



# SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.43 June 2007.



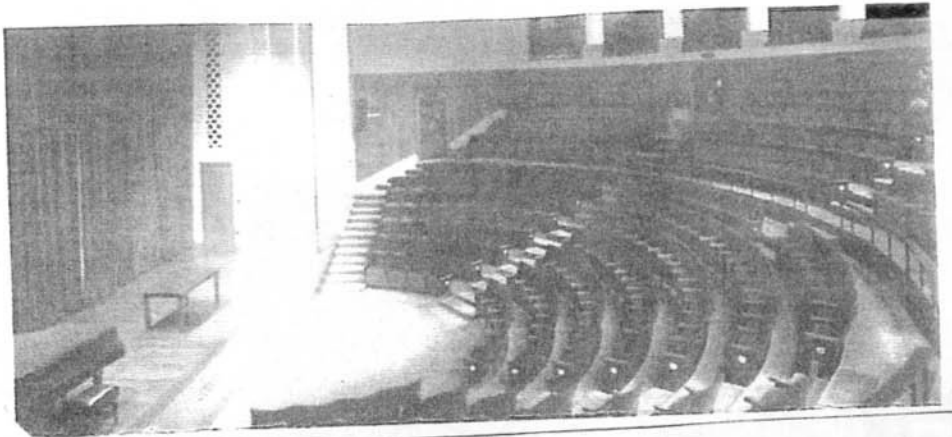
## National Museum of Wales

**Formal opening of the Eastern Ranges of Galleries and  
Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre, Cardiff 25th October 1932  
By His Royal Highness The Prince George, K.G., G.C.V.O.  
Being Greeted by Sir William Reardon Smith BT.**

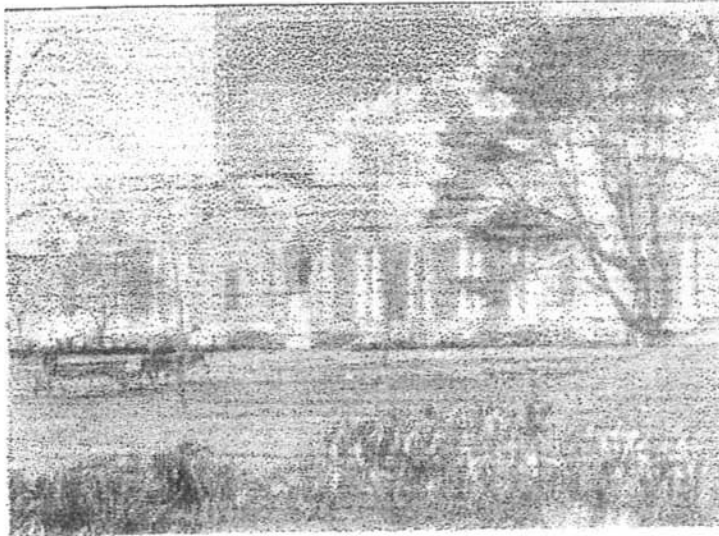
## National Museum of Wales

The photograph on the front page of this edition, taken on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1932 of the late HRH Prince George K.G., G.C.V.O. being welcomed by the Sir William Reardon Smith BT at the bottom of the steps leading up top main entrance of the National Museum of Wales. In the background, standing on the steps in two rows forming a guard of honour are cadets from the Smith Junior Nautical School.

The Museum is part of Cardiff's prestigious civic center with its fine buildings, park lands and Alexandra Gardens in the center of which is the Welsh National Memorial. Also nearby is Cardiff Castle with its fine Norman Keep



**Reardon  
Smith  
Lecture  
Theatre**



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Over a quarter of a million people visit the Museum annually.

In 1932 the Smith Junior Nautical School and the Senior School of Marine Studies where marine students studied for their Board of Trade Certificates of Competency was situated in the Technical College, approximately 450 metres across Alexandra Gardens from the Museum. At that time there was Marine gallery in the Museum with about twelve ship models, this was discontinued after W.W.2 and was replaced by a new building, the Marine and Industrial Museum at Cardiff Bay, this too has been demolished to make way for the Cardiff Bay developments. The Welsh Maritime Museum is now established in Swansea.  
OJL.

