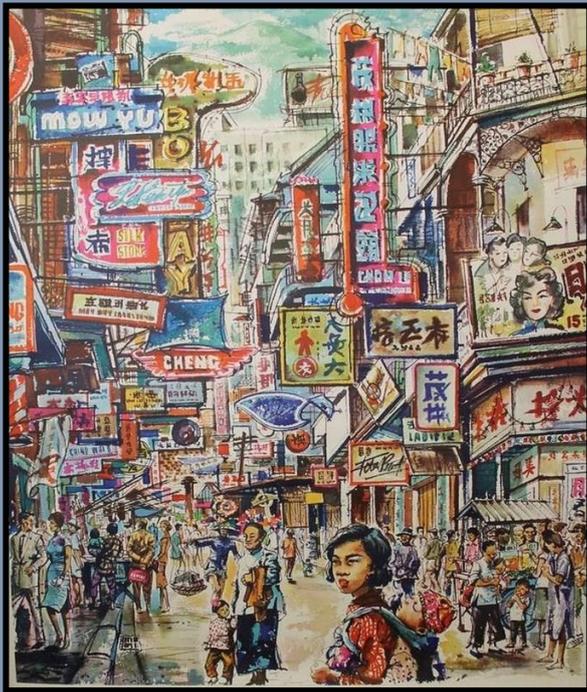


More Tales from the Captain's Locker

By
Geoff Walker



The Mystique, Charm, and Magnetism, of the Orient

Quotes worth remembering:

“Anchor as though you plan to stay for weeks, even if you intend to leave in an hour” – Tommy Moran

“Waves are not measured in feet, or inches, they are measured in increments of fear” – Buzzy Trent

“Life's roughest storms prove the strength of our anchors” – unknown scribe

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Setting the Scene

Nostalgia

Whether a dreamer, thinker, or speculative philosopher, they all encounter periods of nostalgia.

Life is dull and meaningless without times set aside, to open memories like an encyclopedia.

Echoes of the past feature boldly, when lapsed into deep thoughts of mementos and reminiscence.

So many souvenirs of bygone years do I keep within my heart, to act as a reminder and remembrance.

Recollections run deep when triggered by sight, smell, or sound, all of which cause memories to abound.

Without such thoughts and reminders, life's path would be tedious, if not otherwise to rebound

To each, and every one of us, the ability to recall our past, would mean an uninspiring life would be cast.

To live our life to the full and retain feelings of sentimental yearning of the past, then nostalgia must last.

Nostalgia looms mostly when feeling down and out, so propound a memory of what past life was about.

Think in terms of positive vibes, when one relives times long past, for you will find a happy time out.

Rejoice with laughter and delight when the past looms clear, jovial sentiments you can embrace.

Treasure long past, memories only masked, until asked to reemerge, in a flurry and never to erase.

True nostalgia sometimes arrives unexpectedly, then grows into a feeling mainly of joy and gaiety.

Do not try to suppress from your mind the memories of life's long past, for they are there for all eternity.

It makes for fond moments day or night, to connect with past events, after all it is for free.

Remember therefore, rare moments of geniality, called nostalgia, rejoice, and let it be.

Geoff Walker

A Salute to the Coast Watchers of the Pacific Islands

“Lest we Forget”

Commentary compiled

by

Geoff Walker



During the early years of WW 11, one may argue that Australia had become a little complacent about security due to its remote geographical location. However, pride and support for King and Country was at the forefront in the mind for most young Australians, resulting in large numbers of volunteers joining the armed forces to

combat the Germans. The war seemed so distant that it did not overly concern most Australians, other than for the wellbeing of their country's finest young men and women who had been shipped overseas to serve in other theaters of the conflict. The comfortable lifestyle in Australia went on as usual, and the land of plenty continued to provide an agreeable existence, for most residents, despite the distant European war.

However, the entry of Japan into WW 11 was a wake-up call for many, especially following the rapid collapse and occupation of Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and parts of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Philippines, during 1941/42. This, together with the unprecedented speed of aggression southwards, through the Pacific Islands, made Australia an obvious target for the Japanese Imperial Forces, particularly following the bombing of Darwin. Suddenly, Australia became a vulnerable target, partly because of its relatively low level of military preparedness. Australia's vast wealth of mineral resources would always be an ongoing ambition for the Japanese. So, the continued well-being of country became a matter of great concern, for Mr. and Mrs., average Australia.

Volumes have been written concerning the Pacific Campaigns of WW 11, much of it overshadowing the heroic exploits of a relatively small band of allied operatives, known as the “**Coast Watchers**”. It is of these, brave few, this short narrative is concerned.

The progressive occupation of the Pacific Island by the Japanese aggressors stimulated the Australian and New Zealand military commands to expedite the urgent need for intelligence, concerning the movement of Japanese troops and naval forces throughout the Pacific region. A Coast Watcher Service had been formed in 1939, but the imminent conflict brought about the need for the rapid expansion and deployment of the “Coast Watchers”. These Coast Watchers were also referred to as the Coast Watch Organization, Combined Field Intelligence Service or Section C, Allied Intelligence Bureau.

New Zealand had developed its own Coast Watching measures from the 1930s. From the outbreak of war, the New Zealand Naval Board controlled Coast Watching stations located around the New Zealand coastline and in the eastern Pacific. Stations were established in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Tokelau, Samoa, Fanning Island, the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Fiji.

Coast Watchers were covert allied military intelligence operatives, stationed and strung out amongst the remote Pacific islands during World War II, to observe enemy movements and rescue stranded allied personnel. The Coast Watchers reported on Japanese troop movements, warned of attacks by sea and air, and saved countless civilians, downed airmen, lost soldiers, and shipwrecked mariners – (one of which was to become a future US President, John F. Kennedy).

Mostly Australian, with some British, New Zealand and American members, the Coast Watchers hid in the dense jungle on the various remote Pacific Islands, continually moving their location to evade detection by enemy patrols, all the while reporting their intelligence via tele-radios. The Coast Watchers' exploits in the Pacific Islands in World War II clearly demonstrated the extraordinary influence a few individuals could have, even in a global conflict, involving thousands of combatants. Coast Watchers became particularly adept in monitoring, and observing Japanese military activity and movements, in the roughly one thousand islands that make up the New Guinea and Solomon Island groups. Avoiding detection by simply vanishing back into their remote jungle hideouts. These bands of Coast Watchers became a real source of irritation and annoyance to the Japanese military, mainly due to their elusive capabilities.

Originally confined to Australia, the Coast Watching Service was bolstered after the outbreak of war in 1939 to include New Guinea, and to the Solomon Islands. About 400 Coast Watchers served in total—mostly Australian military officers, New Zealand servicemen, Pacific Islanders, or escaped allied prisoners of war, as well as members of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defense Force and 13 civilians. Most were commissioned with honorary ranks, usually in Military Reserve Units, to provide a modicum of protection under the Geneva Convention, if captured by the Japanese. However, the complete disregard by the Japanese Military for the Geneva Convention, applicable to Prisoners of War, has been well documented. Regrettably, some Coast Watchers were unfortunately captured, and were summarily executed by the Japanese.

What made their valor even more deserving of praise and recognition, was, Coast Watchers undertook their duties at a time when there was no certainty that the allies would be victorious against the seemingly unstoppable Japanese onslaught. During these uncertain times, knowing their fate if captured, the Coast Watchers risked their lives, when the Japanese exercised total control of the regions in which they operated. They played a significant role in the Pacific Ocean theatre and South West Pacific theatre, particularly as an early warning network during the Guadalcanal campaign.

As described, the Australian Coast Watching network was established to provide information on the movements and disposition of enemy forces in the South Pacific, drawing upon the local knowledge of inhabitants throughout the area. Their operations were code-named **FERDINAND**, from the children's storybook character, Ferdinand the Bull. In the book, Ferdinand, the main character, unlike all the other Bulls, refused to fight. The code-name was selected as a reminder to the Coast Watchers that it was not their task to directly fight the enemy, but rather to observe and report on military information they procured. The intelligence that they gathered played a significant part in the execution of the war in the Pacific.

The establishment of a formal Coast Watch network had first been thought of early in 1919. In March 1922, the Combined Services agreed that a Coast Watching network in Australia was a necessity, but it was left to the Admiralty to establish and administer the network through the Royal Australian Naval Intelligence Division. By the outbreak of WWII, hundreds of Coast Watchers had already been recruited throughout Australia and the South Pacific. Responsibility for the network fell to Lieutenant Commander Eric Feldt, RAN, Staff Officer (Intelligence) Port Moresby. Lt. Cdr. Feldt first joined the RAN as a midshipman in 1912 and retired as a lieutenant in 1922, when he relocated to New Guinea and became a local administrator, somewhat similar in capacity to a Kiap. He re-joined the RAN when WW II began and was a superb selection for the task assigned to him, due to his experience and knowledge of the region, its peoples and geography.

Cdr. Feldt toured the territories during 1939, recruiting additional Coast Watchers as he went, and set about obtaining more tele-radios to fill the gaps in the network. The additional Coast Watchers and their tele-radios were in place by August 1940, all of them civilians excepting for one naval rating. Each Coast Watching station transmitted its coded messages to receiving stations at larger allied hubs, such as Port Moresby and Rabaul, which, in turn, forwarded them on to the Naval Intelligence Division HQ in Australia, for evaluation and dissemination.

In 1941 **FERDINAND** started to become a more formal naval operation. Cdr. Feldt moved to the newly established Combined Headquarters in Townsville, while new Intelligence Officers were appointed in Rabaul, Port Moresby, Thursday Island, Tulagi and Vila, each overseeing a network of civilian Coast Watchers. Cdr. Feldt assumed overall control with the new styled title of **Supervising Intelligence Officer, North Eastern Area**.

Whilst the intelligence network was becoming more structured, the sheer distances involved meant that decentralization was equally essential so that individual Coast Watchers could act on their own initiative. Cdr. Feldt encouraged self-reliance and a wide decision – making scope for the Coast Watchers, based on the notion that being isolated in the jungle, they alone being on the spot were the only real competent judges of their own prevailing circumstances.

The Coast Watcher's operational area stretched from the border between New Guinea and Dutch New Guinea in the west to Vanuatu in the east. The Coast Watchers themselves were all experienced islanders, mainly white Europeans who had settled in the territories, Administrators, District Officers, plantation owners, miners, coastal ship masters, and others familiar with their territory, some having married local women. As a group they were tough and resolute, proud, and independent, they were aptly suited to the deprivations they would experience over the ensuing years. Many spent countless months isolated and concealed in the jungle behind enemy lines, while continuing to provide intelligence which often proved to be crucial to the execution of the war.

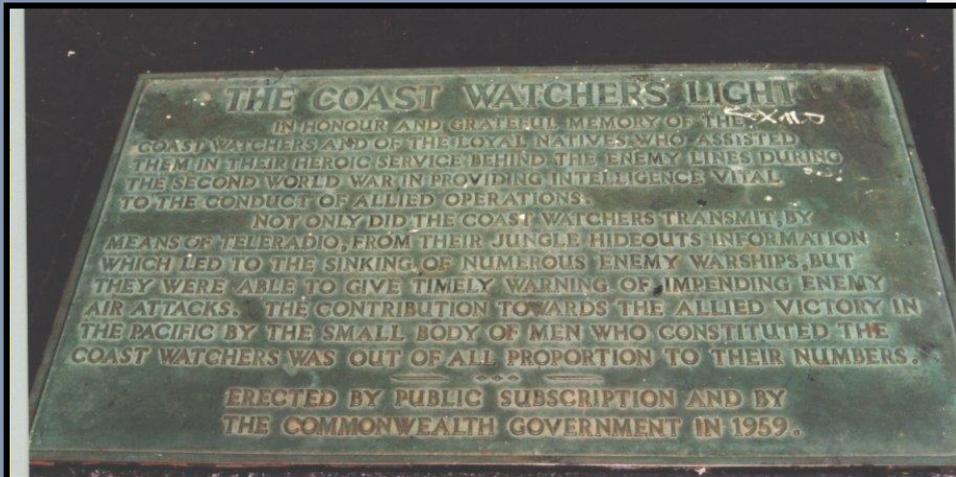
All Coast Watchers relied heavily on the support of the Indigenous people. Most native islanders remained loyal even in Japanese occupied territory, and many died carrying out their duties, in defiance of the brutal aggressor. The bravery of so many native peoples has been understated in many cases, without whose help and assistance the Coast Watchers would have been hard pressed to function to the level of efficiency they attained during the Pacific Campaign.



The Coast Watchers Memorial Lighthouse at Madang, in Papua New Guinea, erected by the Commonwealth Government in 1959. The Plaque reads:

"In honor and grateful memory of the Coast Watchers and of the loyal natives who assisted them in their heroic service behind enemy lines during the Second World War in providing intelligence vital to the conduct of Allied operations. Not only did they transmit by means of tele-radio from their jungle hideouts information which led to the sinking of numerous enemy warships, but they were able to give timely warning of impending enemy air attacks. The contribution towards the Allied victory in the Pacific by the small body of men who constituted the Coast Watchers was out of all proportion to their numbers."

Below is an image of the actual plaque at Madang Coast Watchers Lighthouse.



More than 700 people served in **FERDINAND** during the War, all making their own contribution to the war effort, and with their own stories to convey. It is impossible to do justice to their contribution here, but after the war, Cdr. Feldt himself noted the Coast Watchers had done their job well and, for their few numbers, had made a significant contribution out of all proportion.... These unheralded heroes performed extraordinary feats.

When the Japanese overran the Gilbert Islands in 1942, 17 Coast Watchers were captured. Imprisoned at Tarawa, they were executed by the Japanese in October 1942 following an American

air raid. These unheralded heroes performed extraordinary feats. Two of their most remarkable members, worked on Bougainville under the most harrowing circumstances; with constant enemy patrols trying to eliminate them, with few supplies and uncertain support. Their warnings played a critical role in allowing the Americans to triumph on Guadalcanal.

One of their most important contributions in the Pacific theatre was the intelligence provided during the allied campaign at Guadalcanal, which involved some 16,000 US marines, 48 combat ships, 28 auxiliaries and 670 aircraft. The Coast Watching intelligence network in the Solomon Islands, was the only one to include a female, an Honorary Third Officer of the, WRANS; she continued to provide intelligence, even as the Japanese occupied the islands, including information about the construction of a strategically important airstrip near Lunga Point on the north coast of Guadalcanal.

Native Solomon Islanders infiltrated into the Japanese camps under the pretext of being laborers, doing work, and later related what they had seen to the Coast Watchers. This intelligence was used in maps of Lunga, Tulagi and Gavutu, identifying the position of Japanese guns, defense works and other installations. Following the landing on 7th August 1942, Coast Watchers on Buka, Bougainville, and New Georgia Islands alerted the allied forces on Guadalcanal to imminent Japanese air raids, allowing them to prepare for, and repel, the enemy aircraft.



Above, an old image of a Coast Watcher's base camp believed to be somewhere in the Solomon Islands. The huts and ramshackle buildings, usually erected by local natives for the Coast Watchers, were intended to be easily camouflaged, thus, blending in against the backdrop of tropical jungle; or to create the impression they were small native compounds or villages; to avoid visible detection and conceal their true identity, from the air or from seawards by the marauding enemy.

The Japanese conducted frequent patrols in attempts to detect and capture Coast Watchers, which they knew operated throughout the Islands, but the Coast Watchers were generally forewarned by native scouts - "hidden eyes and ears" - who reported to their "Bosses" on the whereabouts and movements of enemy patrols. It is hard to believe that without the aid and support of these native peoples, many of which were members of the Solomon Islands Protectorate Police Force, so many Coast Watchers would manage to evade capture.

Technically, as civilians, most Coast Watchers were advised to cease their operations and evacuate as the Japanese advanced into their territory. However, the majority, chose to continue their activities in the knowledge that capture could result in their execution as spies. One of the most highly decorated Coast Watchers was Sergeant Major Sir Jacob C. Vouza, who retired from the local Solomon Islands Protectorate Constabulary in 1941, but then volunteered for Coast Watcher duty. He was captured and interrogated brutally by the Japanese, but luckily, he survived and escaped,

eventually making contact with the US Marines, warning them of an impending Japanese attack. He recovered from his wounds and continued to scout for the US Marines. He was awarded the Silver Star and Legion of Merit by the United States, and later received a knighthood as well as becoming a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

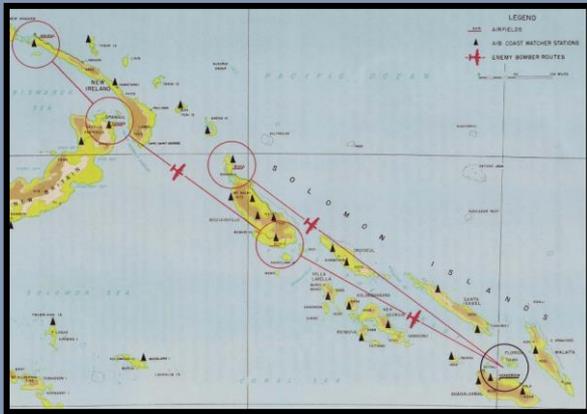


A flight of Japanese “Betty” bombers, photographed by a Coast Watcher, presumably somewhere on Bougainville Island. The bombers are seen flying towards a target probably at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Australia’s defenses in the territories at the outbreak of War in 1939 were sparse and thinly dispersed. Consequently, they were not expected to do more than delay any Japanese advance. The larger Coast Watching stations such as Port Moresby and Rabaul had contingency plans to continue

operating at close – by alternates in the event of Japanese occupation

Japanese air raids in the Bismarck Archipelago began early in 1942 when Rabaul was attacked by 22 heavy bombers. Advanced warning of the attack, provided by a Coast Watcher, stationed on Tabar Island, ensured that casualties were comparatively light, but that was just a prelude to the Japanese invasion of New Britain and New Ireland, later during the month of January.

