rising cost, we are sorry about this increase.

Alec Osborne Editor.

## ROCKS - A MEANING FOR LIFE

A philosophy Professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him.

When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The students laughed. The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Naturally, the sand filled up everything else.

"Now", said the professor, "I want you to recognise that this is your life. The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, your car.

The sand is everything else, the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks.

The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the loo.

Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

But then, a student took the jar which the other students and the professor agreed was full and proceeded to pour in a glass of beer. Of course, the beer filled the remaining spaces within the jar making it truly full.

The moral of this tale is : *No matter how full your life is, there is always room for a BEER !!!!*

---

I would like to thanks the members who sent in stories, but "Shipmates" needs more short stories. If your story is not published in this issue it will be in one of <sup>the</sup> issues to follow. Enjoy your Christmas and New Year.

*Alec Osborne Editor*



## Life After RSL. (Who wants to be a Supercargo?)

This item is not entirely about the Reardon Smith Line, but I trust that the connections are strong enough to retain the interest of the readers of this publication. Under different circumstances, in an ideal world, I suspect that the majority of us would still be soldiering (sailing?) on, both at sea and ashore, in the office, happily anticipating our approaching retirement and a comfortable pension to go with it, and keeping abreast of all the Company news via a monthly newsletter published in Greyfriars House.

Unfortunately, we all know the reality of what happened to the majority of the grand old companies that formed a large part of the once proud British merchant fleet, and the effect that this had on the lives of us all. That the decimation of the Merchant Navy was due mainly to market forces and the globalisation, if you like, of the shipping industry, was of little comfort to anyone.

By the early 1980's the financial problems besetting RSL were fairly obvious to all, and the fleet was shrinking rapidly. The associated redundancies were affecting many people. Towards the end of 1983 I was on the 'Tacoma City' as Chief Mate when the vessel was chartered to a company called Norbulk, of Hong Kong, to load a cargo of timber and plywood from the Far East for the Continent and the U.K. Norbulk is probably remembered by a number of RSL employees, as they subsequently took at least one other of the Company's vessels on a similar charter.

The 'Tacoma City' duly called at Antwerp and Rotterdam and completed discharge in Cardiff. During our time in Cardiff I learned that Norbulk had their own agency and forwarding business in Alexandra Dock and that they were looking for a cargo superintendent. I applied for, and was given the job. By this time, the 'Tacoma City' was loading in Antwerp for her next charter, and with the kind permission of the Company, it was agreed that I would be relieved when we arrived in Kuwait, to come home and begin work with Norbulk in April of 1984. I initially began this job with a certain amount of optimism. However, little did I suspect what awaited me.....

This change of employment proved to be a leap from the frying pan into the fire. In view of the uncertainty over the future of RSL, taking this job as a Supercargo was supposed to be a career enhancing move with prospects for spending more time at home and offering a certain amount of job security. It was anything but. The terms of employment as promised at the interview metamorphosed into something less advantageous when I actually came to start work and were only partly reinstated after strenuous complaints. I had also been led to believe that the job would consist of working for most of the time in

Cardiff, completing discharge of the cargoes and then seeing the chartered vessels off hire.

However, within a couple of months, I had been shanghaied (not quite literally!) out to the Far East to act as Supercargo on a chartered vessel. This involved loading at about a dozen or more ports all around Borneo and Sumatra and was a long drawn out period of hard work and constant struggle arguing with uncooperative stevedores, agents and ship's personnel, and a totally unsympathetic charterer in Hong Kong. I cannot name names, as I suppose that even writing for a newsletter, I could be sued for libel, but judging from some of the holes in the jungle that we visited to load cargo, some of the hardwood was of very uncertain origin.

The charterer had obviously never heard of the expression 'sustainable resources', and even if he had, I am sure that he would have ignored it, and used any available method to avoid any attempt at conservation. Apart from, (probably), making considerable, dubiously legal, profits, the charterer was also happy with the fact that he had a fledgling Supercargo that he could employ on virtually slave wages, instead of having to pay the going rate to somebody more experienced. He was also in a perfect position to vent his spleen on me at every opportunity, without too much fear of retaliation. When I think about this individual nowadays, I sincerely hope that his unsavoury business practices have been curtailed or shut down by Greenpeace or some other body campaigning for sustainable use of hardwood timber resources, but I rather suspect that he would have been prepared to carry on with this trade until the very last tree had been sawn down.

I went through this ordeal twice within the first seven or eight months of my employment with Norbulk, and spent the interim periods attending to the discharge of the Norbulk chartered vessels in Alexandra Dock in Cardiff. Once these vessels had come off hire, I was occupied with the transportation of the cargo to destinations all over the U.K. This operation offered further insights into more dubious business practices, one of which was a conscious effort to cut costs by overloading the transport. I believe that the weight record was held by a 20 tonne vehicle which was stopped by the Police, and found to have a 29 tonne load on board!