## Obituaries

Our member Alexander Frederick Westall (Alex) crossed the bar on the 1st April 2007 he was 86 years old. Alex was Managing Director of Sir William Reardon Smith Shipping and Charting Director of Sir William Reardon Smith Line. He worked at Reardon Smith head office Cardiff from a junior until he was called away to join the army in WW2 where he served in North Africa, Crete and Italy. He returned to the company after the war and in 1967 was appointed Director where he served until the company went into Liquidation. Our sympathy goes to Alex's wife Millie and her family.

Harry Parry from Birkenhead crossed the bar in April 2007, Harry served with the Reardon Smith Line and was a member of "Shipmates" from many years. Our deepest sympathy goes to his family.

Jerry Taylor crossed the bar on the 6th April 2007 at the age of 91 years old. Jerry joined the Reardon Smith Technical Department in the early 1970's and was there until the company went in to liquidation. He was in charge of the Ship Planned Maintenance System. He used to produce the computer print out of the ships maintenance work for 4 months for the Chief Officers and Chief Engineers when they going to join a vessel. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Joan and family.

John Dutton crossed the bar suddenly on the 30st March 2007. John served his engineer apprenticeship at the railway sheds at Barry and joined Reardon Smith as Junior Engineer in the early 1950,s rising to the rank of Chief Engineer sailed on, many R.S.I, ships. He left the company and went to work on oil rig supply ships. Our deepest sympathy go to his wife Maureen and their family.

## PHAETHON AETHEREUS

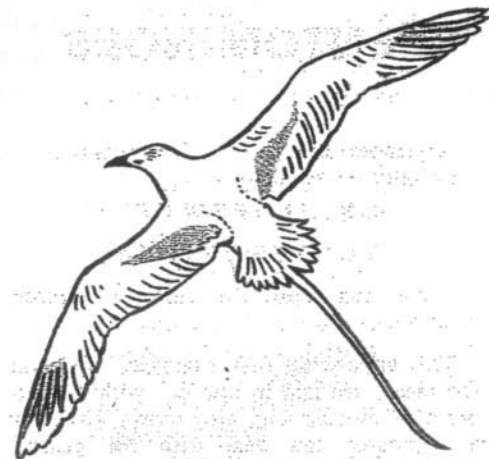
WHILST EN ROUTE from Kobe to Ensenada, we had the pleasure (if it can be called that), of welcoming on board an old and familiar friend to many seafarers. The Red Billed Tropicbird, known more commonly as the "Bosun Bird" because of its shrill, piping cry, roams far across the warm Atlantic and western Pacific Oceans and the Persian Gulf. Solitary for much of the year, it ranges with swift, graceful wingbeats, then hovers briefly before plunging with half folded wings to take fish and squid from just below the water's surface.

Tropicbirds are generally between 16 and 19 inches long. They have long pointed wings, and a wedge shaped tail, with elongated central feathers. The faint pink tinge to its feathers is caused by an orange-red oil which it uses to waterproof itself with. It has a short neck, with a large head. Its bill is longish, slightly decurved

and very strong. Plumage is glossy white with varying amounts of black on the wings and head; there is also a black stripe extending from the bill to and beyond the eyes.

Our passenger boarded sometime during the very early hours of the morning of 25th May (much to the second mate's surprise), when we were about 2,800 miles from our destination. Having landed on the Bridge deck, it took an instant dislike to the green deck, and proceeded to re-colour it white. This didn't exactly go down too well with the mate, not just because of its choice of colour, but more because of its choice of paint (?).

Its departure came rather abruptly, when the mate got the 8-12 security to give it an assisted take-off, and it was last seen, unhappily as it may be, flying in a southerly direction.



M. J. CLARKE  
Third Officer  
m.v. Amparo

*Story from Reardon Reardon Smith Newsletter July 1977 30 years ago.*

This is the continuation of memories, published in our last issue, from our member Sam Salter of his trip

### “FIRST SHIP”

On 10<sup>th</sup> February another convoy came in and two days later we started off homeward, with ‘Botavon’ again as Commodore ship of Convoy QP7.

Nearing the end of the 20-mile long fiord by early evening, a boat drill was held and the two forward boats swung out. Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> (never an auspicious day for superstitious seafarers), found us well clear of land, a group of eight merchant ships with an escort of six destroyers and sloops. Guns were tested earlier on the run and despite a few alarms, all went well for a few days; one night when on watch I was given my first turn on the wheel under supervision – an experience that quickly dispelled any notion it was an easy job to keep on course, particularly in rough conditions. It was due to poor overnight weather that the convoy became separated the following night and at dawn, three of us, plus two destroyers, found themselves about 5 miles ahead of the others. A day later our escort left to round up the stragglers, the rest of us splitting-up and heading on different courses so as to hopefully be less conspicuous.