On 24th January, a Coast Watcher’s message reported that Kavieng had been occupied. Contact with Rabaul, however, had been lost and two Coast Watchers from Talasea, began a 320km trek to report on the situation. At Pondo, on Open Bay, they met 12 soldiers who had evacuated from Rabaul and were told that some 700 people, including those from the Coast Watcher station, were scattered on both the north and south coasts of New Britain. What ensued was an incredible search and rescue mission involving Coast Watchers in New Britain and New Guinea, in which more than 550 people, starving, and inflicted by malaria and other tropical diseases, were rescued, and transported to safety.



A Map of New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands – “Hot-Spot Central” for Coast Watchers during occupation by the Japanese during 1942/43.

The landings at Guadalcanal did not, however, immediately result in victory for the allies. The fight that ensued on the island over the next six months has been described as some of the most fierce and vicious in the Pacific theatre. Following the disastrous Battle of Savo Island on 9th August, allied sea

control was both fragile and uncertain. However, the allies did maintain air superiority, while Coast Watchers continued to provide information about Japanese naval, air and troop dispositions. The Japanese were obliged to use destroyers to reinforce and re-supply their forces by night, dubbed the ‘Tokyo Express’, making a fast transit of New Georgia Sound, known as ‘The Slot’. However, this method prevented the re-supply of heavy equipment, such as artillery and vehicles, and drew the much - needed destroyers, away from other areas of the Japanese naval campaign.

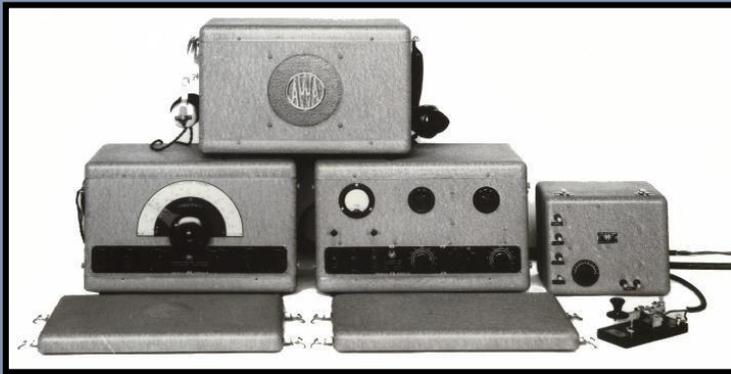
Towards the end of October, the Japanese were preparing to mount a counterattack on Guadalcanal. Japanese troops on Guadalcanal launched a determined but unsuccessful attempt to capture the airfield at Lunga Point and in early November, Coast Watchers on Bougainville reported detailed information about the buildup of Japanese forces at Buin, as well as the passage of 11 large transports heading south towards Guadalcanal. Subsequent reports from the Coast Watchers on Bougainville on 11th and 12th November prepared allied forces for incoming air raids in which few of the Japanese aircraft survived. The Japanese transports came under air attack on 14th November, of which seven of them were sunk. The remaining four landed at Tassafaronga (north coast of Guadalcanal), with only 2000 of the original 10,000 embarked troops, where they came under allied air attack the following morning.

The Japanese position had become untenable by the end of the year, and by 7th February 1943, some 11,000 Japanese troops had been evacuated from Guadalcanal. Both sides had lost 24 warships in the battle for the island. Estimates of casualties vary but range as high as 7000 allies and 30,000 Japanese killed. The intelligence provided by the Coast Watchers was integral to the successful allied campaign at Guadalcanal, providing information about Japanese naval, air and ground forces. Such was the Coast Watchers contribution to the campaign that Admiral of the Fleet, William F Halsey, USN, later said ‘The Coast Watchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific.’

More than 700 people served in **Ferdinand** during the war, all making their own contribution to the war effort, and each with their own stories to tell. It is impossible to do justice to their contribution in this short narrative, but it is certain that without the significant element of intelligence which the Coast Watchers provided, the war years in the Pacific theatre may have been far more prolonged and costly in terms of human life and sacrifice for the allies.



A memorial dedicated to the Coast Watchers situated at Honiara. The National Museum in Honiara has WWII relics and cultural artifacts, including features on the Coast Watchers.



Typical of a wireless set, used by Coast Watchers.

End

A Captain's Testimonial to Old Borneo

By Geoff Walker

Many sailors of my vintage may remember when Sabah was called Sarawak and British North Borneo. It now forms what is referred to as East Malaysia since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1963. It encompasses a large portion of the northwest and northeast of old Borneo Island and borders with what is now named Kalimantan which falls under the sovereignty of Indonesia. There is a small enclave between Sarawak and Sabah designated the Sultanate of Brunei. Brunei ceded much of its territory to the White Rajahs of Sarawak, resulting in its current small landmass and separation into two parts. In 1888, the British signed a "Treaty of Protection" and made Brunei a British protectorate until 1984 when it gained independence. It has since prospered due to the discovery of huge oil deposits in its offshore fields.



Modern Day map of Sabah



Ports of Sarawak



Modern Day Map of Brunei showing segregated areas.

The landscape of East Malaysia is mostly lowland rain forests around the coastal plains with areas of mountain rain forest towards the hinterland. It is a place of lush equatorial jungle terrain of immense beauty. Not only is it rich in tropical flora but also fauna with a wide variety of some of the rarest birds and animals. It lays claim to some of the finest scuba dive sites in the world and is surrounded by the South China Sea to the north and northwest, the Sulu Sea to the northeast, the Celebes Sea and the Makassar Strait to the east, and the Java Sea and Karimata Strait to the south. Sabah became a British Crown Colony in 1946 and in August 1963, was granted self-government by the British and became part of the Malaysia Federation.

Some of the most interesting years of my time at sea was spent as Master of 500 Teu container feeder vessel. Operated by Singapore interests, she was like a yacht, Gross Tonnage: 6100, Deadweight: 8530, LOA: 115m, BHP: 6000, 16.5 knots. I was coaxed back out of early retirement and served as her Master for two enjoyable years, during which we were engaged on a regular run which included Port Klang, Singapore, Pasir Gudang, Sibul, Miri, Bintulu, Labuan, Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and Tawau, with occasional calls to Bangkok and Vung Tau. It was a remarkable experience because I considered these to be my home waters since I was a long-term resident of Asia.

Sarawak has four primary ports located at Kuching, Sibul, Bintulu, and Miri. The busiest seaport at Bintulu which is under the jurisdiction of the Malaysian federal government and mainly handles LNG products as well as regular cargo of all types. The remaining ports are under the respective state port authorities. The combined throughput of the four primary ports was 61.04 million tons in 2013. Sarawak has 55 navigable river networks with a combined length of 2,100 miles. For centuries, the rivers of Sarawak have been a primary means of transport as well as a route for timber and other agricultural goods moving downriver for export at the country's major ports. Sibul port, located 70 miles from the river's mouth, is the main hub along the Rajang River mainly handling timber products. However, the throughput of Sibul port has declined over the years after Tanjung Manis Industrial Port began operating further downstream.

Visiting the various ports in Sarawak one could often observe the local people wearing traditional costume. There is a variety of traditional dress as it differs for each of the native Sarawakian ethnic tribes, but they are all colorful with exquisite weaving and embroidery, for both male and female. Wearing of the indigenous costume is usually reserved for formal occasions or weddings. The common sarong is still widely worn across all sections of society throughout Asia and is seen frequently.

Kuching was a bustling little port for its proportions. Navigation of the channel to/from the pilot station was well buoyed but restricted by two bars. The outer bar had a sandy bottom and was situated about 2 nautical miles East South East of Tanjung Po Lighthouse and charted a depth of 5.2 m above Chart Datum. The inner bar lies approximately 1 nautical mile South East of Muara Tebas with a depth of 4.3m above Chart Datum. The Tidal Range for the Port is 4.5 m, so it becomes necessary to calculate the stage of the tide before entering or departing the Port and crossing the river bars.

Kuching is known as Cat City – there are several anecdotes as to how the City got its name. The one I think is most plausible is that the town was named after a river called Sungai Kuching, which means Cat River. Another suggestion is that it is named after “Mata Kucing”, which is a fruit grown in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, rather like a Lychee. Literally translated the name means Cats Eye. The port itself is about 22 miles upstream from the estuary of the Sarawak River, so where one can proceed depends on the vessel’s draft. We usually headed for the container area which was at different stages of development. Logging was a major export and upon every call there was always a cluster of logger type vessels loading their logs into gaping cargo holds or on deck.

The Sarawak River is quite wide and meandering. Lush jungle encroaches right down to the soft, muddy riverbank only broken by the occasional group of huts on Bamboo stilts. The river is fast flowing with speeds up 2 knots and can exceed that rate if there have been prolonged rains inland, when it is not uncommon to see small rafts of floating palms (like minute islands) that have been washed away which float freely downstream towards the South China Sea. This also includes the occasional log – some being rather large which can cause damage to ships, as they float inches below the surface and become a danger to propellers and rudders. The river is claimed to be home to large crocodiles, but I never saw one.

Traditional workboats called “Tambang” are plentiful on the river darting every which way. These are like sampans except they have a completely covered structure, rather like a small house built on deck. They are the main form of river transport.

I always enjoyed the multiracial aspects of Kuching, its diverse culture, and culinary delights, especially their hot spicy Seafood Laksa that they produce in local restaurants which seemed to be their signature dish.

Kuching general cargo and container facilities. The wharfs can handle quite large vessels. It is understood that this section was scheduled for further expansion.



Sibu was another Sarawak river port, not too distant along the coast from Kuching. We did not call there often but it seemed to have the exportation of logs as its main source of revenue, which reportedly superseded rubber during the 1960s. Sibu itself is located at the confluence of the Rejang and Igan Rivers and is a thriving modern town with a busy commercial center, a bustling, crowded waterfront and is about 70 nautical miles upriver from the river delta and has a large ethnic Chinese population. Being the largest town on the river, Sibu is the political, economic, cultural hub of the central region of Sarawak. It therefore has a good variety of shops, markets and of course establishments focused on night life. Sibu can be reached by ocean going ships without difficulty as the Rajang River is in the main easily navigable. Its muddy colored waters meander through dense jungle and is quite wide in most parts. Ships calling at Sarawak river ports on a regular basis and being built for the specific trade, are usually designed with the bridge located higher than normal to provide visibility above the tree tops, thus enabling easier sighting of other conflicting river traffic when approaching bends in the river. The ship on which I served, had its normal bridge on the 6th deck so there was good elevation, which helped considerably when navigating these jungle rivers.



In this image of “MV Rajah Brooke”, a vessel built specifically for the trade by the Sarawak Steamship Company, shows a good illustration of the enclosed “Flying Bridge”, which does look like an afterthought it must be said. I believe this photo to be taken whilst alongside at Sandakan.

There are two river ports one the Ranjang River, namely, Sibu port itself and a few miles further upstream Sungai Merah port. Sibu port can accept ships with a gross tonnage of up to about 10,000 tonnes, while Sungai Merah port has a maximum limitation is around 2,500 tonnes. Sibu port is used mainly for handling logs, dressed timber and agricultural commodities while Sungai Merah port is used for handling fuel oil products. Large quantities of logs are moved downstream on heavily laden barges, some motorized and some towed, to ships awaiting their cargo at the anchorages downstream.

There is a small but active shipbuilding industry mainly constructing wooden boats for river and coastal navigation. The 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion of this sector, due mainly to increasing exports of tropical timber from Sarawak. The industry developed its focus into steel boat building the smaller types of vessel in demand within the region such as tugs, barges, anchor handlers, offshore support vessels, small ferries, and express passenger boats for river use, and the like.



Small tug towing a barge laden with logs down the Rajang River to vessels anchored downstream. There is a considerable number of these tug and barge combos working in the river. Often, they are hidden below the tree line and difficult to detect by larger vessels proceeding upriver, hence good radio communication becomes essential to ensure safe navigation and collision avoidance.



View of a small shipyard on the banks of the Rajang River, near Sibü. A variety of small craft seem to dominate the building inventory catering mainly for local domestic requirements.



One of the container facilities at Sibü Port. The width and long reaches of the Rajang River are apparent in this image. The large building in the foreground is the Sibü Port Authority Head Quarters

Bintulu – approximately 110 nautical miles up the coast from Sibü. The Port of **Bintulu** is a modern coastal town in Sarawak and is its busiest Port, which serves as the capital town in the prefecture. Bintulu was a mere fishing village until the late 1960s until Oil and Gas

reserves were discovered offshore. This triggered a rapid expansion of the port and it has now developed into the energy center of Sarawak with a good Container port as well as an Oil Palm Terminal for exports. It also offers good wharfage facilities for Oil, LNG, and Product tankers.



A Drone's view of Bintulu which shows the wide range of facilities that this port offers to international shipping.

Bintulu is a combination of old and new, which has been well managed by local authorities to cater for the needs of a developing city whilst maintaining its cultural heritage



Many who have visited Bintulu will well remember the triple story shop houses in the old sector that line both sides of the streets of the township; full of character and Asian ambience, a hive of activity both day and night which adds to the attributes of a thriving city.

Only just over 100 nautical miles distant from Bintulu lies the seaport township of Miri.

Miri is a small coastal town rather close to the Brunei border and unlike Kuching or Sibul, located far upstream. The significance of the town is dependent on Oil and Gas as the majority industry, although in recent years the Timber trade has made inroads and contributed substantially to the local economy. Miri is also the headquarters of the Malaysian energy conglomerate, Petronas. The town is used extensively as a transit point for personnel working in the offshore oil fields with fast crew boats operate continuously to

meet the demand of frequent crew changes on near coastal offshore rigs and installations. Therefore, the port may be considered as something of a nerve center for the Oil and Gas sector. There is also a small, but active shipbuilding and repair industry, mainly catering for offshore, coastal, and small bunker tanker vessels.

There is a reasonable anchorage with a good depth, used extensively for ships replenishing bunkers, however due to its exposure in the Northeast Monsoonal period the northeast and southwestern coastal regions of Sarawak can be subject to strong winds and rough seas coupled with hefty swells at times. I can recall heavy swells running just off the coast.

The layout and appearance of most of the Sarawak coastal towns are markedly similar; a busy wharf area usually consisting multiple jetties, rows of quaint Chinese shop-houses line the streets in the central business districts, more-substantial and high-rise buildings are in the governmental administrative and CBD areas. There is generally always the obligatory Chinese temple and several villages of timber or corrugated tin-built dwellings scattered along the riverbanks.



Typical “Kampong” style dwellings often seen in Sarawak, along jungle clearings that border the riverbanks. These are usually inhabited by the kaleidoscopic mixture of indigenous peoples.

Many a mariner will remember the hoi polloi of kids that frequently swam in the river along the riverbanks close to these small villages, oblivious to the numerous crocodiles and other nasties that lurked below the water’s surface out of sight, then wave madly to ships as they sailed by. However, fewer, and fewer of these compounds now exist due to urbanization by local ethnic groups, industrialization, and employment opportunities for the native peoples. Hence this sight is becoming a rarity in Sarawak and is quickly becoming relegated to the drifting hazes of nostalgia. On my last trip to the river ports of the region I was amazed at the speed at which these small holdings were disappearing.

The numerous street markets were awesome, where one could buy anything and everything. One of the best sellers was the wide range of native artifacts and carvings created by the most skilled of craftsmen. I must confess to having been an ardent collector of such memorabilia.

Between Miri and Labuan lies the **Sultanate of Brunei**, with its main port of **Muara**, which butts on to Brunei Bay. We were only ever in Maura for a few hours each call and due to ship's business, I therefore never ventured ashore. Anyway, it was unspectacular – an entrance to the port was off a small inlet with a single multi-purpose wharf. We used ship's cranes to load and discharge containers directly to/from trucks, as there was no shore cranes available at that time. However, it would appear, a much larger container park has since been established along with two portainer cranes, located on the quayside. Upon our every call there was a large motor yacht moored alongside the jetty and guarded by the military, it seldom if ever shifted. A quite spectacular vessel and reportedly belonging to the Sultan of Brunei.

Brunei Bay lies to the east of Maura and is a large and protected, shallow embayment. It is a favored spot for the "Hot" layout of large container vessels and tankers, whilst awaiting employment.