However, even these periods did not offer an ordered, or routine, existence, as I usually had to attend to the first part of the discharge in Antwerp and Rotterdam, and rarely had sufficient time off to spend more than two or three consecutive days at home in Shropshire. The time in Cardiff was also interspersed with visits to customers, to explain why their cargo of timber/plywood was wet or damaged. (Sometimes both!) The chartering of unsuitable vessels made handling and stowage difficult for inexperienced stevedores in the Far East, and their operations caused a certain amount of

damage to cargo and packaging. Handling during discharge in Cardiff was none too gentle either! Add to this the fact that some of the cargo was stored in open sided sheds, where the rain could be blown over a considerable amount of the kiln dried timber; it was not easy to explain to irate managers of large timber importers, why their goods looked a bit sorry for themselves. I don't think that I was much good in making up excuses, or inventing downright lies. The truth was definitely not an option. To use a modern idiom, Norbulk U.K and Norbulk Hong Kong 'did not do truth'

Worse was to come, as starting from the beginning of 1985, the gentleman (a very loose description indeed of the person concerned), who ran Norbulk decided that there was more profit to be made by keeping the chartered vessels on hire after their timber cargoes were discharged, and loading them for a further voyage. This meant even more chasing about from pillar to post and even less time at home, with a corresponding complete loss of any residual job satisfaction, which had never been much to begin with.

On one occasion early in the New Year, I was sent down to France to pick up a ship that was due to arrive in Nantes, for discharging. On arrival at the Agent's office, I was met by an harassed looking young Frenchman who informed me that we had to go immediately down to St. Nazaire, as the ship in question had been delayed. It transpired the this ship (I cannot recall the name at the moment, but the vessel had an all Filipino crew, including the Master), had picked up a pilot who had refused to take her any further up the river due to her having various navigational equipment defects (no gyro to start with and a dodgy VHF) plus a considerable list.

Between the Agent and myself, we finally persuaded the belligerent and suspicious Master, after much argument, that he must give us full access to the vessel's stability information and co-operate fully unless he wanted to stay on the lay-by berth for an indefinite period off-hire. It was duly established that the vessel had a negative GM. Fortunately, there was sufficient ballast capacity to correct this, but more threats were needed before the Master would agree to start ballasting. I never did establish why he decided to arrive without having run-in every available tank much earlier in the voyage. Possibly because he did not fully trust his stability calculations, which were not very imposing! It must be said in his favour, that Norbulk, when booking cargoes, paid very little attention to warnings from ship's staff that stability was becoming tight, and crammed everything on board as long as there was space available. On one occasion, when loading one of these chartered vessels, I discovered that the chief tally clerk had issued two separate cargo plans - a (reasonably) accurate one for me, and another one, about two hundred tonnes lighter, to the ship! It was also not unusual for ships, in the final stages of loading, to have to take considerable extra bunkers to retain stability.

I had so many problems with the Filipino vessel, both the ship and the Master, during discharge, with defective cargo gear and unreliable hatch covers and so on, that I decided to fly home for a few days rest instead of accompanying the ship to Antwerp and then Rotterdam. When this came to the attention of the Charterer in Hong Kong, it inspired a veritable eruption of wrath and invective.

However, I did manage to see this vessel finally discharged in Cardiff and then to carry on with the following ship, which had an all Italian crew. About this time, the Norbulk Agency in Cardiff decided that they could earn some easy money by acting as Agents for these chartered vessels. Their experience in this field, which was virtually nil, did not stop them from charging a hefty fee. Most of the Agency work was left to the Manager's son, who had just left school at eighteen, and whose main claim to fame was that he was good with computers. He did manage to oversee the occasional change of crew, get people to and from the Doctor and arrange for chandlers to visit etc, but anything more out of the ordinary, if he did not know what it was, he just ignored it. Hence, important visits from Surveyors got overlooked and when one vessel needed bunkers, panic set in. I believe that a bunker barge had to be brought in from another port and this entailed all sorts of delays, not least of which was waiting for the tide to get the barge through the locks. The cost of this bodged operation brought forth further ravings from Hong Kong, and gave me a certain amount of gleeful satisfaction that I was not the only target of abuse.

The Italian ship was somewhat more restful, but loading a cargo of steel billets and rebars down in Spain was not exactly a picnic. I did come away with a good knowledge of Italian culinary habits - they had a most miserable tiny breakfast, a very frugal lunch and then a huge dinner in the evening which went on for about three hours.. This usually consisted of about half a dozen courses, starting with soup, pasta, vegetables, meat, salad, sweet and then cheese etc. Since these dinners were accompanied by an endless supply of decent wine, I could usually manage to reconcile myself to starving throughout the day with the thought that I could make up for it later on in the evening.