Eight days out from Murmansk the east coast of Iceland was raised, when a group of British warships were sighted – a battleship, aircraft carrier, cruisers and destroyers. Entering Seydisfiord next day we anchored off the village at the head of the fiord, where we took on more bunkers and fresh water. Leaving Seydisfiord on 25<sup>th</sup> February with five other vessels and still with our Commodore aboard, we headed southwards in company with three armed trawlers – but not for long; heavy weather set in and the convoy was scattered by next evening, leaving vessels to reach Loch Ewe independently and anchor to await orders.

Weighing anchor on 2<sup>nd</sup> March I had my first experience of working in the chain locker; this meant climbing down into the locker with another person and with the aid of long iron hooks, flake the anchor cable to and fro to prevent it piling up on itself in the bottom of the locker. The space was cramped and poorly lit and what with the noise of the windlass working overhead, the sight of the never-ending cable coming down through the spurling pipe, dripping water and evil smelling mud, made it an unpopular place in which to work – as a novice, I couldn’t help thinking “What if I fall into the locker?” fortunately, similar experiences came along in the future without any mishaps occurring.

Having left Loch Ewe in company with other vessels, we were delighted to anchor again the same day in Dunnet’s Bay as gale force winds and strong currents prevented safe passage through the Pentland Firth, all of us being ‘light ship’. It became necessary to move closer inshore towards Thurso later in the day, when increasing winds caused anchors to drag and also blew our box kite away for good measure. The bad weather persisted and the whole convoy transferred to Scapa Flow for better anchorage, remaining there until 7<sup>th</sup> March. Following a short passage down the coast we arrived



off the River Tyne early on the 9<sup>th</sup>, going upriver to Redheads Dry Dock at South Shields for below waterline scraping and painting of the hull – but the voyage, which had not been entirely without incident both outward and homeward, was not destined to end quite as expected. Going upriver with engines at ‘Half ahead’ and approaching the dry dock entrance on the starboard bow, they failed to go into ‘Full Astern’ mode when required, having failed to respond to the telegraph signals. It was unfortunate, but directly ahead lay the ‘Eros’ moored to the quayside and undergoing repairs!

Sensing what was about to happen, all six of us in our for’d stand-by gang. (Chief Officer included) - hurriedly vacated foc’sle head, using only the handrails and none of the steps of the two ladders down to the main deck. Came the sound of rending metal and popping rivets as we struck ‘Eros’ almost head on, ending up with a 10 x 4 foot gash in the port bow. The other vessel received similar damage, in addition to breaking her moorings and drifting off the quay – but we stopped! The final ignominy came after entering the dry dock, when the engines again failed to go astern and the vessel came to a stop with her stern bar embedded in the heavy timber decking across the dock.

And so, to all intents, the voyage came to an end. Two days later the crew were paid-off including two fellow apprentices who were going to nautical college prior to sitting for their 2<sup>nd</sup> Mates examination. I followed a day later, going to the Shipping Office to collect my pay-off slip and railway warrant home, having completed with the Third Mate the job of gathering in all the ship’s lifejackets and Navy protective clothing issued previously to the crew.

I arrived home on leave at 6.30am on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 1942, but it wasn’t for any superstitious reasons that I spent the morning in bed, merely the effects of a very tedious train journey. Having proudly shown my Father and Sister my first-ever pay slip (duration of voyage 4 months 10 days. final balance due £15-10-03), the next few days passed happily enough in a sequence of visits to the shops, the cinema, playing cards and taking the dog for a walk. After three days a telegram arrived. “Rejoin on Wednesday at Norwich”. This I did, but the ship wasn’t there – she was too big for that port, so the taxi driver told me! Noting daunted, I decided to try Harwich, arriving after a rotten journey at 9pm to find an air raid warning in progress caused by German mine-laying activity in the shipping channels. No ship there either, so I ended up at the Pier Hotel for the night returning home the next day.

A phone call to the company later revealed that ‘Botavon’ had left dry dock in South Shields, gone to North Shields and subsequently, would be in Middlesborough on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, where I was told to rejoin her. It transpired that the telegram I had originally been sent should have read – “Rejoin on Wednesday. Acknowledge.” At least I had a few more days leave out of the GPO’s phonetic error!