Labuan Island – a medium sized Island, officially dubbed "The Federated Territory of Labuan". Most of the island is forested with the capital township and harbor being named Victoria. Following WW2, in 1946, it joined the British Crown Colony of North Borneo, which in turn became a part of the state of Sabah and Malaysia in 1963. Later, in 1984, the Government of Sabah ceded Labuan to the federal government which subsequently elevated it to a federal territory. It was declared an international offshore financial center and free trade zone in 1990. Due to its favored financial status many ships are registered in Labuan (including the Container feeder vessel I served on for 2 years).

Labuan is an interesting place to visit. Good hotels, restaurants, bars, night clubs, shopping Malls and of course marketplaces, there is a mixed population but mainly of ethnic Malay and Chinese origins. The Port is limited to a single commercial finger jetty which can accommodate vessels on both sides. However, the port infrastructure is limited, especially for the handling and storage of containers. This always ensured we had at least one night in port, rather a rarity for a container feeder ship, enabling all the crew to enjoy some quality shore time.

There is an offshore base with independent jetties and wharfage, which is kept busy as Labuan is a major player in the development and support of the nearby offshore fields and is a hub for these activities. There are also good dockyard and slipway amenities in the port itself.

On the downside, the approach channel buoys often dragged out of position, so day or night, extreme caution is required. Mooring gangs and linesmen at the main wharf were only available from 8am onwards, so night movements were restricted in some cases.

The small anchorage is frequently congested with coastal and offshore vessels which does, on occasion make it unsuitable for vessels of any size. I personally would never enter the port limits after sunset due to congestion at the anchorage, the size and draft of my vessel, and because in the event of an incident there was little room in which to manoeuvre once inside the designated anchoring area. Additionally, there were numerous unmanned small ships in the anchorage, many unlit, which made matters more challenging. Instead, I

preferring to adjust sea speed to time arrival for first light. Night departures for my ship were usual since the anchorage could be avoided if proceeding directly to sea. Provided the longshoremen were available, I was at liberty to sail at will since pilotage was not compulsory.

Piracy has always been an issue in this area so it is unwise to use the anchorage overnight if it can be avoided. Much better to stand off and wait for daylight or direct berthing. Piracy and oil theft are prevalent and there are illegal, small tankers that roam the waters, syphoning off fuel from smaller ships. The crews are bribed and paid off at a fraction of the true market value of the pilfered fuel oil. Once these rogue tankers have filled their tanks with stolen oil, they sail to destinations unknown to on-sell the fuel oil at a substantial profit with the recipients receiving it in good faith, without any knowledge that they have purchased fuel from illegal sources.

Labuan does serve as a gateway for many “illegals” into Malaysia, mainly females who take the fast ferries to Kota Kinabalu, to act as hostesses in local bars, or work elsewhere in Labuan or KK townships. At the weekends Labuan was always a playground for many from Brunei, due to the liberal rules and availability of entertainment that was available, by comparison to their home state. The water taxis ran full at weekends. The introduction of the new Pandaruan Bridge (sometimes called the Pandaruan Friendship Bridge) completed in 2013 has eased travel between Brunei and Sarawak, with a total span of 19 miles the bridge links Tembung in Brunei with Limbang in Sarawak. This new causeway has had little bearing on the fast ferry service between Maura and Labuan.

Many a good evening was spent at the Waterside Hotel which was a leisurely ten minutes stroll from the dock gate. There, one could enjoy a good meal with a wide variety of curries, satays, and other spicy Malaysian dishes from which to select and there was also a popular bar with live music. The venue was packed at weekends due to the influx of visitors from Brunei.

Kota Kinabalu – formerly known as Jesselton which stems from British colonial times. The British declared “Jesselton” as the new capital of North Borneo and in 1946 started to reconstruct the town which had been substantially destroyed during WW2. Following the formation of Malaysia, North Borneo was renamed as Sabah and in 1967, Jesselton was renamed “Kota Kinabalu”, Kota being the Malay word for Fort, and Kinabalu after the nearby Mount Kinabalu. It was always one of my preferred ports of call in Sabah. In comparison with other places, I found Kota Kinabalu (KK) to be rather “lay-back” with no sense of urgency in its DNA. Like most other Asian cities and towns, it came to life after sunset when all the market stalls and lights added to its mystic and Asian charm. Shopping was relatively cheap when compared to many other Sabah towns, excepting perhaps Labuan. KK offered good hotels, a wide variety of restaurants, bars, and night life in general, typical of most Malaysian port destinations. One place of never-ending interest was the central market, a beehive of activity and a riot of color.

An early morning arrival at Kota Kinabalu is a sight to behold. The heavens ablaze with pink and gold hues which provide a magnificent backdrop for Mount Kinabalu, silhouetted on the

skyline as the sun gains amplitude in the eastern sky. This is a truly unforgettable sight. On a clear morning with the sun rising over the mountainous terrain, the approaches to the port are awesome. The pristine waters are alive with fish, the shoals skipping over the wavelets and the early morning fishermen from neighboring villages, in their dugout canoes, out in force with their nets during the morning calm.



Left, one of those spectacular Asian sunrises at Kota Kinabalu. Calm, peaceful and just breathtaking, as seen on almost a daily basis. A great start to a day.



A good aerial image of Kota Kinabalu showing the Township. The cargo wharfs are at lower left, with the container areas and Portainers just out of shot, which are located close to the large warehouse which is located at the southwestern end of the main wharf. Due to the restricted access to the main wharf and limited infrastructure, congestion often prevailed with the movement and deployment of containers to and from ships. There always appeared to be a shortage of container trucks which caused delays at ship's side. Self-sustaining cargo and container ships using the port were necessary up until early 2000's as there was no shore cranes available; it was only after 2000 that two Portainers were introduced along with other improvements to container handling, which changed the situation for the better.

Just across the narrow waterway between KK Port and Gaya Island is the illegal Filipino refugee camp known as Kampung Pondo (just out of above picture to the right). Starting in the 1970s, Filipino refugees began to inhabit the island in their bid to escape from the war in the southern Philippines. The eastern side of Gaya Island supports a well-known illegal Filipino settlement, called Kampung Lok Urai, with stilt houses crowded along the waterfront. Reportedly it has a 6,000 population of largely Filipinos who provide Kota Kinabalu with a source of cheap labor. These illegal camps are considered a dangerous, high crime or "no-go" area by the police and KK locals. The ramshackle houses are linked by walkways and these stilted camps are reported to be the source of most of the flotsam seen drifting around the KK tide line areas. In 2014 there was a massive fire in the maze of stilted houses which wiped out more than half of the makeshift dwellings which acted as a catalyst to bring new momentum to the Malaysian government's plan for the deportation of the Filipino illegals.



Kampung Pondo. The illegal Filipino settlement just opposite the wharf at Kota Kinabalu Port.

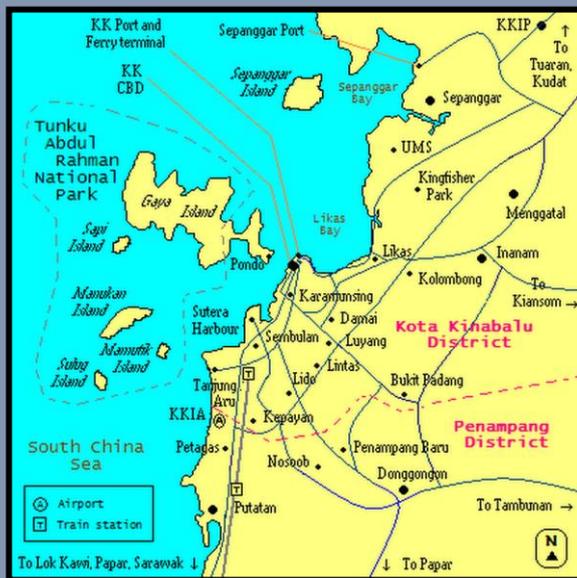


The downside of the illegal stilted dwelling areas – the flotsam and rubbish discarded indiscriminately by those who occupy compounds, such as Kampung Pondo.

Sepanggar Bay Container Port is a newer facility about 10 Nautical Miles north of Kota Kinabalu Port. It also acts a base for the Malaysian Navy. It is situated in Sepanggar Bay, just northeast of Sepanggar Island, which is the larger of the three islands seen in below image (top left).



Sepanggar Bay Container Port – Kota Kinabalu



Kota Kinabalu showing its proximity to Sepanggar Bay Container Port.

There is a wide-open anchorage with good water depth located between Gaya Island and Sepanggar Island, which serves both KK and Sepanggar Port. If you fish whilst at the anchorage you are assured of a good catch as the fish give themselves up without any kind of fight whatsoever.

Kudat is a small settlement (actually, a township) at the northern tip of Sabah just over 100 nautical miles north of Kota Kinabalu. It features some of the most unspoiled parts of Sabah, especially beaches and offshore reefs. We called at this port infrequently. There is a single dogs leg jetty which comprises the port and is only suitable for small coasters. We always anchored about one mile from the port and discharged full containers, using ship's cranes into a motorized barge. I do not recall ever having backloaded empty containers at Kudat. I believe these may have been sent south to KK by other means once they had been deconsolidated.



Kudat Port's single finger jetty

Whenever possible I timed my departure from Kota Kinabalu so arrival off Pulau Kalampunian coincided with first light. If we were discharging at Kudat this seldom took us more than 1-2 hours at most so once completed, I wasted no time in weighing anchor and getting underway because I required the remaining daylight in which to negotiate the treacherous reefs, islets and rocks that were strewn about the narrow navigable passage between Kudat, south of Pulau Banggi and the entrance to the Sulu Sea in the vicinity of Turtle Island – this took about 6-7 hours. It was always wise to clear the area as quickly as possible because these waters were notorious for pirates, although I was fortunate and never encountered any piracy incidents.



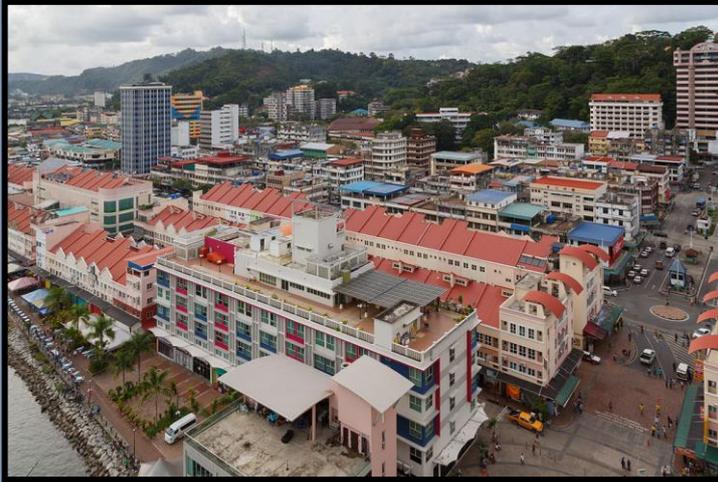
Navigating through the narrow channel one needed to be on the ball, the biggest hazard being heavy rain which rendered the Radar almost useless and the channel zig zagged between the reefs and islets. In some places it was too narrow for two vessels to pass comfortably. It was always a pleasure

transiting these waters as they were crystal clear and the reefs stark white, the beaches were silver white and a tropical paradise. The passage was frequented by ships sailing in both directions and provided good ship to ship communications were established there was never any difficulty. However, in times gone by some had not been so lucky as there were several wrecks high and dry, which acted as good radar beacons. Once down to Turtle Island one was clear of the worst part of the passage.

Map Above, the narrow inner passage used between the South China Sea and Sulu Sea

Another port we frequented was Sandakan.

Sandakan lies on the southern shores of the Sandakan Peninsula, at the entrance to Sandakan Bay and faces the Sulu Sea. Formerly it was the capital city of British North Borneo, before the capital was passed to Jesselton (KK) following WW2, and now ranks as the second largest town in Sabah after Kota Kinabalu. Sandakan is one of the main ports for oil, tobacco, coffee, sago, and timber exports and to a lesser extent there is a small shipbuilding industry. Fishing is also an active enterprise in Sandakan which acts as a marketing hub and distribution center.



The sleepy looking township of Sandakan CBD.

Sandakan has always been a major player for the exportation of dressed sawn timber. The timber is packaged for ease of handling and stowage. So, it is not unusual to see numerous ships loading assorted types of lumber at the anchorage. Sandakan also has a single concrete wharf that can accommodate 2-3 ocean going ships. This wharf is used for handling containers and other export cargoes. This meant that on most visits we had to anchor about a half mile away to await a vacant berth. This was no hardship since there were ferry services to and from the shore to the ships at anchor, usually arranged by the ship's agent upon request of the Master. However, when at the anchorage extra watchmen were deployed together with additional deck lighting because of the risks of pirates.



The wharf area butts onto the old township so it is always a beehive of activity, especially the market areas which are a mass of color and activity, both day and night. Many of the shops and businesses are operated by Chinese who emigrated from Hong Kong and Canton areas so Cantonese and Hokien is still widely spoken amongst these ethnic groups. As the capital of North Borneo in the 1880s, Sandakan became an active commercial and trading center. The main trading partners were Hong Kong and Singapore. Many Hong Kong traders eventually settled in Sandakan and in time the town was called the "Little Hong Kong of North Borneo".

Sandakan is a great place for the freshest of seafoods and there are an abundance of excellent sidewalk cafés and restaurants specializing in seafood dishes. The town has its usual share of bars and several five-star hotels. In actual fact, it is quite a tourist town and it attracts many tourists who flock to the city due to the nearby world class scuba diving resorts and of course to take a trip to the famous Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre which rescues and rehabilitates the apes. Another draw card for the ecotourist is taking a trip to Selingan Turtle Island, which is to the north of Sandakan about a one hour's boat ride offshore, and is renowned for protecting, taking care of turtles, and releasing them back into the Ocean.

However, visiting any of the offshore islands is not without risk due to random kidnappings by Mindanao terrorist groups based in the Tawi Tawi Islands. Sandakan and its surrounding areas are what could be considered high risk areas for piracy. Piracy has a historic legacy in the Sulu and Celebes Seas. The Philippines was ceded to the United States as a result of the War between Spain and America in 1898, after which American troops embarked on an elimination campaign that extended American rule to the southern Philippines and effectively suppressed piracy until the end of WW2. Whilst piracy was suppressed during the war years, the end of WW2 saw the reemergence of piracy in the Sulu Sea, as a phenomenon that persists to this day. Pirate bands operated openly from the Tawi Tawi Group of Islands and frequently raid coastal towns along the coast of Sabah, as well as local and foreign shipping.

Sailing between Sandakan and Tawau was one of my delights, with steaming time well short of one day. Our route took us to the west of the Sibutu Islands and Sibutu Reef. The reef(s) are highly visible especially at low water. The waters around are bright blue, and crystal clear. These waters are also notorious for strong flowing currents, the direction of which is influenced by the prevailing monsoonal season. Whales frequent these areas and were often seen blowing and rising out of the water. These pods tended to linger in the area for some time, I assume feeding on the plankton and small crustaceans whipped up by the fast-flowing currents. It was always a time of great amusement as we sailed by with the whales all around, seemingly non-caring or oblivious to our presence.

Semporna is a small coastal township and is the southernmost port in Sabah, Close to Pulau Bum Bum at the tip of Semporna Peninsula around Darvel Bay. Like nearby Sandakan it was originally settled by Chinese traders so the Hakka language can still be heard. It does not feature a port as such, but rather a seafront area which is mainly for fishing boats and offshore scuba diving, and snorkelling vessels. It is a haven for the finest seafoods, which are

readily available, cheap, and delicious. There is an anchorage about 400m off the Semporna pier which is about 40 ft long at the end of a coral causeway. There is a second pier of about 150 m long.

The only times we called at Semporna we anchored off as it was to land various crates of personal effects which were unloaded from the containers whilst on our deck by local labor, then loaded into small boats using our cranes.

Semporna is the gateway to diving in world-renowned island paradises like Sipadan, Mabul, Kapalai, Matakang, Sibuan, Mantabuan, Siamil and Pom Pom amongst others. There are many stilted dwellings that fringe the coastal area around Seporna, as well as stilted offshore resorts.

Tawau is the third largest city in Sabah after Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan. It is located on the Semporna Peninsula in the southeast coast of Sabah on the northern shore of Cowie Bay, and is bordered by the Sulu Sea to the East and the Celebes Sea to the south of Cowie Bay. By comparison with other regional cities Tawau is not so spectacular, nevertheless it is strategically positioned due to its proximity to the Kalimantan northern border, which is a great asset to its trade. The town is the cocoa capital for both Sabah and Malaysia which is reflected in the quantities exported from the port. Other major exports are Palm Oil and Timber.

There are two main wharf complexes for ocean going ships, a ferry terminal and several small jetties used by coastal craft. In addition, many ships anchor off the wharfs in Cowie Bay. Fleets of fishing vessels arrive and anchor off the fish market in the port every day, to discharge their catch. The open-air market is typical of those found in other ports in Sabah.