On leaving this ship I managed to get home for a weekend, but only because it happened to be the Easter holiday. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> January and Easter, I had managed only one part weekend at home. My discontent over this situation was resolved for me when I went back to Cardiff. Before I could even start work, I was called into the Manager's office and told that my services were no longer required. I received a month's pay in lieu of notice, handed over the company car and went on my way. I cannot honestly say that I was either surprised or upset by this dismissal, relief was the most prominent emotion, I think. I did ask the reason for the summary dismissal and was told that I had not been 'aggressive' enough in my approach to the job. This meant, to me, that I was nowhere near being as objectionable as the tyrant in Hong Kong or as much of a bully as the Manager of the agency in Cardiff. Not being aggressive. to them, meant that I

could not browbeat the Port Authorities into giving Norbulk preferable treatment with regard to port facilities and the number of gangs for working the ships.

I returned to sea later in 1985 and for the remainder of my seagoing service I always made a point of being extremely kind to all Supercargoes!!

Just for the record, while I was engaged in the above work, I was very kindly given lodgings in Newport by an old friend, Jack Lyons, who was then retired from his job as Chief Steward with RSL. He used to say that he was going to teach me an appreciation of Rugby Union, but he never did get around to it and I still haven't a clue about the rules to this day!

*R. F. Alford*

### Twentytwo Ways To Drive Your Doctor Insane

1. Turn up late for an appointment and tell the Doctor that you were allowing for the fact that he/she is always running late.
2. Call Doctors who are not Surgeons, "Mr"
3. Say, "I wont keep you Doctor, I've just popped in for an antibiotic."
4. Bring an article from a newspaper suggesting a better treatment for your condition.
5. Ask for something to throw off a cold.
6. Bring a dairy listing the frequency, form and content of your bowel actions over the past four weeks.
7. Save up a long list of problems for one consultation.
8. When keeping an appointment, take along your two young sons , daughter and niece with you. Should the Doctor say they need separate appointments , say " I'm very busy and thought I would save you time by sorting it all out in one go"
9. Start consultation by saying "I'm not a tablet person, but....."

10. After listening to your Doctors advice, say "Yes, but I think I'd better have a letter to see someone else"
11. Fail to wash under your armpits.
12. Try to persuade the Doctor to do a home visit by saying that you "pay his bloody wages"
13. When given a prescription, always ask if the medicine is a drug.
14. Make any reference to the Citizens Charter
15. Try to help the Doctor by diagnosing your own condition.
16. Ask for some medication that your neighbour's niece, who is a Nurse, has recommended.
- 17 Tell the Doctor that little Jason has always been hyperactive as he smashes up the Consulting Room.
- 18 If the Doctor declines to prescribe an antibiotic, remind him that his Predecessor always used to.
- 19 Tell the Receptionist that if you cannot have an immediate appointment, you will go home and call the Doctor out.
- 20 Say you don't know why you are obese because you "don't eat a thing"
- 21 Tell the Doctor how they treat your condition in America.
- 22 As you are the Doctors last patient to be seen and knowing he/she is running extremely late, on leaving the Consulting Room tell him/her that there are four Reps. Waiting at Reception.

### **New Members.**

Mr.J.T. Greenway from Barry,who is the Secretary of the Barry Branch of the Merchant Navy Association(Wales) is now a member. Mr. Greenway is kept busy organising the parade and service,etc, on Merchant Navy Day at Barry.

We welcome our new member David Jenkins B.A. PhD who works for the National Museums & Galleries of Wales and is the Senior Curator of the (Maritime & Transport Collections). David has a vast knowledge of the Reardon Smith Line and Merchant Shipping Companies.

### UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In October 1979, after an encounter with the British Shipping Federation Doctor at Cardiff, I was declared medically unfit to pursue seagoing by virtue of mild hypertension and consequently being on medication. At that time anyone on repeat medication was not considered suitable to be at sea. In view of this, Reardon Smith had no option but to terminate my employment. Interestingly, after 30 years with the Company, I was entitled to £1000 redundancy. How times have changed!!

This was a critical time for me. At age 47 and having been Master for 9 years with 2 daughters approaching University, I had to rapidly find alternative employment.

Thanks to a contact in Abu Dhabi, I was made aware of vacancies for Marine Officers (Pilots) at the port of Jebel Dhanna in the United Arab Emirates.