Rejoining the ship at Dent’s Wharf, Middlesborough, I found the majority of its ratings were newcomers, also I had two new roommates to replace those who had paid-off. Apart from her hull painting and repairs to her damaged bows, ‘Botavon’ had been fitted with two additional Oerlikon guns. Loading started on 24<sup>th</sup> March, initially mostly army

lorries, tanks and cases of copper piping. During our stay there were a number of air raids, one casualty being Binns store, which was burnt out. We took aboard various deliveries of ship's stores, also several sackfuls of woolen comforts which had been knitted ashore by kindly ladies for distribution – these were gratefully received as it was rumored we were going to Russia again, confirmed as fact two days later when I was given the job of listing the personal measurements of the whole crew for the issue of RN protective clothing.

Deck work consisted mainly of painting and bringing stores aboard for all departments. An interesting addition to the cargo was a batch of radio-location equipment, this being a bit 'hush-hush' we were given to understand. Cargo work in port usually ceased by early evening and if not required for other duties, we were free to go ashore. We apprentices mainly stuck together on such occasions and being usually short of cash, could do little except patronize cinemas, ice cream parlours and station buffets – this is not to say that we didn't find our way into the occasional pub, or indulge in some fish and chips when en route back to the ship

*Sam Slater*

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### M.V. "Atlantic City"

(story NI<sub>42</sub> page No.10.)

Our member Mr. Tony Lewis has drawn to our attention that the dates in the article when the "Atlantic City" was torpedoed are confusing where it mention quote "The vessel loaded a part cargo of coal in January 1941 with equipment and munitions stowed over the coal and sailed for the Clyde in convey". unquote. This was taken from the Reardon Smith Newsletter April 1978. From the hand written report of the Superintendent who wrote his report on the back of the original photograph showing the damage caused by the torpedo the date given is 26th July 1941 which I am sure is correct.

I had a letter from Mrs. Peggy Harvey from Belfast where she mentions that her husband Capt. George Harvey was sailing on the "Atlantic City" when the ship was torpedoed. He was one of the volunteers to return to the ship with Capt. Brice Thomas and the Chief Engineer. George joined the Reardon Smith Line in 1928 and was 32 years old at the time of the "Atlantic City" incident. He sailed with the line until his retirement.

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### M.V. "Houston City"

Mrs. Harvey also sent in a copy of a diary printed on the next pages which her daughter Lesley had to keep for her headmaster when she did a voyage on the "Houston City" with Capt. Harvey and Mrs. Harvey in 1952-53. She was seven and a half years old at the time. Nice memories for her.

We left London on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1952 on Daddy's ship "MV Houston City", and by the following morning the Cliffs of Dover were left behind and we were in the English Channel on our way to Canada. The weather became very rough, at first my brother and I found it hard to stand but we soon found our "sea legs" and I often went on the bridge with the mates and watched the waves breaking over the bow.

On 11<sup>th</sup> August we passed round Lands End and entered the Atlantic Ocean. Just before we got to Newfoundland we had a lot of fog and it didn't clear until we got into the Gulf of St Lawrence. The pilot came on board at Father's Point and took the ship up the St Lawrence River to Three Rivers, which is half way between Quebec and Montreal. We arrived on 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

Three Rivers is a small French Canadian town where very few people speak English. There are several lumber mills there and timber and grain are exported – we loaded wheat. There is only one main shopping street, but the shop I liked best was the drugstore where I had my first banana split. It was very warm while we were there and we bathed both in the river and the swimming pool.

We left Three Rivers on 2<sup>nd</sup> September bound for Sweden, and when passing through Belle Isle we saw two icebergs in the distance. The journey was uneventful.

We passed through Pentland Firth and arrived in Gothenburg. The ship was lying across the river and we had to go in a ferry to get into the city. All the buildings seemed to be lovely and clean, and most people appeared to live in flats. Even in the shopping streets there were trees growing on each side of the street and the Gota Canal ran up the main street. Few people spoke English and it was difficult for us.

Our second port in Sweden was Malmo. It wasn't much different from Gothenburg. Some of our crew took a trip to Copenhagen but I was ill and didn't get out very much.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October we left Malmo and returned to Canada, this time to Montreal. We arrived on 17<sup>th</sup>. Montreal is also French Canadian, but more willing to speak English. St Catherine Street is the main shopping street. The stores are six stories high and instead of ordinary stairs they have escalators.