Wharf side at Tawau Port

The summaries of the various ports contained within this article are based on my memories and last visits made during the early 2000s. I should hasten to add, since then many upgrades to various ports may have taken place.

End

Douglas Steamship Company Limited (1883-1976)

(aka S.T. Williamsons & Co. / Inch Steamship Co. – Hong Kong)

By Geoff Walker

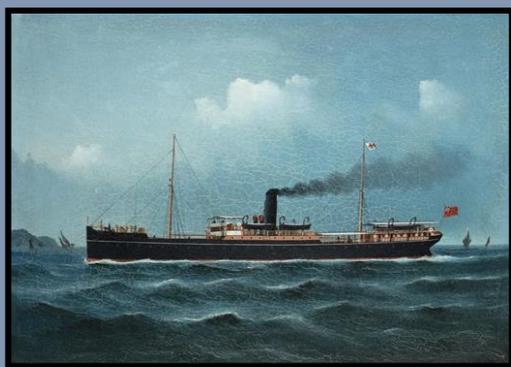


Douglas Lapraik was, without doubt, a true Hong Kong shipping magnate and “Taipan” being the owner of one of the largest shipping concerns in Asia by the early 1900s.

Born in London in 1818, he was nevertheless of Scottish origins, commencing his working life in London with the trading house of Wm. Mathieson & Company.

The young and widely ambitious Lapraik arrived in the Portuguese colony of Macao in 1839 and became apprentice to the Scottish watch and clockmaking firm of **Leonard Just & Son**. In 1842, his employer sent Douglas Lapraik to Hong Kong to open a new branch of the company in the newly founded, and fledgling colony, following the cession of Hong Kong to the British Crown. Not long after arriving in the colony, Lapraik established himself with his own business as a watchmaker by 1846, while also conducting similar duties for Just & Son.

The large number of ships using the colony offered opportunities to repair and manufacture ship's chronometers, which were used for navigation. Due to his trade in chronometers and watchmaking and given the need in the colony for shipping companies to register a local address, Lapraik soon found himself nominated as a shipping agent. Over the ensuing years Lapraik became established as a wealthy citizen of Hong Kong during the 1850s and 1860s, earning the exalted title of a “Taipan”. As such, taking part in the founding of many of the colony's business ventures and expanding his own business interests in many sectors of Hong Kong's burgeoning economy.



Of the Chinese School, an unknown artists impression of the early Douglas SS Co's. cargo ship **S.S. Haiching**. Built in 1898 by Dunlop & Co., Glasgow, Haiching registered 2,182 gross tons.

In 1929 she was seized by pirates whilst on a passage to Swatow, set on fire and gutted amidships, fortunately she was saved by H.M.S. Shirley who escorted her back to Hong Kong. Following repairs, she resumed service but was torpedoed and sunk by U-168 100 miles west of Bombay on 2nd October 1943

In 1863, after acquiring a small shipyard off Queen's Road, and building two more at Aberdeen and Whampoa, Lapraik co-founded the **Hong Kong and Whampoa Dock Company** together with Jardine Matheson & Company and Thomas Sutherland, the officially appointed Hong Kong agent of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. The dockyard would go on to become the largest shipyard in Asia at its peak. In 1864, Douglas Lapraik went on to be appointed as a member of

the transitional founders committee of **The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation** which would be founded in 1865. Douglas Lapraik retired and returned to England in 1866 after creating a trust in benefit of his longtime Chinese mistress. He died in London in March of 1869 without any legitimate heir.

Lapraik's watch business was acquired by a former employee, **George Falconer**, and still trades in that name as a principal supplier of British Admiralty Charts, nautical publications, and literature, as well as nautical instruments. Although the company was acquired by others in 1997, it still retains the name George Falconer & Co. and acts as an official British Admiralty Chart Agent in Hong Kong.

Earlier, during 1858, **John Steward Lapraik**, the son of Douglas Lapraik's eldest brother, had arrived in Hong Kong to join his uncle's firm. **John Steward Lapraik** would go on to inherit his uncle's business fortune and empire after Lapraik's death in 1869. Following the death of his uncle, John Lapraik formed the **Douglas Steamship Company** in Hong Kong, in 1883, with two other partners, and continued to oversee the running of its small fleet of coastal steamers, mainly engaged in trading between Chinese Treaty ports.

Over the years, Lapraik had become heavily involved in shipping between Formosa and Amoy in China, which had developed into one of the most profitable parts of his Douglas Steamship shipping business.

The cession of Formosa to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 which ended the Sino-Japanese War, had a profound influence on the future trading prospects and profitability for the Douglas Steamship Company's Formosa enterprises. Osaka Shosen Kaisha (OSK) placed several steamers on the Amoy Tansui Line and the Douglas Steamship Company was forced to cut freight rates. Also, OSK opened several other lines and began to compete on the China coast with Douglas Steamship Company. This caused the Douglas SS Co to incur severe financial losses.



Built in 1927 by Barclay, Curle & Co. Ltd, Glasgow as City of Hereford, purchased from Ellerman Hall Line in 1955 and renamed "**Inchona**". In 1956 she was sold to UK interests for continued trading. In 1959 she was reported as being scrapped.

Fortunately, in 1900 and 1901, satisfactory earnings were made by chartering several of their ships to the British Government and later to the American Government, due to the Boxer uprising in China. The Formosa trade was proving to be a lost cause, and the company withdrew from that market.

After the loss of the Formosa trade, the company retained its operations in the China coastal and river trade, however it met with financial difficulties by the late 1920s. In 1932, **Stewart Taylor Williamson**, a New Zealander by birth, acquired a controlling stake in the Douglas Steamship Company. Williamson was one of the most prominent and colorful figures in Hongkong business

circles, and the holder of extensive interests in shipping, amongst other things. He began his career as an engineer officer with the Atlantic Transport Line and subsequently, joined the office of Douglas Lapraik, and from that time, steadily advanced within the firm. Mr. S.T. Williamson was Managing Director of the Douglas Steamship Company, Chairman of Directors of the Kowloon Docks, and a Director of numerous local companies. At the time of his sudden death in 1950, he was 62 years of age and was reputed to be one of the wealthiest expatriates in the Far East



The **Inch S.S. Company** was formed as a subsidiary of the Douglas SS Company in 1947, and thereafter all Williamson ships bore 'Inch' names, the last of them being sold in 1975 shortly before Mullions (their future shipping associates) also ceased ship owning.



Built by Wm. Gray & Co. Ltd, West Hartlepool, as Empire Labrador built for Ministry of War Transport, in 1949 purchased by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong renamed "**Incharran**", in 1955 sold to Indo China Steam Nav. Co., for the Logging trade, and renamed Ho Sang. Sold for demolition in 1970.

With the outbreak of WWII, the company had most of its ships seized by the Hong Kong Government on behalf of the British Ministry of War Transport and with the capture of Hong Kong by the Imperial Japanese Army in December 1941, most of the staff of the Douglas Steamship Company were interred in prison camps in Hong Kong, including Stewart Taylor Williamson. After the war, the company resumed its operations with the two remaining ships that survived the war years.

Built by Barclay Curle & Co Ltd, Glasgow, as Trevaylor. The ship was purchased by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong, from Hain Steamship Co., in 1955 and renamed "**Inchstaffa**".



In 1966 it was sold to Rowan Shipping Corporation Ltd., Hong Kong, then resold to Mullion and Co. Ltd., and renamed **Ardstaffa**., in 1967 sold to Southern Shipping and Enterprises Co. Ltd., Hong Kong and renamed Nankwang, on 30th November 1967 she stranded and sank off Woosung anchorage after breaking her anchor chain in heavy weather, on a voyage from Whampoa to Shanghai.



Above, an early Empire Class ship of 5609 Gross Tons, belonging to the Douglas SS Co., built by Short Brothers Ltd., Sunderland in 1938 as Tacoma City, in 1954 it was purchased from Reardon Smith and renamed "**Inchcastle**". Sold out of the fleet in 1966 for continued trading and scrapped at Kaohsiung 1969.



Delivered in 1945 by Wm. Doxford & Sons Ltd, Sunderland as Jersey Hart, of 7275 Gross Tons, originally built for Morel Ltd, Cardiff. Purchased by Williamson Group., Hong Kong in 1956 and renamed "**Inchdouglas**" as a member of Inch SS Co, fleet. 1970 scrapped at Kaohsiung.

Upon the death of Stewart Taylor Williamson, control of the company passed to James Robertson Mullion who became the new chairman with Robert Ho Tung and John David Alexander serving as Directors. Considering the exposed financial state of the company, Mullion divested of the remaining two ships and focused the business activities of the company in financial investments.

In the mid - 1950s Mullion decided to reinvest in shipping once again, and the Douglas Steamship Company bought three Empire ships followed in 1959 with a similar ship. In 1966 J.R. Mullion & Co. formally took over as managers for the entire fleet and in 1969-1970 the then serving Empire ships, were replaced by other tonnage, among them two tankers.



A nice photograph of "**Inchmull**" 7308 Gross tons.

Built 1941 by Wm Doxford & Sons, Sunderland as Empire Spray for Ministry of War Transport, in 1955 sold to Williamson Group., Hong Kong, and renamed **Inchmull**, 1966 transferred to Douglas Steamship Co. as a member of their "Inch" Shipping company fleet. Scrapped at Kaohsiung in 1969.



Built by Lithgows Ltd. Glasgow, as Empire Treasure, 7022 Gross Tons. In 1955 purchased by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong and renamed, "**Inchleana**". Sold to Pakistani interests in 1966 and reported scrapped in 1969.



Built by Short Brothers Ltd., Sunderland as Empire Cromer for Ministry of War Transport, 1954 the ship was purchased by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong and renamed "**Inchmay**". Sold to Pakistani interests in 1966 and reported scrapped at Karachi in 1968.



Built 1920 in Gloucester, N.J. as Ethan Allen for U.S. Shipping Board. Renamed Empire Puma for Ministry of War Transport. In 1947 purchased by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong and renamed "**Inchwells**". 1951 sold out of fleet for continued trading. Reported scrapped at Hong Kong in 1959.



One of the last additions to the Williamsons/Douglas Steamship Group. Built by Austin & Pickersgill Ltd., Sunderland as Glanely, for Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd. Purchased in 1969 by Williamson & Co., Hong Kong renamed "**Inchona**", (their third ship to bear that name) transferred to Inch SS. Co fleet. 1975 sold for continued trading and reported broken up in 1987.

By 1969, James Robertson Mullion became the controlling stakeholder of the Douglas Steamship Co., and he attempted to introduce several structural changes to the business, however, by 1972, the company was running large losses and Mullion was forced to inject substantial funds of his own money into the company to keep it solvent. The Mullion Group decided to sell off its ships in the mid - 1970s and the Douglas Steamship Company was formally wound up in 1976, when the company board decided to enter liquidation and wind up the company. The dissolution was made formally in 1985 and Douglas Steamship Co., was dissolved on 1 June 1987.



Below follows a randomly selected Gallery of Mullion & Company vessels, which shared the management of the Douglas SS Company and Inch Steamship Company in 1966, and served with many of the rebranded Douglas Steamship Co and Inch Steamship Co., ships, until the demise of the Mullion shipping empire in Hong Kong.

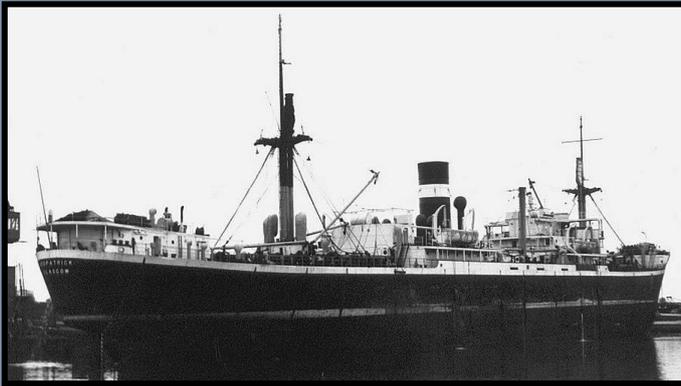


Under Mullion – Hong Kong's Management, "**Ardfinnan**" of 7123 Gross Tons, built in 1944 by Burntisland Shipbuilding Co, as Empire Fancy. Acquired by Mullions in 1961 and served until 1968 when sold for demolition in Hong Kong.



A nice profile of the "**Ardbrae**", ex-Empire Mandarin, 7078 Gross Tons, a standard WW2 Empire "B" type built by the Shipping Corporation, Tyne, in 1944. Operated under the flags of several other owners prior to being purchased by Mullions – Hong Kong in 1961. Sold out of

their fleet in 1966 for demolition in Japan.



Built as Empire Pickwick of 7074 Gross Tons, by J. Readhead & Son, South Shields in 1943. The ship was purchased from Clan Line (ex - Clan Mackendrick) by Mullion & Co., in 1961 and renamed "**Ardpatrick**". Sold to Pakistani interests in 1966 and reported

scrapped at Karachi in 1968.

Having survived many challenges, good times as well as near insolvency, the shipping empire of John Lapraik's ambitions finally ceased operating in 1976, when the then beneficial owners – J.R. Mullion & Co., wound up their Hong Kong based shipping enterprises. Just another Tramp Ship owner that enjoyed a "Moment in Time", whilst it lasted for him.

End

Little Ladies of the Malacca Straits and China Seas

Commentary by Geoffrey Walker



Painting by Tony Westmore.

“MV Rajah Brooke” of Straits Steamship Company anchored mid-stream in the Sarawak River.

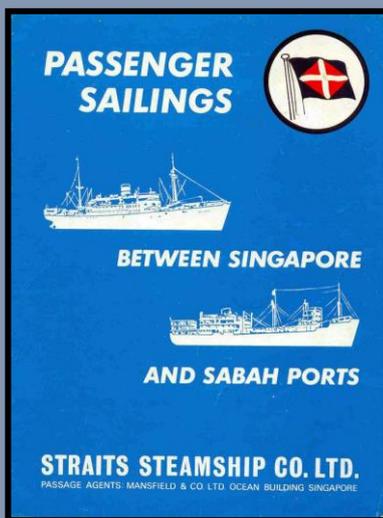
I cast back my memories to when I was a junior deck officer on ships that routinely plied the Malacca Straits as part of their international trade, during the early to late 1960s. Having crossed the Bay of Bengal from the Indian east coast and made our landfall on the Island of Pula Wei, situated at the head of the Malacca Straits, we would then proceed south down the Malacca Strait, to Penang, Port Swettenham and on to Singapore. Casting my memories back in time to those golden times, it stimulates my nostalgia, and the ships usually encountered around those parts. I clearly recall the many hours spent on watch studying these fantastic small ships through my binoculars, from horizon to horizon, as they forged their passage through the flat calm waters of the straits to or from their various ports of call.

Most of my seagoing years were spent sailing the trade routes of Asia, so I frequently traversed through the Malacca and Singapore Straits. This was “Headquarters Central” for encountering the quaint and beautiful little inter-island, short sea traders that were prevalent in these waters throughout the era.

It was a fascinating period in the development and coming of age of what used to be known as the “Straits Settlements”, namely, Penang, Malacca, and Singapore.

There were two main players in the intra - regional trades for this type of vessel; **Straits Steamship Company** based and operated in Singapore with its sister company **Sarawak and Singapore Steamship Company**; easily recognizable by their white funnels and black top with a broad pale blue band sandwiched in between. These ships were usually manned by British Officers and Malay or Chinese crews, who were devoted to the ships and trade in which they remained for many years. Then there was the Dutch **KPM (Koninklijke Paketvaart- Maatschappij)**. The Dutch founded **KPM** in 1888 as a regional shipping line mainly to service their interests in the Indonesian archipelago, then known as the Dutch East Indies, as well as feeding the larger hub ports with cargo for ships belonging to their associated companies engaged in worldwide trades.

Straits Steamship Company (SSC) was formed in Singapore as the **Straits Navigation Company** in 1890. Since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had considerably boosted trade between Europe and Asia, and with its Malaya and Singapore colonial pedigree and status of its connections with the Straits Settlements, the company enjoyed a steady period of growth and expansion. The **SSC** operated its vessels between Singapore and the west coast of Malaya peninsula, especially Malacca and Penang, together with several smaller river ports. They also served various Ports located in British North Borneo, nowadays known as Sarawak and Sabah. The Company played a considerable part in the exploitation of regions abundant with tin ore deposits and rubber plantations. Each ship catered for 50 or 60 First Class passengers and approximately 600 deck passengers.



Left, **SSC** Poster, advertising its passenger services between Singapore and Sabah (previously known as British North Borneo).

In its first 25 years, the **SSC** transported mainly tin ores, bagged rice, rubber and occasionally livestock. Other staple cargoes included coffee, pepper, and tobacco. Besides goods, the ships also ferried passengers – mostly laborers from China who came to work on rubber estates and tin mines, mainly in peninsula Malaya and adjoining region.