Through their agents in Bromborough, I was interviewed and offered the job. The Company was Abu Dhabi Petroleum Ports Operating Company, -ADPPOC for short-who were responsible for all port operations in that area. On April 1<sup>st</sup> 1980 myself and a second appointee proceeded to the UAE and eventually arrived at Jebel Dhanna after a two hour drive West of Abu Dhabi. The port consisted of no more than a tank farm to which Murban Crude Oil was pumped from the desert. It was then fed to tankers (ULCCs) secured about one mile offshore in what was termed Conventional Buoy Moorings. These large tankers would load to a draft of about 45 feet and thence proceed to deep water ports further up the Persian Gulf to complete loading.

There were twelve pilots plus port operations personnel including Phillipino divers, Indian engineers and Catering staff and Egyptian staff on station.

Tankers would be boarded 18 miles offshore and conducted through the buoyed channel to the berths. There were three tugs to assist berthing. The interesting aspect of this work was the opportunity to experience the efficiency of different nationalities, as one never knew what flag the next tanker would be flying. Japanese seamen were extremely efficient but one despaired at some others!! Loading could take up to three days and the Pilot remained on board throughout, supervising the loading operation and finally conducting the vessel out of port.

The terms of employment were for two months on and one month off and we were flown back to the U.K. after a tour of duty for leave. Salaries were paid in UAE Dirhams and I was extremely fortunate that, shortly after taking up this employment, the exchange rate rocketed in our favour! This coupled with being a non UK taxpayer was a great improvement on my RSL Masters salary! I continued in this employment until 1985 when I finally "Swallowed the anchor" and retired. For the past 17 years I have been involved as a Justice of the Peace here in Nottingham and especially involved with Liquor Licensing matters.. In May 2002 I retired from the Bench.

*Capt. John Dunn*

## Steering Gear Breakdown.

The "Great City" sailed from Newcastle N.S.W. Australia, on 25th July 1963, for Madras with a cargo of grain. During the passage, while in the Australian Bight, the weather was dull and the sea was quite choppy. Captain Harry L. Evans was Master, and John Cann was the Chief Officer, I was the Chief Engineer. On the 5th August at 03.00 hrs. it was reported to me that the steam steering gear would not steer the ship. The M.E. pumps were changed over to the standby pumps and the vessel was stopped. On inspection of the steering gear it was found that the main bronze wheel in the gearbox had stripped ten teeth and its driving worn wheel had jammed on top of the next four teeth making the steering engine unworkable.

The emergency steering arrangement had to be rigged but firstly the driving gearwheel, which drives the rudder quadrant, had to be taken out of mesh. With this type of gear the steam engine and gearbox was mounted on a bedplate on a sliding cradle with withdrawal screws so that the driving gear could be pulled out of mesh with the rudder quadrant teeth. This allowed the emergency gear to be used. The holding bolts were released, the steam pipes dismantled, and the gear moved aft. The emergency rig was then rigged up, this was something to be seen under working conditions. Wires were run from the poop deck mooring winch port and starboard drums down through the special holes in the main deck to rope blocks attached to the ship's frames and led and attached to eye plates which were cast on the rudder quadrant. The wires on the winch drums led in different directions. If the rudder was required to go to port the port drum would pull the rudder to port, and to starboard the winch would be reversed and the rudder pulled to starboard. Aft of the winch drums a white line was painted port to starboard across the deck. A piece of cloth was tied to each wire to hang down over the line. When the rudder was in midships position the two pieces of cloth would be in line with each other. Any movement of the rudder, the markers would move away from the line indicating the rudder angle.

Captain John Cann, who was Chief Officer on the vessel at the time wrote quote:- With the steering gear episode was a classic B.O.T. stuff How many of us when questioned in the Orals Examination or in the written paper about emergency steering gear arrangements tended to think it was all "out of the Ark"? Whilst rigging the tackle and disengaging the steering gear I thought of "Captain Williams the B.O.T examiner who would be proud of us". It has been recorded that the system worked well although communications between the Bridge and Poop were a bit hairy!. No walkie talkies in those days but Captain Harry Lloyd Evans would take up position on the wing of the bridge armed with a Loud Hailer and bellow orders aft!. I recall the Fremantle pilot boarding and observing what was going on. He prudently retired to the wheelhouse and told Captain Evans to carry on!. I figure we were the only ship to be "talked down".

Vessel arrived at Fremantle 16.02 hrs. 8th August the steering gearbox was opened out. The worm and spindle was taken ashore to the workshop and tested for truth in a lathe. This was found not to be damaged in any way. At the time the gear broke down a new bronze worm wheel was ordered by cable from R.S.L. Cardiff Office. This was air freighted and arrived at Fremantle on the 8th August and delivered onboard at 23.30 hrs. Assembly was started right away, the workmen worked through the night and work was completed on the 9th August.

*Alec Osborne*