One evening the apprentices took me out for supper and to the pictures. We rode in a street car which goes very fast and is always crowded. We did not get tickets but dropped coins into a box at the back then kept moving along so that we could get out at the front. The whole city was lighted with neon signs, I liked watching them flashing on and off.

The highest point in Montreal is Mount Royal, where a large cross lit up at night can be seen across the whole city. A special car takes people up the hill and from there the whole city can be seen. It began to snow the afternoon we were there. It is a lovely woodland place and many people were riding horses on the bridle paths, some dressed like cowboys.

We left Montreal on 23<sup>rd</sup> October bound for Japan, and on the way to Panama Canal passed San Salvador Island, which was the first land sighted by Christopher Columbus on his voyage of discovery to America.

About 1<sup>st</sup> November we got into the tropics and were able to bathe in the pool which the 1<sup>st</sup> mate had made on the monkey island. He also made a sandpit, a swing and a hammock for us.

We went through Panama Canal on 5<sup>th</sup> November. The ship is put into locks. These locks are filled with water and the ship is gradually lifted up about 80 ft into a lake. After passing through the lake the ship goes through a part of the canal which is cut through a mountain and is then put into other locks and lowered down to sea level into the Pacific Ocean. It takes about 8 hours to go through.

We went from Panama Canal to Japan without stopping, passing through the Hawaiian Islands. The weather was very warm. We saw flying fish and porpoises. Some flying fish, attracted by the



lights, flew on board. One of the stewards tried to stuff one for me so that I could bring it home, but he was not able to.

On the week we crossed the date line, which is on the opposite side of the world to London, we had to miss out a day.

Our port in Japan was Moji. We were only there for four days from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> December. Although the Japanese have not got modern machinery for taking the grain out of the ship, hundreds of them, including women, work for very long hours. The Japanese men who came on board to see Daddy kept bowing and were very polite to us, although they made rude noises when they were drinking tea.

The women looked very dainty in their coloured kimonos. They walk with very small steps wearing gettas. The shopping streets are very narrow. The shops are not like ours at home, having no doors or windows. The streets are hung with coloured lights at night. Mummy and Daddy were invited out for dinner one evening. They had to leave their shoes outside the door. They sat on the floor at a low table and were served by Geisha girls. They drank saki, a warm rice wine.

On the way from Moji to the United States the weather was very cold and we had a lot of snow. When we crossed the date line again we had to add on a day and this happened to be 25<sup>th</sup> December, which gave us two Christmas days. We had a lovely time, with a tree, decorations and plenty of toys.

We went to Longview in the state of Washington, to load wheat for Bombay. The American people were very kind to us. The ship's agent met the ship when we arrived with a big box of chocolates, sweets, fruit, fruit juice and fresh milk. Another gentleman, we called him Uncle Bill, took us in his car to his home in Portland, Oregon, about 50 miles away. The car went at 75 miles an hour, and we stayed overnight with his family. The town of Longview was designed by an Englishman, it is laid out like a wheel with the Municipal Building forming the hub and the streets all branching out from it. The biggest lumber mill in the world is at Longview.

When we left Longview we had very bad weather for the first week, but for the remaining five weeks of the passage to Bombay it was very warm, and we made use of our bathing pool every day. One day we passed an island in the Marianas group named Farallon de Pajaros, it is 1,046 feet high.

We arrived in Bombay on 26<sup>th</sup> February. We were there for eight days and spent most of our time at Breach Candy which has two swimming pools, one indoors and one outside, a paddling pool with sand, a big lawn with flowers and a café. The weather was very warm and we spent the days in our bathing costumes. I had a swimming lesson every day and at the end of the week I was able to swim out to the raft and dive.

We were taken for a drive round the city. The traffic seemed crazy, people walked in amongst the cars and we were sure they must be knocked over.

We went to Malabar Hill to see the Hanging Gardens, these are built over the reservoir and the trees and bushes are lovely colours.

We saw a lot of vultures flying round a tower, and were told that the Parsees, an Indian sect, did not bury their dead but put the bodies on top of this tower for the vultures to eat. We looked down across the bay at the city. The bay is shaped like a horseshoe and at night when the lights are lit around it, it is known as the Queen's necklace. We also saw where the Governor lives.

It is one day's run down the coast to Marmugoa in Portuguese India. Manganese and iron ore have recently been found near here and this small port is now being enlarged to handle it, but when we were there, there were so many ships in front of us we had to lie at anchor for 49 days before we could get alongside the quay to load. The ship's motor boat went ashore twice a day and I went in it every morning. Sometimes the mate in charge let me take the tiller and steer.