At the outbreak of WW2, the **SSC** fleet size totaled some 51 vessels. During the war years **SSC** ships and crew were seconded to the Royal Navy, serving in all theaters as escorts, patrol vessels, minesweepers, hospital ships and guard ships. Heavy casualties, totaling 38 ships were sustained during hostilities. At the conclusion of the war, **SSC** embarked on a period of consolidation and set about increasing the size of its

fleet, but it never reached pre-war fleet numbers.

In conjunction with its sister company, **Sarawak, and Singapore Steam Ship Company**, it expanded passenger cargo services to encompass services from Borneo and Sarawak to Singapore, and the Ports of Malacca, Port Swettenham, and Penang.

Malaysian Airlines (initially a joint venture between Malaya and Singapore in which **SSC** played a managerial role), had not yet developed so there was a consistent demand for passenger services between their main trading destinations of Singapore, Penang, Muara, Kuching, Sibul, Miri and Labuan. After recovery, **SSC** began its path of expansion once again broadening its scope of

operations. In 1957, it gave up managing the airline and went public, venturing into the lighterage industry.

Inevitably, in keeping with the times, **SSC** diversified into other ventures such as property, leisure, warehousing and distribution during the 1970s and '80s. In July 1983, Keppel Corporation Ltd purchased a 58-percent stake in Straits Steamship from Ocean Transport & Trading and in September that same year, Keppel increased its stake in the **SSC** from 58 to 82 percent. In 1989, the ship owning part of **SSC** was split off and named **Straits Steamships Land (SSL)** whilst the ship owning division was separated and rebranded **Steamers Maritime Holdings Ltd**. Alas, in 1997, the Keppel Group realigned its main business focus, **SSL** became Keppel Land, while **Steamers Maritime** became Keppel Telecommunications and Transportation (Keppel T&T).

Hence the demise of the fleet of beautiful small ships, an absolute icon of the region and so frequently observed throughout the full range of Malaya, Singapore, and Borneo ports, faded gracefully into obscurity and history, now only remaining as nostalgic memories. One noteworthy point is, towards the latter stages of **SSC's** days of stature and distinction, they did acquire some larger tonnage when they purchased several ships from the **China Navigation Company – Hong Kong (CNCo)**. See amongst below images.

A typical early "**Straits Steamship**" passenger cargo vessel the "**Marudu**" depicted in Sarawak working both cargo and passengers during the inter-war years.



A painting by Tony Westmore

Below, is the actual **SSC steamer "Marudu"** seen arriving at Sandakan. She ended her illustrious days moored in Singapore, where she acted as a training ship for young seafarers, finally meeting her demise at Jurong.



Images of **SSC's "MV Petaling"** (above) and sister vessel **"MV Perlis"** (below) used exclusively on the Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and Borneo passenger cargo trade during the 1960-70s. These were popular little ships offering a 3-5day transit between Sarawak and Malay Peninsula ports. They were supplemented in the service with the slightly larger vessels, namely, **"MV Kimanis"** **"MV Keningau"**, **"MV Kunak"** and the **"MV Kinabalu"** which offered a 13day round trip extended service, including calls at Tawau, Sandakan, Jesselton and Labuan.



The passenger service was very productive and was supported by vessels such as the “**MV Auby**” and larger, but of similar appearance, “**MV Rajah Brooke**”, which was approximately 2300 GRT.

An interesting design feature of these vessels is the split fore and aft accommodations. The idea for the bridge being so far forward and high was to provide the Master much better visibility over the tree canopy, when proceeding to upstream river ports, particularly in Sarawak.



The slightly larger “**MV Kimanis**” engaged on the popular 13 days round voyage service from Peninsula Malaya, Singapore, and British North Borneo Ports. These vessels operated well into 1970s.



Above, an interesting caption of Boat Drill on **“MV Kimanis”**, taken whilst alongside at Jesselton Quay



The iconic **“MV Rajah Brook”** seen loading a bagged cargo, image possibly taken at Sandakan



A forest of derricks looking aft from Bridge on “MV Rajah Brooke”, depicted at Labuan



The “MV Rajah Brooke” photographed whilst at the eastern anchorage in Singapore Roads. The extra lofty Bridge is very evident in this caption. The ship was named after the last white Rajah of Sarawak, James Brooke



An interesting portrait of the **"MV Rajah Brook"**. The entire SSC Fleet, all absolute iconic ships, of their time.



A detailed image of the SSC's steamer **"Kelantan"** depicted arriving at Sandakan.



The SSC's "MV Bruas", pictured in the calm waters of the Malacca Straits, during a passage to Penang.



Captured at Singapore Roads Eastern Anchorage during the late 1970s, the very elegant "MV Straits Star" ex "Kwangsi" late of China Navigation Company – Hong Kong (CNCo)



Located at Singapore anchorage during 1978 **"MV Straits Hope"** ex CNCo's **"Chefoo"**



SSC's **"MV Kilas"** seen in 1970 – the ex CNCo's **"Anking"**

Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (KPM)



A pre - WW2 poster advertising cargo passenger steamers usually used to trade between the various Indonesian archipelago ports and, Penang, and Singapore during their heyday.



This image of KPM's Steamship "Reael" anchored upstream at some Indonesian archipelago location, amidst the choking heat, mosquitoes, and crocodiles, tells the complete story. No air-conditioning, only a fan and louvered cabin doors and large windows to assist with the ventilation.



The **KPM** vessel “**Karsik**” departing from Hong Kong in the direction of Lai Yi Mun. Going by the Hong Kong Island skyline the photo looks to have been taken during early to mid - 1950s.

KPM was founded in 1888 by the Dutch as their dominant inter-island shipping line during their colonization of the Dutch East Indies and operated until 1967 when it merged with the Dutch shipping company of **Koninklijke Java China Paketvaart Lijnen (KJCL)**. During the latter part of the Indonesia colonial era, **KPM** experienced a bumpy ride due to a threat of nationalization by the Indonesian government. In 1958, as a consequence of Indonesian unrest, the company was compelled to relocate its Head Office and shipping assets to Singapore from where it successfully operated until 1967, when the company merged with **(KJCL)** part of the large **(RIL)** shipping conglomerate, which was very prominent throughout Asia with their extended world-wide services to Australia, Africa and South America. After 1977 they were all to become part of mammoth Nedlloyd consortium.

Seldom a day passed, without sighting one of these small iconic steamers, all immaculately maintained by their long serving crews. Hearsay has it, once an Asian crew joined a **KPM** ship they usually remained with it for the remainder of their seagoing days.

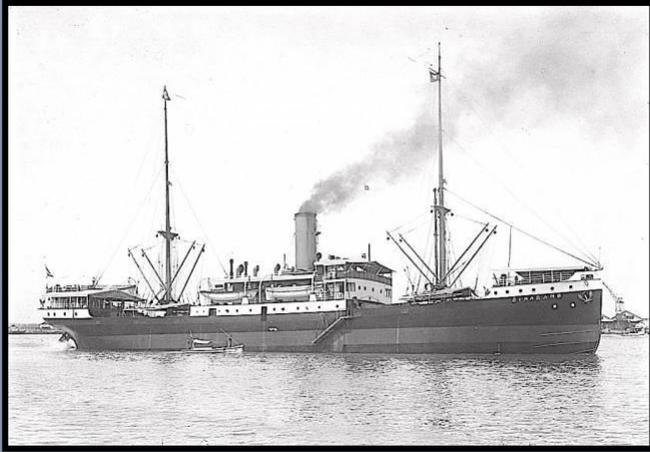
For many years after the demise of **KPM** as a trading entity, the vessels they had were sold for demolition or to other regional shipping operators. These little ladies always remained easily identifiable by their distinctive design features. The cessation of **KPM** was a sad loss and signaled the end of inter-island trade around the Indonesian archipelago, with ship services being phased out. Nowadays, modern container feeder vessels, have replaced them. Below follows a gallery of randomly selected captions of **KPM's** graceful little ladies.



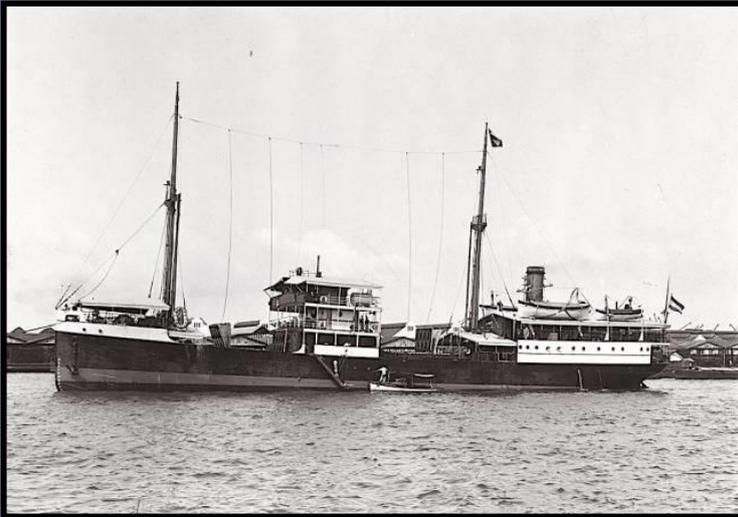
The KPM inter-island trader, “Saioe” in RIL (Royal Interocean Line) colors after KPM’s merger with that group.



KPM’s “Barumun”. A typical example, of an inter-island trader, captured busy working cargo from both jetty and lighters, most likely in Batavia, now known as Jakarta.



Above, an old **KPM** Steamer, "**Sinabang**". A Frequent visitor to ports in Java and Sumatra



Another **KPM** old timer "**Moesi**" from a bygone era, somewhere in Indonesia, proudly displaying the Dutch Ensign



Easily recognizable as **KPM**, with classic lines and buff and black funnel. Their ships were always immaculately maintained which was reflected in their presentation. Photographed, is their ship “**Van Der Lun**” laying serenely at anchor working from lighters.



Instantly identifiable as an ex **KPM** inter-island trader, working cargo alongside the wharf, at Belawan after the demise of **KPM**.



Having seen better days, but still going strong under new ownership, another ex **KPM** merchantman seen at Singapore small ship's anchorage, waiting on cargo



An ex **KPM** vessel, renamed "**Hero**", placed under a new register and management. Image taken at Hong Kong, whilst secured mid-stream to a Typhoon Buoy seen working cargo from barges

END

Memories of a First Command

By Geoff Walker

My ship was secured at the Typhoon Buoys in Victoria Harbor, Hong Kong. We had only just commenced loading a combination of general cargoes for Bangkok, Singapore, and Rangoon.

After having been on deck most of the day I was sitting in my cabin late in the afternoon enjoying a cold beer. Suddenly there was a knock on the door – “hello Mr. Mate” a voice said from behind the drawn door curtain. It was the Master. I quietly greeted him with the respect his position required and gestured for him to take a seat, at the same time offering him a tin of iced Carlsberg beer from my fridge – which he readily accepted.

I had been Chief Officer on the “Hoi Wing” for eighteen months, having joined soon after obtaining my Masters’ Certificate. The ship was an ex-British tramp, previously owned by a Newcastle outfit, twenty years old but as stout as a drum, she had no vices and was a typical old “Hong Kong Dustbin”. Dustbin referring to the all - black funnel, sported by most Hong Kong registered tramp vessels of the era.

I had joined because of the trade in which the ship was engaged - mostly tramping throughout the Far East - Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Borneo, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan with occasional calls to mainland China. A rewarding employment and salary package also sweetened the pie. I had lived in Hong Kong most of my life, considered it to be my home and really knew no other abode so I guess it was natural that I followed a career path in my own back yard so to speak. The shipboard conditions were good and the owners’ professionals, who knew what they were doing in comparison to many other Far Eastern shipping concerns around at the time

The “Old Man” came straight to the point – The Owners think you have done a reasonably good job so far and they are enquiring how you would feel about being promoted to Master. I was taken aback – I had expected this in about a year or so but not quite so soon. I instantly gathered my thoughts and knew what my response must be – one seldom gets asked or offered this type of opportunity twice at such a young age as I was still only in my early 30s. I took a deep breath and long swig of my beer, then responded “fine when do I start”. The “Old Man” grinned and shook my hand. He explained that the Marine Superintendent would like me to go to the office the following morning, where I would receive all the details. The Agents launch would be alongside about 9am, so I could take that ashore and whilst I was away the Captain would keep an eye on the cargo operations.

The 1960s and 1970s was a time when old tonnage was cheap and readily available on the market. Many rich Asian businessmen were very astute and wished to become ship - owners’ so they bought these ships in abundance and became ship operators overnight. Some were good but most of them not so good, most of their ships being placed under a FOC but operated from Hong Kong or Singapore by a specialist ship manager. Anyway, in my case I was fortunate as our management team was sound with mostly expatriates in senior positions who were well experienced and acquainted with shipping operations and management. All twelve of our ships were well maintained and manned by properly experienced officers and crew and operated to what was considered an above average standard for the time.

The Captain finished his beer and went about his business, leaving me alone in my cabin to reflect. Frankly, I was stoked at the prospect of my own command and tried hard not to show my happiness

too outwardly. I decided not to say anything until it had all been officially confirmed by the Marine Superintendent and I was privy to all the details.

I found it hard to sleep that night with all sorts of strange ideas going through my head – what if, I ran the ship aground, or was involved in a collision, or the like! Maybe they would change their mind! I soon dismissed all these follies as I had confidence in myself and drifted off to sleep.

The following morning, I briefed the 3rd and 2nd Mates on the day's cargo operations and what I expected of them. I explained I needed to go ashore to the office urgently but did not expand on the reason why. I hurriedly donned a suit and tie, clambered aboard the Agent's launch, and headed off towards Hong Kong Island and Queen's Pier.

I was somewhat apprehensive, arriving at the Company's 10th floor offices at 9.45am. I was expected and greeted by the Marine Superintendent – an Irishman with a strong accent who was an ex Irish Shipping Company Master. He wore a white, long sleeve shirt and a blue tie with a club or society crests on it – I knew him already, so the atmosphere was quite relaxed and cordial considering the matter at hand. He commenced the conversation by telling me that I had done a good job on the "Hoi Wing" and received good reports and recommendations for promotion from the Master.

He informed me the Company had just acquired an ex Australian multi-purpose cargo vessel of about 7,000 Goss Tons and were about to take delivery in Hong Kong with the intention to introduce her in support of the "Hoi Wing" in regional trading. The ship was being delivered with an Australian crew, (who would sign off and be repatriated immediately upon arrival in Hong Kong) and be manned with Hong Kong Chinese crew. The ship was expected to arrive in Hong Kong in about 3 weeks. She was to be renamed "Hoi Hing" (loosely translated means Sea Prosperity) and placed under the Panama Flag. Therefore, I would need to apply for a Panama License (a formality) which would be issued on the strength of my own British Certificate. I would have European senior officers; the Junior Officers would be either Hong Kong Chinese or from the Philippines. This satisfied me totally as I had no concern about the vessel being placed under Panama flag because I knew and trusted the owners and their high standards of ship management.

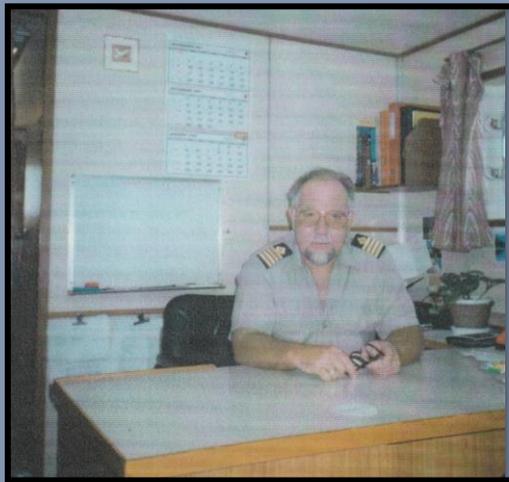
During the lead up to the ship's arrival I was to prepare a good handover for the new Chief Mate on the "Hoi Wing" and stay with him a few days once he had arrived until he was fully familiar with everything. The 2nd Mate on the "Hoi Wing" had not been promoted on this occasion even though he held a brand spanking new Mate's Certificate. He was highly regarded by the Company but was considered a little too young for the role of Chief Mate at only just 24 years of age – his time would come in about a year or so. My replacement as Chief Officer was about 28 years of age, a Portuguese Chinese from Macau and going by his resume, reasonably well experienced, and well suited for the task. It was expected he would join in 2-3 days

Prior to her first voyage the "Hoi Hing" would go into Dry Dock for pre-purchase survey and maintenance, the ship being no stranger to the shipyard as she has been re-engined there some years earlier when her main engine had been converted from steam turbine to motor, with steam auxiliaries being replaced with diesel. In an effort, to extend her competitive working life, she had also been retro fitted with on deck container fittings and two 36ton SWL deck cranes. This all sounded great to me and as soon as the conversation ended with the Marine Superintendent, I was taken around the office to meet everyone and introduced as the new Captain of "Hoi Hing" – I felt elated and much elevated indeed. Obviously, never having been called "Captain" before, it would take some getting used to it.

Upon my arrival back at the “Hoi Wing” the news of my promotion had spread like wildfire – I was congratulated by everyone and must admit to feeling a little embarrassed by it all. The ensuing days were busy for me preparing the handover for my relief and at the same time watching cargo proceedings.

A few days later my relief, Tony Robero, arrived on board and the handover began in earnest. Tony was a nice chap with a good sense of humor, he lived in Macau although he had been born in Hong Kong and had taken all his qualifying examinations in Hong Kong. He soon settled in and took control of the daily management of the ship, at which time I bowed out and went ashore to my home to visit my parents and convey my good news.

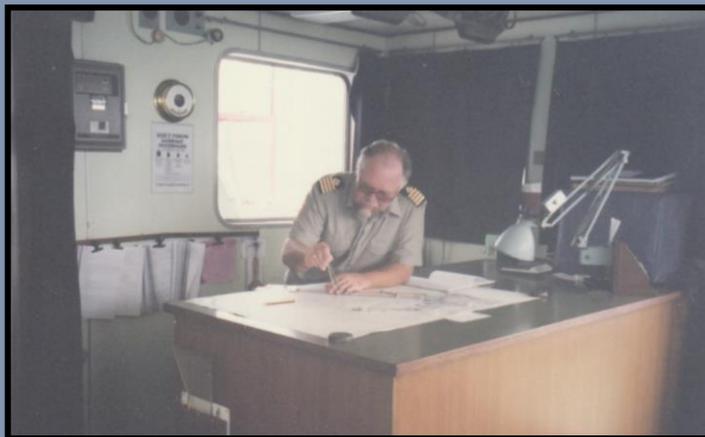
The 1970-80s saw the pinnacle of change in Hong Kong and its establishment as the financial center of Asia. It seemed no matter what venture Hong Kong embarked upon the outcome turned into pure gold for the then, colony. During this period there were many new developments such as Ocean Terminal, Extension of Kai Tak Airport and Cross Harbor Tunnels, significant increases in local manufacturing and exports, massive, low cost housing projects, together with new skyscraper buildings, erected at a rapid pace, not to mention a boom in tourism as Hong Kong had suddenly become more accessible by air and was adorned with an abundance of world class hotels. The Hong Kong skyline was in a state of continuous motion – buildings that had been around for ages were suddenly demolished and immediately replaced by super high-rise structures. The shanty huts and squatter areas were cleared, and their residents rehoused. This prosperity created wealth the likes of which Hong Kong had hitherto never experienced, society was becoming more affluent, which was a marked contrast to the previous decades.



Recently promoted - at my Desk



Noon on the Bridge



Charting our position

Meanwhile, time had passed quickly for me and the 1970s had arrived. Since completion of my apprenticeship some 8 years earlier, I had continued to reside in Hong Kong and roam the oceans on a variety of ships whilst consolidating my sea service in order to finally qualify to present myself for examination for my Master's Certificate. Most of the time was engaged sailing between East and South Africa to the Orient. I steadily progressed through the various ranks of 3rd Mate, 2nd Mate and Chief Officer. Once the ink was dry on my Masters' Certificate and safely in my pocket I concentrated once again on sailing exclusively within the Asian region, which was my passion.

Vacancies for qualified deck officers during these times, throughout Asia were plentiful and to a degree one could pick and choose in which trades and on what ships one wished to sail, so one tended to become very selective as for whom one was working. It was an important issue because

with the expansion in shipping during this era, Asia had amassed its share of clapped out or decrepit tonnage.

Also, emerged a number, of very “shonky” operators who usually placed their vessels under the Panama, Liberia, Somali or similar, non-descript Flags of Convenience (FOC) as it was much cheaper to do so. It would be true to say that many of the new ship owners were only interested in the cheapest of the cheap, keeping operating costs for their ships to the absolute bare minimum with the view to turning a quick buck, thus avoiding as much as possible, the significant costs associated with operating ships to decent international standards. However, having said that, it did not apply to all Asian Owners, some of which were excellent in every way. The Hong Kong British Flag was most respected, as it assumed most of the same standards as for the United Kingdom. Singapore and Malaysia also followed similar regulatory standards.

However, many of the shady owners tried to entice good quality officers and crews with the promise of highly inflated salaries – unfortunately, there were the gullible, resulting in many instances of crews being owed wages or not getting paid at all. For owners who fell into this category it was not uncommon seeing their ships under admiralty arrest rotting in some Asian backwater whilst the crews desperately attempted to recover what they were rightfully due and get repatriated, or in extreme cases, even get victuals on which to survive. It was not unheard of that some of the less trustworthy FOC operators emptied bank accounts, closed shop overnight, leaving their ships and crews stranded, the owners having absconded with the funds, never to be heard of again. Such was the sad lot of some seafarers about this period.

A good percentage of the newly established owners operating under Flags of Convenience were front companies for Communist countries such as Mainland China, Indonesia (Communist regime at that time), North Korea as well as Formosa (Taiwan) because of its conflict and trading restrictions with China. This enabled these operators to earn foreign exchange as most shipping transactions were conducted in USD. Needless, to say, the shady and less scrupulous outfits did not last long and soon collapsed – besides the word soon got about, and qualified officers and crews refused to sail on their ships.

After a week or so at home my new command arrived in Hong Kong and went straight into the dry dock. I joined soon after and was welcomed by the outgoing Australian Master who signed off the same day along with all his fellow Australians. I suddenly realized the responsibility of command – I was on my own and it was up to me to manage, and operate, the vessel in all respects. At least I would have a little time to settle in as the ship was scheduled to be in dry dock about one week during which time the remainder of my officers and crew would join. I was accommodated ashore close to the shipyard whilst awaiting my crew to arrive, although I did manage most evenings at home.

A day or so later the vessel was refloated and shifted from the dry dock to a lay by berth at the shipyard. It was then that I, along with all officers and crew signed on ship's articles.

My Chief Officer, Les Barnes was English, from Liverpool minus the accent. An energetic little man, and a newcomer to our company. Les had been sailing as Chief Mate for just over two years. He was a couple of years my senior but that was of no consequence and he held a Masters' Certificate. The 2nd Mate was from Newcastle and an ex-Chapman's man, whilst the 3rd mate was a young Filipino who went by the flowery name of Jesus Jose Catalan Empleto.

On the engineering side, the Chief Engineer was a New Zealander, as was the 2nd Engineer, both heralding from Taranaki, whilst the 3rd and 4th Engineers were Geordies from the Northeast part of

the UK. The remaining Junior Engineers being Hong Kong Chinese. Our Radio Officer was a very brogue Irishman from Belfast. This was his first trip to the Far East, and it was not difficult to ascertain his sense of excitement and awe at being in a new and unfamiliar environment. He was very industrious and even before unpacking his bags he set about testing his Radio equipment and monitoring the installation of a newer model Radar unit which was in the process of being fitted by the shipyard technicians. We would end up with two as the older one was still in good working order and usable so was not being removed.

Our Chinese crews were all experienced and a thoroughly reliable crowd, some of whom had sailed with me previously on other vessels. Hence, this was my ship's complement, and I was determined to make it all work and not let down the Owner's (or indeed myself) at having been given this opportunity.

The "Hoi Hing" lay at the shipyard for another few days during which time everyone was kept busy settling in and taking over the ship. She was given a fresh paint job and new names painted on bow and stern with port of registry "Panama" also featuring prominently on the stern, below the name. She looked very trim indeed, and I was quietly satisfied by the entire chain of events since my unexpected promotion only a few weeks earlier.

It was only now that I had time to truly discover the ship. She was a 10year old lady, but had reasonably flowing lines, streamlined accommodation and upper works, with the usual five holds and five hatches along with a set of twin deep tanks. The red and black funnel was slightly raked and the hull silver-grey, whilst masts, and deck cranes were all buff in color. The accommodation was spacious and comfortable and had obviously been well cared for by previous crews.

My quarters were large and occupied an entire deck below the Bridge deck. I had a Day Room, adjoining Office (complete with large desk and conference table with six chairs), Bedroom and en-suite Toilet, Bath and Shower facilities. The bulkheads were a darkish veneer and the curtains and seat coverings throughout were nicely color coordinated to afford an appearance of comfort. The decking consisted of beige vinyl tiles which had been buffed to a high gloss finish and added an air of grace and composure. There were four forward facing windows in my Dayroom and Office, two side windows in my Bedroom which overlooked the sea and a frosted window in my washroom. A short distance down the alleyway to starboard I had a private Pantry, large refrigerator and cooking hot plates (in case required). On the port side of my deck was situated a small single berth Pilot's Cabin which had seldom if ever been used by the look of it, other than for storage space. All things considered, not a bad layout.

My Deck Officers, Radio Officer and senior Engineer Officers were housed on the deck below. All having similar style accommodations, albeit not quite as large and spacious as mine, but nevertheless quite comfortable. The junior Engineers and catering staff were located on the deck below that, whilst the deck and engine ratings were all situated aft in the Poop accommodation, which was also quite acceptable. The ship's complement was 32 all up which included 2 Chinese fitters for maintenance of the cargo winches.

Our Chief Steward, along with the catering crew set about scrubbing out all the galleys, fridge rooms and dining areas, public rooms, and alleyways. An abundance of new stores and provisions arrived even though many of the provisions and stores were carried over from previous owners provided they were within the use by date. Similarly, our Bosun and his sailors attended to the array of deck stores that the company delivered on board, a standard issue, for any new ships they purchased. Within a week we were ready to go, when required.

Eventually, after a couple of days I was given order to shift from the dock yard to one of the Typhoon Buoys not too far distant from Stone Cutters Island. The harbor Pilot arrived on board at 7am and we cast off, moving slowly through the harbor traffic to the designated Compass Swinging area for periodic adjustment and check of our Magnetic Compass, followed by the issuance of an updated Deviation Card provided by the Compass Adjuster himself. Then on to our buoy where we moored using our anchor chain and slip wires. One of our anchors had been disconnected from the chain and hung off so that we could shackle the anchor chain direct to the buoy. It was a simple exercise to reconnect the anchor later, after departure.

Soon after our arrival at the mooring buoy I received a visit from the Marine Superintendent. He was accompanied by the Engineer Superintendent who came to inspect the vessel and have discussions with my Chief Engineer. I received the usual "Pep Talk" from my Irish Boss, being a newly promoted Captain, along with a variety of instructions including details of our imminent cargo fixture. I recall very clearly his parting words to me "remember...obtaining command is easy ...maintaining it is harder". Very sound advice for a fledgling Captain

I learned that we were to take a cargo of semi-refined bagged sugar from Hong Kong to Singapore. The bagged sugar, in heavy duty paper bags, would be loaded ex lighter at the buoys rather than at the usual Taikoo Sugar Refinery wharf, situated quite close to the dock yard from which we had just shifted. It seemed the Sugar Wharf was booked already by an inbound ship arriving with a full cargo of raw sugar from Mauritius. Following discharging in Singapore it was likely that we would proceed to one of two destinations which was yet to be finalized, namely, some Indonesian river Port to load a cargo of dressed logs for Japan or Bangkok to load a cargo of bagged rice for China. I hoped for the latter rather than proceed to some upriver jungle logging camp to load logs – personally, I dreaded the thought of anchoring in some desolate place like Paia Inlet or Umuda Island located in the steaming river estuaries at the head of the Gulf of Papua. Loading logs into a vessel of our configuration in locations like that, could take weeks.

Our chartering department would pass on information to me once all had been decided. However, I had enough information to be going on with, to ensure our 2nd Mate ordered all the required Admiralty Charts, and Sailing Directions, for the entire South East Asia region. The ship had only been delivered with limited chart folios for Asian waters, only sufficient to cover her delivery voyage to Hong Kong, as she had been engaged for many years operating around the Australian coast. In any event most of the charts remaining on board were either outdated or in desperate need of being replaced. It was recognized that correcting and updating the existing charts on board would be a mammoth task for the 2nd Mate, not to mention most of the charts looked as if they had been used as tablecloths being full of coffee and tea stains or torn. Hence it was agreed with Owners we purchase new charts and build our own chart folios afresh.

As it would be a day or two before we commenced loading, we were to bunker Fuel Oil and Lubricating Oils in drums. Soon after therefore, the Bunker Barge came alongside to replenish our tanks with 750 tons of bunkers as by now our reserves were quite low as the ship had been delivered to us with minimal quantities remaining on board.

We used the waiting time to check all the cargo winches and cargo gear. The ship, being steam auxiliary, was fitted with steam winches which could be operated fast when handled by expert stevedore winch operators. Some replacements were made to cargo runners and derrick head and heel blocks as well as a few guy ropes. Eventually, I was able inform the Owners we were fully operational.

Cargo lighters and barges used in Hong Kong are frequently owned by the families that operate them – not only do they handle all the cargo, barge winches and derricks themselves but also live on board with their family members, including small children, dogs, and cats etc. Occasionally large stevedoring concerns would own a fleet of barges, but this was not the norm. Hence the cargo barges were immaculately maintained and expertly operated.

The time arrived when the barges were towed out to us in mid-stream and moored alongside, one for each hatch. Without delay our union purchase gear started the long task of transferring the slings of bagged sugar from barge to ship's cargo hold where stevedores set about stowing it in rows and tiers. Barges were replaced immediately once they were emptied. Fully laden barges promptly replaced them. This went on for seven days around the clock until the last sling of sugar was loaded. Hatches were full and were then battened down and the ship made ready for sea.

The agent came on board with the Cargo Manifest and Port Clearance, soon after the harbor Pilot who would guide us towards Green Island and the Sulphur Channel then towards Llama Channel as we were departing towards the South West. I gave my first order "Stand by Engines" the telegraphs rang out and was instantly answered by the Engine Room indicating all was ready. Upon the advice of the Pilot, I ordered that we disconnect the anchor chain from the buoy. Soon after (and having taken a deep breath) let go your slip wires; we were free and underway as we cleared the buoy, I gave the order "slow ahead, port twenty" and slowly felt the vibration under foot as the engines worked up and the ship gained momentum. It was comforting to hear the slow "Thump, Thump, Thump" of our Doxford main engine as we glided slowly through the water towards the Pilot disembarkation point just clear of the Sulphur Channel. As soon as the pilot was clear I ordered a progressive increase in speed until some 15 or so minutes later when passing the fairway buoy and clear of conflicting traffic, I instructed the 3rd Mate to ring down to the Engine Room "FAOP – Full away on Passage" indicating to the duty Engineers they could now assume full sea speed.

I stood on the starboard bridge wing for a while with the sea breeze blowing through my hair, passing the occasional course adjustments until we were well clear of all other shipping and fishing boats. With the "Hoi Hing", well established on her course by this time, the auto pilot was then engaged. I remained on the bridge for a good half hour checking all was well and the courses were accurate and most importantly our young 3rd Mate was comfortable and ready to take over. Once I was satisfied, we were on track, and well clear of any potential hazards I left the Bridge and handed over to the 3rd Mate (trying as I may to make it sound as if I had done it a thousand times before...) making certain he fully understood he was to call me without hesitation if I was needed, he was ever in doubt or the traffic volume increased.

I went below to my cabin, trying to hide the slight tremor in my hands caused by the excitement of the moment. After about an hour, and not before numerous interim glances through my forward - looking cabin windows, I returned to the Bridge to check all was well and we were on track. The 3rd Mate was doing the right thing by taking frequent Radar Fixes to check our position as the outlying Islands of Hong Kong slid into the haze over the distant horizon. We were dead on course – I expected nothing less. During this lapse in time Les, our Chief Mate, had reconnected the anchor to the anchor chain and housed it properly in the Hawse Pipe.

As Noon approached our 2nd Mate appeared on the bridge, he handed me the "Noon Chit" which indicated, Noon Position, Sea Speed, Course, Distances covered and remaining to destination, Propeller Slip, Daily fuel Consumption up till Noon since departing Hong Kong and tentative ETA Singapore Eastern Pilot Boarding Ground. I in turn extracted all the data, compiled a telegram with all the information and passed it to our Radio Officer for relay to our Owners. We were now truly on

our way and the ship's destiny firmly in my hands. So, my course had been set and it was now a case of ensuring I lived up to the responsibility and job to which I had been entrusted over the ensuing years.

So, began 12 of years in command, visiting ports throughout Asia, Pacific, Middle East, and Africa. They were not without challenges, but fortunately trouble free. My wife and young son sailed with me as frequently as possible. For some unknown reason, within our company, I earned the nickname of the "Party Captain", mainly because whenever there was any function or entertainment of port dignitaries required, it often so happened, it was held on my ship. This was not too much of a burden since my wife was an excellent organizer, claiming it gave her something to do, and anyway, we both enjoyed a good party.