There is nothing much in Marmugoa, a café, one hotel, a post office and a few offices. The natives seem to be very poor and the oxen they use for pulling carts are dreadfully thin. We found a little beach where we bathed at the weekends, and it was fun playing in the big surf. To get to the beach we had to walk along a cliff path, then through a grove where there were coconut and banana trees growing, but my favourite fruit was mango.

One morning there was a snake charmer in the town, he was sitting on the ground and had six snakes in boxes. He played a flute and we watched a cobra coming out of a box and swaying in time with the music. He picked the other snakes up and let them twine themselves round his arms and body.

The town of Vasco de Gama is about two miles from Marmugoa. It is a small place but we were able to do shopping in it and it had a nice park. I made friends with a little Portuguese boy and girl and I spent some afternoons visiting them.

We spent a weekend in Pangim, the capital of Portuguese India. We stayed at the Mandovi Hotel, which is newly built and very modern. Our room had a balcony and I slept out on it. While at Pangim we visited Old Goa, which was the first city to be built by Europeans in India. It is now in ruins except for four roman Catholic churches which have been preserved. In the first one we visited we saw the shrine of St. Francis Xavier, the Patron Saint of India. Although he died 400 years ago his body is still whole. It is kept in a lead coffin inside a silver one, which is beautifully carved. The coffin had been opened just a month before our visit.

The paintings and carvings in all four of the churches, although very old, were well kept and interesting to see. In one church we saw bats flying around the ceiling, in another one we went into a vault underneath the altar and got bitten by insects.

We visited Margao, the business centre of the colony, it hadn't much to interest me but on the drive down we passed many rice paddies. The young shoots were just showing above the ground

and the natives were making dams to catch the rain water when the monsoon would break in June.

When we went alongside the quay to load, there was so much dust from the manganese ore that we had to go to the Palace Hotel to stay. The food was Indian with lots of garlic in it and we were glad to get back to the ship.

We left Marmugoa on 8<sup>th</sup> May and arrived in Bombay the following day. We were there four days loading general cargo and we went to Breach Candy every day.

One night we went to a theatre where a magician "Sorcar" was giving a show. He did many tricks including cutting a lady in half and cutting a piece off a man's tongue and putting it back on again. I enjoyed the show very much.

The women in India wear saris and some of them wear rings through their noses. In the tropics there isn't any twilight, as soon as the sun sets it gets dark right away.

It took eight days to get to the Red Sea and another six days to reach Suez. On the way we passed through the Gulf of Suez, it was somewhere in this gulf that the sea opened for the Children of Israel. One side of the gulf is Africa and the other side, Asia. We could see the land on both sides.

We went through the Suez Canal on 28<sup>th</sup> May, it was not as interesting as Panama Canal being a waterway cut through the desert. We saw some camels with their Arab drivers. We arrived at Port Said at midnight, took oil bunkers and sailed at 4am, so I didn't see anything of it.

On the way through the Mediterranean we had a little bit of bad weather, when we passed through the Strait of Gibraltar it was hazy so we couldn't see the Rock, but after that the weather turned warm and we had a nice passage to New York.



On 24<sup>th</sup> June as we were nearing New York we saw "Queen Mary" sailing for home. She passed close to us and is a fine big ship.

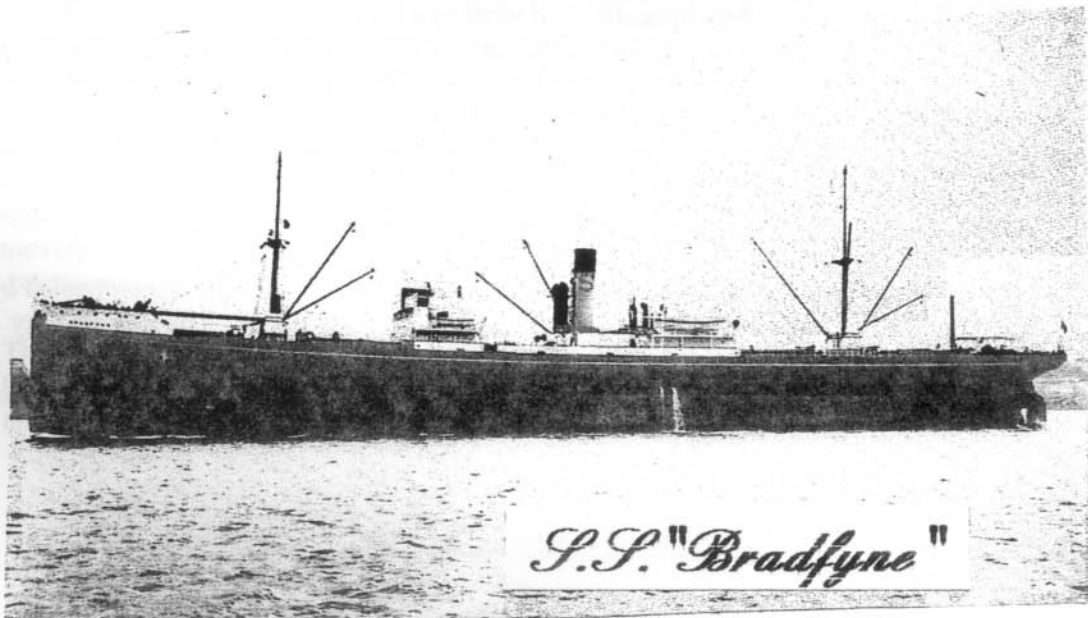
Next morning we went up the river into New York, we passed the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and had our first view of the sky scrapers. In the afternoon we went to see the United Nations Buildings with the flags of all the nations flying in front of it, then we saw the Lever Buildings, built entirely from glass, and then we visited the Empire States Building which has 102 floors and is the highest building in the world. We took two lifts to get to the top, where we bought some souvenirs to bring home. From the top story the people below look like little moving dots and the traffic is not much larger. The district is like a scale map which seems to sway beneath you. We visited Coney Island which is a very large and busy fun fair.

After New York we went to Montreal to load wheat for Liverpool, and our travelling was over.

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### S.S. "Bradfyne"

A mistake was made in the last "Shipmates" issue No.42 where the wrong photograph was shown of the "Bradfyne" which was sunk on the 22nd November 1940 when Capt. Vanner and 38 crew members were lost. Below is the correct photograph.



## Alas Poor Agnes

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1978 I joined the MV "Eastern City" at Tilbury as Second Engineer. This being my second trip on this vessel as I had "stood by" during the latter stages of construction in Copenhagen, and also completed the maiden voyage in 1976. The Eastern City was not a popular vessel with the Technical Department in Cardiff due possibly to the amount of automation installed. However I considered it to be a good and interesting ship, the only thing missing was a turbo-alternator as much heat was wasted and the cost of running and maintaining three diesel generators prohibitive. This trip would encompass Christmas and New Year – always a disappointment for families in particular, but part of the job. In this particular instance I celebrated these events with my family on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1979.

The vessel was chartered for a voyage from the US to Japan with a grain cargo calling at Los Angeles for bunkers. It seemed most likely that we would be at sea during the festive season. Part of the officer contingent would be relieved before Christmas, myself, the Electrician and one Deck Office (plus the Master) would remain. We set sail from Tilbury and arrived at one of the ubiquitous grain elevators along the Mississippi River without incident. Loading began, and was expected to take 36 hours. Due to the length of voyage in front of us I volunteered to do the night on board allowing the other engineers to go ashore for a final night of freedom.

The "shore party" slowly assembled in the vessel's lounge prior to departure at around 7.30 pm, rather like pigeons returning to a loft. Upon their departure I moved to my cabin. At approximately 10pm whilst reading a book, the telephone rang. It was the Third (duty) Mate who advised me there was a man in the lounge that wanted to sell a live goose. This appeared quite intriguing and subsequently arriving in the lounge found – sure enough – a man, somewhat dishevelled, with a squirming sack under his arm. The contents of the sack were examined with some difficulty as the goose obviously objected strongly to the confinement. This was an opportunity not to be missed particularly with Christmas approaching. After a few minutes thought negotiations began with regard to price. The Third Mate proved to be an excellent negotiator and a price of \$10 was fixed upon. The man, upon receipt of the \$10 handed over the goose and departed with alacrity. Now the thought of roast goose for Christmas dinner was very appealing but what to do with it in the mean time. Several options were available but it was thought that we should keep the goose alive and fatten it up. This was for the long term but what to do with the goose for the night? It was decided that the goose would be better off where there was some water, so we placed the bird in the Electrician's shower thinking it would be a nice surprise for him on return from the shore. With this satisfactory solution after a quick look around I turned in.