Happy days – still time for a party on board (one of many)

Always nagging away in the back of my mind, and never far away from my thoughts, was a quotation by Plautus (254-184 BCE) which stated, **"Any man who would be fully employed should procure a ship or woman, for no two things on this earth produce more trouble if not handled properly".**

END

A Vignette of Pearl Luggers in The Torres Straits

By Geoff Walker

Brilliant blue crystal-clear waters, white coral reefs, golden sandy beaches and cloudless skies typifies images of the Torres Straits, which was the main source for “Mother of Pearl” and Pearls during former times and the glory days of pearling. The pearling industry of Northern Australia has an indelible place in Australia’s modern history which is rather romantically depicted by the yarns and tales of the old pearling Luggers and Schooners that plied the Torres Straits in their quest for the finest pearls and “mother of pearl” shell. Their main area of operation was between Thursday Island and Broome, but Thursday Island eventually became the main focal point for the Australian pearling industry. At the height of the pearling industry, steamers connected Thursday Island with a monthly service to Batavia (Jakarta) and to the United Kingdom, a thrice monthly steamship services provided access to Darwin, Hong Kong, and Japan, whilst there were about six trips per month connecting other principal Australian ports. There was no shortage of means by which to export the illustrious “mother of pearl”.

Pearl fishermen from Indonesia and China were the first to harvest shell and pearl gems as well as sea-cucumber in northern Australian waters, well before the arrival of the Europeans. They traded with the various Aborigines living in the coastal areas, who placed little or no value on the shell or pearl gems at the time. Pearls, often considered as gemstones, had been sought in Asia and further afield throughout history as a highly prized and valuable commodity. As far as Aborigines were concerned the oyster meat was the most important, as it provided a big supplement to their diet.

The pearling industry, catering for a mass market, first started in or around the 1860s and over ensuing years became a very important feature in the economy of northern Australia, although it was usually financed from sources in Queensland or New South Wales. To give this some historical perspective it was the era when the new steamships were starting to establish new, long distance trading routes, the Suez Canal was first opened, and the overland telegraph became a reality.

The white Australian was very reluctant to become involved in diving due to the very high mortality rate and it was prohibited to employ Aborigines during the 1870s due to welfare reasons. Hence divers from Malaya and Japan were used, including women, who in fact were favored above men for their diving abilities. In those former times a diver would just jump into the water holding a heavy stone, having first taken the deepest of breaths. The diver would slowly sink to the bottom. Once on the seabed they would collect as many pearl shells as possible during the time the diver’s breath held, placing them into a bag or net, then discard the stone weight and slowly rise to the surface with the “catch” or it may be hoisted from the seabed by the Lugger’s crew. Some divers could stay on the bottom for as long as two minutes, using this primitive method. These divers were referred to as “skin divers”.

The industry experienced its highs and lows between 1870-1890 and it continued well into the 1950s, by which time Luggers and Schooners were becoming something of a rarity. The 1970s saw the last of the true pearl Luggers due to the advent of cultured pearls, and any remaining vessels were sold or converted for other commercial purposes. However, during the intervening years, Australia had established itself as being one of the world’s principal suppliers of high quality, pearls and “mother of pearl” shell. Whilst the pearl gem itself was highly sought after and valuable, the actual “mother of pearl” shell became even more valuable, as it was in demand throughout the world for a variety of decorative purposes.

The type of vessel favored for pearling was a gaff rigged Ketch, typically of about 15-25m in length. These craft were designed with low freeboards to assist with their diving operations. They operated in fleets of up to 20 craft and usually each fleet had their identifying color scheme with name and registration number on each craft cut into the wooden hull near the bow sprit.

Generally, the sailing Masters of these vessels were Australians, although there were a few New Zealanders. Crews and divers were made up of Torres Strait Islanders, Pacific Islanders, Indians, Ceylonese, Malays, Indonesians, and Japanese. A typical complement for a pearling Lugger would be, sailing Master, cook, 2-3 divers, 2-3 air-pump handlers, and engineer (if the craft was motorized) and 2 sailing crew. Hence it was a true multicultural enterprise, but the industry did experience some notoriety for the exploitation and injustices of its labor and crews, contrary to claims by the fleet owners that their crews and divers were well treated, properly fed and accommodated. An average trip was about 2 weeks before returning to port.

One can picture the fleets of these graceful craft sailing under full sail from their home ports, in their quest for the elusive pearl shell. These fleets of Luggers were supported by larger Schooners which acted as supply and mother ships for their respective fleets. At times, the north Australian ports could become congested with Luggers due to their prolific numbers. This in turn helped establish secondary industries such as trading stores and ship chandlers, mostly dominated by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. The ship chandlery business was focal to the existence and dynamics of the early mainland pearling ports, their waterfront areas and subsequent long-term development.



A Lugger heading to the pearling grounds. Note the number of crew on board and the low freeboard of the vessel.

Over time the Japanese, mostly originating from Okinawa, became a domineering influence in the industry with their pearling expertise rising to the fore. The Japanese shipwrights controlled the few shipyards that built these elegant craft which were mainly constructed on Thursday Island using local Australian timbers. Also, the Japanese immigrants were active as divers, having previously gained their diving experience in Japan where pearl diving was a centuries old occupation, therefore they brought with them superior diving and harvesting techniques. There was great competition between these divers to see who could obtain the most "mother of pearl" shell.

These pearling fleets often made fortunes for their owners whilst their imported crews were not so well compensated considering the many daily risks they encountered. At one stage pearl shell

was in such high demand it warranted the highest possible prices, with Australia becoming the world's largest producer. This was particularly so in Europe and the Americas where pearl shell was used for the manufacturing of "mother of pearl" buttons and decorative ornaments.

Pearl diving could be dangerous, and a hazardous occupation with the diver being solely reliant on simple air pumps and their designated deckhand that operated their air hoses and air pump. The "Bends"- decompression sickness, and "Raptures of the Deep"- nitrogen narcosis, was quite common amongst the divers, leading to frequent fatalities, since not a great deal was known about these conditions during the fledgling years of the industry. Similarly, there were periodic shark attacks which either killed or maimed scores of divers. The currents in which these divers worked could be strong and unpredictable but their quest for pearl and pearl shell was their ultimate endeavor above all else since the divers were paid based on the amount of shell they collected. Hence the amount of time they spent underwater was highly valuable to them in terms of potential income.

In the early 1860s the diving equipment was very primitive so mainly "skin" divers were used in the shallower waters of up to about 8 fathoms. These divers only wore swimming trunks and goggles and carried a stout knife. Hand dredging was also common in these shallows and stripped the seabed of almost everything, including large quantities of shell and marine vegetation. This compelled the diving industry seek more efficient ways and means of diving in deeper waters

The early diving suit was normally made of thick canvas and the diver wore heavy leaden boots plus weights which restricted his movements. They also wore heavy brass helmets with visors, to which the hoses were connected. Hence, diving was restricted to relatively shallow water where shell could easily be harvested but as time went on, so the divers ventured deeper because hand dredging of shallow waters quickly laid bare vast areas.

In 1875 an improved diving suite was introduced with the divers who donned them becoming known as "dressed divers". The "dressed divers" could now access to a depth of 20 fathoms and by the 1930s further improvements in diving suits allowed them to go much deeper. The work became extremely hazardous as the diving depths increased and by 1916 fatalities had risen to 10% amongst the diving work force.

Seasonal Cyclones that frequented the north end of Australia, mainly between the months of November and April were another danger these small craft had to contend with, remembering weather forecasting was somewhat unsophisticated during the 1900s era, and radio was unavailable at the time for such types of sailing craft, it being limited to large oceangoing ships.

During WW2, pearling in the Torres Straits was disbanded, with some of the Luggers being requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy. These craft were motorized and used to patrol the Torres Straits Islands which had become extremely strategic in nature during the time of hostilities and were subject to constant surveillance by the allies. As a precaution all residents of the Torres Straits Islands had been evacuated to the mainland, between 1942 and 1946, for fear of a Japanese invasion of Australia, stemming from their occupation of New Guinea.

Following the war, due to the interruption and instability these intervening years had caused, it became difficult for the industry to re-establish itself mainly because of lacking demand for pearl shell since the common button was no longer made from "mother of pearl", but rather plastic, which had been introduced during WW2. This transformed the pearling industry, making it less economically viable, the consequence of which was that the remaining Luggers were progressively phased out from pearling and deployed to other commercial activities. However, by this time

pearling had become a mere skeleton of its former glory years. Some pearling did struggle through to the 1970s, but the final death blow came with the introduction of cultured pearl farms as well as high yielding oyster farms, many of which are responsible for producing, the high quality oysters, to which we have now become accustomed, for our dining tables.

The last Pearl Schooner which I personally saw during my seagoing years was in the vicinity of Thursday Island during the early 1970s, and what a sight it was, striking forth under full sail making a decent speed and heading in the direction of Darwin, with its many crew on deck all waving as we passed at close quarters. It was the last of an era, but at least I had the privilege of seeing the genuine article in its home waters.

Today, the remaining Luggers and Schooners have now been seconded, to the no less important tourist sector, providing sailing and diving adventures and tours between the northern locations of the Australian mainland and the various Torres Straits Islands. Even if not in original form it does allow these old vessels to remain in the public eye and serve as a reminder of their historical significance and glory, and the contributions they made to the pearling industry in northern Australia and the Torres Straits.

Below is a pearling Lugger, becalmed in the Torres Straits, during one of those tranquil sunsets, for which the region is so renowned.



END

Remembering Iconic Ferries of a Fragrant Harbor

Literally translated, Hong Kong means “Fragrant Harbor”, so named by the “Hongs” when Hong Kong became a British Colony in 1842 at the conclusion of the Chinese Opium Wars. How “Fragrant” the harbor may have been in those times is a matter of some conjecture, causing one to struggle with the rationale behind the name.

The Hong Kong to Macau Ferries were an icon, plying the route between Hong Kong and the Portuguese enclave of Macau, which lies about 40 miles to the west at the estuary of the Pearl River. The service was established soon after Hong Kong’s colonization and continues into the 2000s, albeit with upgraded services and ships. Nowadays of course, there is a Bridge spanning the waters between Hong Kong and Macau, the Hong Kong – Zuhai – Macau Bridge, as shown in the Map below



Alas, times have changed now with a new alternative link between Hong Kong and Macau. Will this signal the end of Ferry services as we know them today? The Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macau Bridge (HZMB), opened in 2018, is a 55-kilometre Bridge – Tunnel system consisting of a series of three cable-stayed Bridges, a section of

undersea tunnel, and four artificial islands. It is both the longest sea crossing and the longest open-sea fixed link in the World. Built by Chinese interests, the lead Designer was the Mott Macdonald Group – a London based multinational engineering and consulting firm. It stands as a spectacular mega achievement for all concerned in its construction. As a ditty, when visited by the Author last year (2019) the cost of a single way bus ticket was a very reasonable HK\$ 32. Normally the fare is HK\$ 64 but there is a 50% concession for pensioners and retirees. The one - way trip takes about 30 minutes in a comfortable bus. This magnificent spectacle will surely have a substantial impact on traditional Hong Kong – Macau Ferry service.



A view of the Hong Kong – Zuhai – Macau Bridge (HZMB). Its sheer magnitude is breathtaking. The bus ride is as “Smooth as Silk”.

Commented [GW1]:

As a youngster growing up in Hong Kong, a trip to Macau was considered a great treat. Together with my parents we generally took the passage two or three times every year during the 1950s and early 1960s. The aim of the visit was to attend the Macau Grand Prix or, so my folks could try their luck at the Casinos. If memory serves it was not necessary to wait until arrival in Macau to start gambling as the Ferries offered onboard gambling facilities, open to passengers once clear of Hong Kong waters, Slot Machines, Cards, Fan Tan, Roulette, etc. My last voyage on the old, but much loved, Fat Shan was around 1960. Our favorite was the overnight passage. The ships departed from Sheung Wan Ferry Pier soon after midnight and usually arrived in Macau around 5-6am. Passengers were allowed to remain on board until 7am when they were required to disembark.

Prior to boarding the Ferry in Hong Kong, it was usual to spend some time at the “Poor Man’s Nightclub”. This was basically a flea market erected every night around 6pm and it ran until about midnight, when it all disappeared, just as rapidly as it had been set up. It was a fun place to visit for a few hours and it was located in the empty Sheung Wan Bus Terminus, and car park adjacent to the Macau Ferry Wharf. One could buy anything there from electronic goods, through to clothes,



Canto pop music, Chinese opera, CD’s fortune tellers, snacks, Chinese medicines and potions, letter writers and with noodle shops and Dai Pai Dongs galore - all the usual attributes featured in a traditional Chinese Night Market. Then, just before it closed one would amble the short distance towards the Hong Kong Immigration post and get ready for embarkation on the Ferry. The actual Market location is highlighted in the adjoining image.

The night crossing seemed to be long but there was plenty to do which prevented much sleep. Apart from the slot machines, it is rumored that onboard entertainment extended to showgirls and striptease, but I never came across that. It was however a gathering of rowdy jolly passengers all hoping to make their fortunes at the Macau Casinos, each stoked by having drunk several large

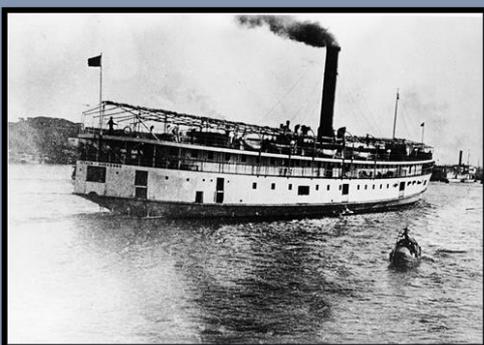
tumblers of Brandy. However, the return journey was generally a little more subdued since it is not usual for Casinos to lose money.

Macau was a completely more relaxed and “lay back” environment compared to that of Hong Kong, there was a continental air about the place. The Portuguese influence became immediately apparent as soon as one disembarked from the ship at the Macau Ferry Landing, its European style cobbled streets, tree lined avenues, outdoor tea houses and continental fashioned cafes, the wide range of pastries for sale, pedal tricycles, the aromas of drying seafood, and Portuguese culture was visible everywhere. Even the senior police officers were Portuguese nationals. Much of the architecture was heavily Portuguese influenced and the hotels all had their wide verandahs and lofty ceilings with lazy rotating electric fans, built by the colonialists for tropical living. Macau was the first Colony in Asia and the last to be relinquished to China in 1999.

Macau’s main means of revenue was from its gambling Casinos and hotels. Fu Lo Yung jointly held the gambling franchise and monopoly in Macau with Ko Ho Ning from 1937 until his demise in 1960. The gambling license was then lost to a consortium headed by Sir Stanley Ho in 1961, who played a significant role in building the new Ferry terminal at Sheung Wan and introducing more modern ships to the Ferry service, up to and including Hydrofoils in the mid - 1960s, followed by Jetfoils in the early 1980s.

There were a number of Ferries engaged on the Hong Kong Macau service; amongst which Fatshan and the post war built Tai Loy (later to be renamed “Nam Shan”), complete the duo featured in this article. In May 1951, Fatshan was acquired by the Man On Shipping and Navigation Company from the China Navigation Company to whom the vessel had been returned at the conclusion of WW2. During this time, Fatshan was one of the main Ferry boats operating the Hong Kong to Macao route. This Ferry was extremely popular with the traveling public and became a symbolic and iconic vessel over ensuing years.

By 1961 there was much competition on the route with Stanly Ho’s Shun Tak Shipping enterprises. Competition for the route increased progressively over the following years until the mid to late 60’s when Hydrofoil Ferry services were introduced. In 1968, Sir Stanley Ho’s shipping company, a subsidiary company of Shun Tak, acquired Fatshan together with Tai Loy and continued sailing the vessel on the Hong Kong Macao route.



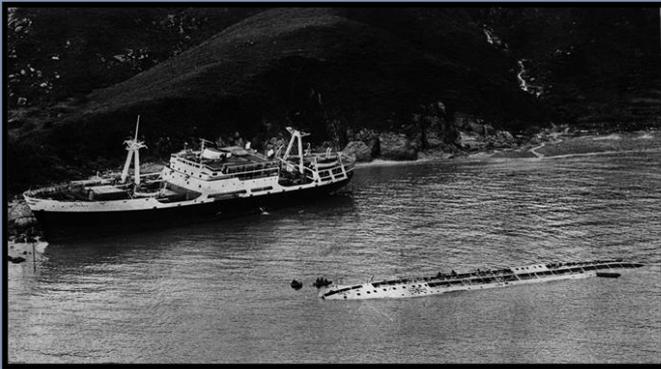
The original Fatshan, Hong Kong to Macau Ferry. Captured whilst navigating the Pearl River, built in 1887 she remained on the route until 1933 when scrapped, and replaced by the newer 1933 built Ferry bearing the same name. The waters of the Pearl River were a dirty muddy brown in comparison of the Blue green waters of Hong Kong. The startling contrast was obvious, to passengers.



A very early image of the Canton Steamer, laying alongside the wharf at Sheung Wan. One of the first Hong Kong to Macau Ferries is alongside the other side of the finger jetty



Above, the later built Fatshan, seen steaming through Hong Kong waters sometime during the 1960s after she had been taken over by the Tai Tak Hing Shipping Company. The Fatshan was built in Hong Kong during 1933 and had a GRT of 2639 tons, a length of 73m, Beam of 14m and was propelled by 2 - 4 cylinder, triple expansion steam engines, producing 2600 IHP, driving twin screws, giving a service speed of 13 knots. Regrettably the Fatshan met her demise in in 1971 during Typhoon Rose, when in order to seek shelter the ship had anchored off Stonecutters Island, but due to severe winds her anchors parted, which caused her to drift and collide with two other vessels, she finally capsized and sank about 120m off the shoreline of Lantau Island at Kap Sui Mun. 88 passengers and crew were lost as a consequence of the tragedy and at the time it was recorded as Hong Kong's worst maritime disaster.