As was revealed afterward, the shore party returned around midnight accompanied by an American couple who had expressed a desire to see the vessel. The Eastern City had well fitted out accommodation, the engine control room and bridge were impressive due to the amount of automation present, we therefore had quite a number of legitimate visitors during port stays.

Whilst the party were in the lounge the Electrician passed to his cabin in order to obey a call of nature. A moment later, he burst back through the lounge door at some considerable speed, and colouring his words with profanity advised the assembled company that there was a live goose in his shower. He knew it was live by the noise and the small tubular shaped parcels of waste products scattered around the shower tray. Now it has always been my experience that Merchant Navy people faced with a problem however obscure always find a solution. In this particular case two elements were present which assisted. One, the American couple were familiar with geese and calmed the bird down by stroking its neck and feeding it tomatoes (which apparently geese are very fond of). Two, a chemical circulation tank had been delivered to the vessel which unfortunately was fitted with the wrong voltage motor. However this tank was delivered in a large slatted crate. The crate was located in the steering gear compartment (a large open space with no bulkhead between it and the engine room). After removal of the tank the goose was placed in the crate with water and tomatoes.

The following day the goose was officially named "Agnes" and made as comfortable as possible in her crate. A syndicate was formed by the three officers who would remain after the forthcoming reliefs in order to care for and "fatten up" Agnes. We stood around the crate not seeing a feathered bird but a lovely roasted goose with crisp skin accompanied by all the trimmings. Letters were immediately sent to wives requesting suitable cooking methods.

Agnes was not too happy in the steering gear, the heat and the engine alarm klaxon upset her, particularly the klaxon, upon the sound of which she would set up a loud squawking. We could not allow this to happen – she might loose weight! Therefore by means of the stores crane we moved Agnes onto the aft main deck where the crate fitted nicely against the engine casing under a companion ladder. This was a secure position and did not interfere with any of the ship's activities. One day it was noticed that Agnes was a bit depressed. The Chief Steward and myself sort a solution to the problem. It appeared that her feet were somewhat dry so we placed one of the handling room drip trays in the crate filled with fresh water, this did the trick she paddled around happily beaking her tomatoes. Apart from complaints from the crew that the goose was better fed than they were, no other problems appeared.

The Electrician (one of the syndicate members) was a very mild tempered and amiable man. He became quite attached to the goose. During the evening he would sit on the ladder in front of the crate and Agnes would put her head out through the slate opening and allow him to stroke her neck. This of course caused much mirth amongst the rest of us. We would wait until the Electrician left the lounge in the evening then sidle out along the deck railing above the crate. Such words as "I won't let them eat you Agnes; you really are a lovely bird" and other endearments would be spoken by the Lecky into the goose's ear (assuming geese have ears). Above this moving interlude we would be rolling around with suppressed laughter, to such an extent one person nearly fell over the railing.

Through all this the vessel's Master – Captain J Vaughan was as good as gold, he knew what was going on but did not interfere with us. We passed through the canal and started along the west coast of America.

During this west coast passage, which was well before Christmas, I became concerned about the carriage of a live bird into the US for our bunkering visit. The USDA do not like live animals or plants brought into the US. Although we were only making a bunker stop I thought it prudent to avoid any problems.

As the crew had made some mutterings about Agnes, I considered it would be good policy if they were involved in Agnes's demise. Therefore I consulted the Engineroom Serang explaining we wanted Agnes to have a very formal death presided over by the most suitable religious member of the Indian crew. This hit the spot and elaborate arrangements were made by the Serang to kill the bird in full MK fashion after Fire and Boat Drill on the coming Saturday. At the appointed time it seemed as if the whole crew had assembled outside the galley on the starboard side of the vessel. Prayers were said and water passed into the bird's throat. I can honestly say Agnes did not suffer in any way, one second she was alive the next second dead. The dead bird was passed into the galley and in a surprisingly short space of time reappeared for my inspection fully plucked and dressed, after which she was placed in the freezer.

We did not eat Agnes at Christmas but on New Years day, she was delicious the cook making a superb job. Needless to say the Electrician did not partake.

*Graham Griffiths*

*I had often thought about the origin of "crossing the bar" which is used to describe the passing of a seafarer or those connected with the sea. A Book of Poems given to me last Christmas by my daughter provided the answer. Marjorie Burston.*

**CROSSING THE BAR**

*Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me !  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea.*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.*

*Twilight and evening bell,  
And after the dark !  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark.*

*For though from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.*

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson.*