The wreck of the Fatshan can be seen just awash in the foreground of the above image.



The "Tai Loy", built in Hong Kong by Wing On Shung Shipyard. She was laid down in 1948, launched in 1949 and went into full service in 1951. She was a modern, purpose built

triple screw motor ship of the times. In imperial measurements she had an overall length of 200 ft and Beam of 36 ft GRT 1330 tons. The vessel was later renamed "Nam Shan" and became famous for her appearance in the 1975 French Movie "Emmanuelle 2", which was filmed in Hong Kong.



The renamed "Nam Shan", seen at the Macau Ferry Terminal at Sheung Wan, on Hong Kong Island, with a very smartly turned out official looking on.

These ships were not, as made out by some and depicted in the movies, rundown rust buckets or Hong Kong dust bins. In actuality, these were triple deck Ferries, maintained to a good standard, under the strict and watchful eye of the Hong Kong Marine Department, and were

professionally managed and operated by properly certified and competent crews.



A stunning aerial view of the original Sheung Wan Macau Ferry Pier, dating back to the early 1950s. The Macau Ferry "Tai Loy" (later renamed "Nam Shan") can be seen alongside the finger jetty.

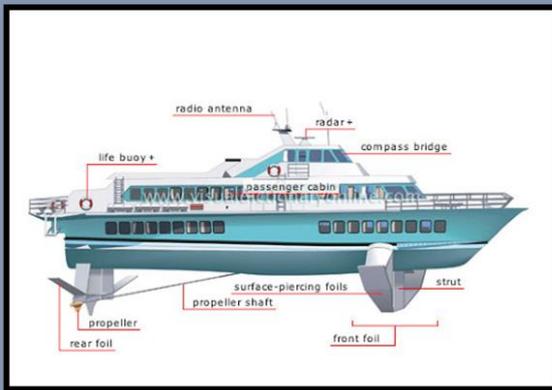
The conventional Ferry Services continued very successfully but it was not long before more up to date technology advanced Ferries came into operation with the introduction of Hydrofoils, and later Jetfoils to improve passenger services and comfort. The Far East Hydrofoil company (FEH) was formed and became the principal user of this type of Ferry and one of the largest operators in the World to successfully operate this kind of fast Ferry which shortened the 4hour trip, to less than 2 hours. Services commenced in 1964 with two Italian-Swiss designed Hydrofoils, the Flying Phoenix and Flying Kingfisher. In 1972 Shun Tak Enterprises Corp. Ltd was formed and became the holding company of FEH and other associated shipping. The major stakeholders in FEH were the franchisee of STD, Societe de Turismo de Macau, which operates casinos in Macau. Gradually the fleet was increased to some 11 vessels offering a departure schedule every 30 minutes from Hong Kong and Macau, between 8am - 6.30pm daily. However, during the 1980s the Hydrofoils were progressively phased out of service due to the increasing competition, from the more speedy, and "passenger friendly" Jetfoil.

Boeing Jetfoils were engaged in the service which further enhanced the route. They were run by Far East Hydrofoil / Far East Jetfoil with the principal stakeholder - Shun Tak operating about a dozen craft. This all remained intact until 1999 when a merger took place which created TurboJET as the major player on the route. Hong Kong has developed an excellent Ferry infrastructure, with multiple ferry companies offering high-speed crossings with modern, luxurious vessels. With numerous departure points throughout Hong Kong, you can now travel to a number of destinations in China and Macau.

The Hong Kong to Macau terminal, at Sheung Wan, is one of the most prominent terminal amenities in Hong Kong. It consists of the major marine facilities and customs and immigration for all services to and from Macau. Additionally, there are two major towers, a hotel and an office complex, with a shopping mall in between and subway connections underground. In Hong Kong, it is called: "The House that the Jetfoil built"



TurboJET's Boeing Jetfoil "Santa Maria" entering Victoria Harbor on its return trip from Macau. Captured on film sometime after the creation of "TurboJET", in the late 1990s.



A simplistic layout of a typical Hydrofoil similar to those used by the HMHC from 1964 through to 1980s



A typical economy class seating configuration used on Jetfoils operated by TurboJET. Airline type seating was standard on all Ferries. It was quite a novel feature in the early days when first introduced.



Hong Kong Hydrofoil Company's "Flying Albatross" riding high on her foils



TurboJET Ticket Counter at Shun Tak Center, Sheung Wan, in Hong Kong.



On a more localized note, there is the Star Ferry Company Limited. This must rank as the first thing anyone associates with Hong Kong. Few visitors to Hong Kong miss taking the essential cross harbor ride on these beautiful, purpose - built ships.

The Star Ferry's history stems back to 1888 when a resident Indian merchant, Dorabjee Naorojee Mithaiwala, founded the Kowloon Ferry Company to span the 1 mile distance between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon peninsula, at Tsim Tsa Tsui. Prior to the Star Ferry the only means of going back and forth between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island was by Sanpan. In 1898, upon his retirement and return to India, Mr Naorojeethe sold the company to The Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company Limited, at that time owned by Jardine, Matheson & Co. and Sir Catchik Paul Chater, by which time the fleet had increased to four Ferries exclusively plying the cross - harbor route. The service then became known as the Star Ferry Company. The names of the original four Ferries engaged in the service were – Morning Star, Evening Star, Rising Star and Guiding Star. At that time, each boat had a passenger capacity of 100 and the fleet made a combined total of 147 harbor crossings per day, on average.

In 1906 the company constructed its first passenger pier at the end of Salisbury Road in Tsim Tsa Tsui, but in September the same year it was destroyed in a Typhoon. It was an impressive structure featuring segregation for First and Second Class, passengers.

1912 was a year that saw the company involved in controversy; at that time Hong Kong currency and Canton currency were both accepted as legal tender in Hong Kong. In the autumn of 1912, the Star Ferry caused a controversy by insisting, that payment had to be made in Hong Kong currency only. Canton coinage would no longer be accepted. More progress and expansion were evidenced over ensuing years as the service grew in popularity, and profitability, with the introduction of the first Diesel Electric Ferry in 1933, aptly named Electric Star. Further developments were introduced when early in the 1950s, construction of the present twin piers commenced on both sides of Victoria Harbor, designed to handle 55 million passengers each year. These structures were eventually completed in 1957, along with the Edinburgh Place Ferry Pier built on the Hong Kong Island.

At the time of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in 1941, the Star Ferry Company had acquired a total of 6 Ferries. The Golden Star and the Meridian Star were used to transport prisoners of war from Sham Shui Po to Kai Tak Airport, and during 1943 the Golden Star was bombed and sunk in the Canton River by American aircraft. The Electric Star was also sunk in the harbor. Following WW2, the Ferries were reclaimed and returned to normal service. As the infrastructure of Hong Kong quickly recovered after the war years, so did the Star Ferry Company Limited, with it expanding its fleet and adding a new service from Hung Hom to both Central and Wanchai, at the request of the Hong Kong Government (both these routes being terminated in 2011). Up until the opening of the first Cross Harbor Tunnel in 1972, the Star Ferry remained the principal means of public transportation between Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon peninsula. The Star Ferry, to this day, operates on a franchise from the Government, which was last renewed in March 2018.



There was more controversy pending, in 1966, when a fare increase of 5 cents (or 25%), by the Ferry company, allegedly instigated by the Government became a political boiling point, as it caused a 27 year old student to go on hunger strike in protest at the Edinburgh Place terminal. His arrest triggered the 1966 Hong Kong Riots, which became particularly nasty as they were stoked by Communist agitators from mainland China.



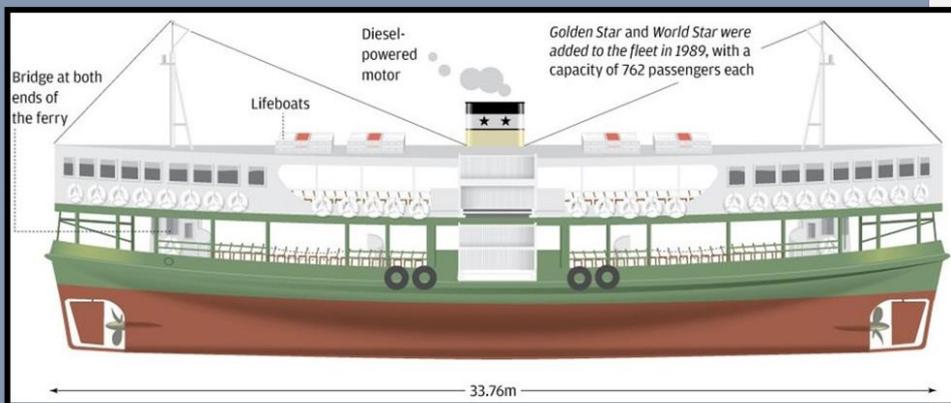
A pre-war Star Ferry with its iconic Funnel markings, which remain unchanged to this day. Taken in the early 1950s, from the Hong Kong Island Star Ferry Pier



A view of the 2nd Class section (lower passenger deck), of a typical Star Ferry during 1950s. It was my preferred spot when using the Star Ferry to cross Victoria Harbor. From the lower deck one could watch the actions of the Ferry Master in the wheelhouse when maneuvering alongside the piers and also look down into the engine room, often catching a whiff of diesel!



A modern - day Ferry "Golden Star" at Tsim Tsa Tsui two tier Ferry Pier. Photo credit Felix Wong



Above is a rough drawing of a typical Star Ferry. Note the navigating bridge Fore and Aft on the lower deck. Upper deck was for First Class and Lower deck Second Class. True Icons of the World's most photographed Port. There are currently 9 diesel-electric Ferries in the Star Ferry fleet, with the same basic design features remaining. The numbering followed by the letter "P" painted on the Hull, denotes the number of passengers the Ferry is certified to carry.

Nowadays, passengers use electronic payment methods such as Octopus or Jetcon tokens to pay for the ride. Tokens are available in the vending machines at the piers. Direct payment by coins at a turnstile is no longer accepted.



Photo Credit: Carl Smith

A panoramic view of the old and the new, observed from City Hall in the mid - 2000s. Old Star Ferry Pier (front left) and Queen's Pier (front right). The new Star Ferry piers (background left) now in full operation.



The Hong Kong Yamauti Ferry Company Limited (HYF) was a highly visible force when it came to Ferries in Hong Kong. In its heyday, this Ferry group, managed well over 20 Ferries, engaged in cross harbor and inter Island services, to the outlying Island off Hong Kong. It was also involved in vehicular Ferry services, especially important prior to the first of the Cross Harbor Tunnels coming on stream in 1972, when it was the only option available for vehicles to cross the water.



One of the many HYF Ferries serving Hong Kong and the outlying Islands. Notice the numbers and "P" painted on the stern which signifies her maximum passenger carrying capacity.

The original company was established in Hong Kong in 1897 by Mr. Lau Tak Po, a Chinese businessman. He bought 5 wooden boats and commenced providing Ferry services exclusively around Kowloon under the name of "Yaumati Ferry". In 1924 "Yaumati Ferry" obtained the franchise license for the rights to the transportation route, preventing competition from the Star Ferry Company. Consequently, the Yaumati Ferry Company became the largest Chinese-owned

company in the world at that time, profiting from the transportation demand of massive expansion on the Kowloon peninsula. The company eventually became known as "Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry". This included the vehicular ferry which served to transport motor vehicles across Victoria Harbor for many decades (1933 to 1998) previous to the opening of the Cross Harbor Tunnel, Eastern Harbor Tunnel and Western Harbor Tunnel in 1972, 1989 and 1997 respectively. HYF also engaged their Triple Deck Ferries Man Shing, Man Ping and Man Kin in "Round the Island" excursions during holidays and weekends.

The company decided to relinquish its Ferry licenses in 1999, and these licenses were transferred to the New World First Ferry on 15 January 2000. A number of the more modern Ferries, were also sold to NWFF at that time. Although HYF gave up its franchised ferry licenses in 2000, the company retained the Dangerous Goods and Vehicular Ferry Service routes between North Point, Kwun Tong, and Mui Wo, as DG carrying vehicles were not permitted to transit any of the three Cross Harbor tunnels, while Mui Wo is situated on Lantau Island.



The HYF Vehicular Ferry Pier at Central, around the early to mid - 1950s. Then, the only means by which vehicles could cross the harbor.



Another view of the HYF's Vehicular Ferry Piers at East Central, on Hong Kong Island - Just as it was throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

According to public records, Henderson Investment Ltd. was HYF's largest shareholder, as at Jan 2006. Henderson Investment Limited is primarily involved in property developments, investment and leasing of properties in Hong Kong and mainland China. Other activities include operations and management of department stores.



HYF Vehicular Ferry of 1970's and 1980's vintage. Note the advertisement displayed on ship's side promoting a new residential development, reflecting HYF's principal shareholder's property interests.



Converted HYF Vehicular Ferry "Man Lok", Built 1982, used as a floating restaurant and entertainment vessel. Providing cruises around Victoria Harbor and local Hong Kong waters

Below, one of the last triple deck Ferries built for HYF in 1988, the ex - Man Kwok, renamed Xin Guo when sold to NWFF in 1999, now part of NWS Holdings Limited



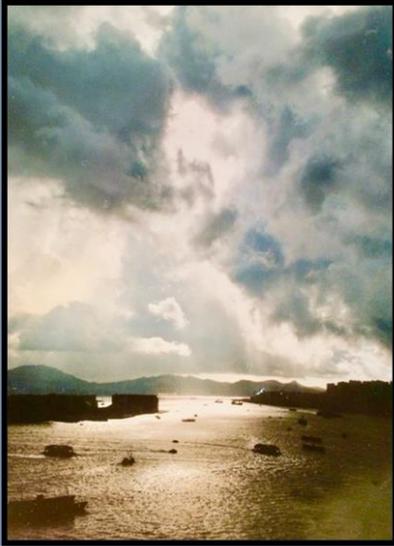


Oops, not included in the schedule!

Above, a NWFF Ferry “Xin Jai” (ex HYF Man Kit, built in 1983.) grounded on Lantau Island near Miu Wo in May 2006, with 81 passengers on board at the time. The grounding took place in good weather and visibility and occurred just west of Man Kok Tsui, on the northern shore of Silver Mine Bay, close to Mui Wo. According to the Marine Department Report the accident was caused when the Assistant Master (who was steering the vessel at the time) altered course to starboard to avoid a length of rope sighted floating in the water, during the process, he suddenly collapsed at the helm, due to an onset of dizziness, causing him to slump across the steering wheel whilst the helm remained to starboard. The Master who was also on the Bridge at the time, quickly tried to remove the Assistant Master from straddling the wheel, then placed the engines astern, in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid grounding. Regrettably, there was insufficient time and depth of water. The vessel subsequently grounded on a rocky foreshore. Only a minor injury was sustained by a single passenger. Once all the passengers had been safely landed, the vessel was refloated the same day with the assistance of 2 tugs, then sailing under her own power to a shipyard in Tsing Yi Island.

So, now the 1950-90’s era has almost drifted into obscurity and oblivion and we will need to engage our memory buds to recover those snippets of nostalgia, but times past come rushing back, so easily when triggered by sight, sound or smell. A visit to modern day Hong Kong makes it so easy to ponder and drift back into a nostalgic trance of days long gone, entwined amongst Hong Kong’s sunsets of longevity.

The Buzz and activity around the Harbor, still exists to this day, the symphony of murmuring sounds are symbolic of a thriving and prosperous city and like music to the ear of those fortunate enough to have experienced it.



An absolutely, stunning image captured from one of the Shun Tak Macau Ferry Center towers, looking Eastwards across Victoria Harbor towards Kowloon Bay, on a stormy afternoon, circa 1990. Notice the number of Ferries just in this single shot alone.

Photo Credit: Alan Rawlinson

Since July 1997, when Hong Kong sovereignty was relinquished to China, there have been numerous new Ferry services inaugurated, with Ferries darting about Victoria Harbor, day and night in every direction. These Ferries are mostly mainland Chinese owned and connect Hong Kong to regional cities such as Shekou (located in Deep Bay), Shenzhen, Guangdong (formerly Canton), amongst other destinations. Today, Hong Kong's Ferry infrastructure is just as significant as ever and continues to contribute a high value commitment to the people who reside there.

End

Not Knowing What to Expect – My First Trip – MV Weybank

By Geoff Walker



MV Weybank captured circa early 1960s looking every bit as good as the day I joined her



A day etched in my memory. Despite being summer, the weather was overcast and cool as I remember it. The telegram had simply stated, join “Weybank” as Deck Apprentice, Imminghm Dock 21st June and report to Master. Pre-paid rail ticket is available for your collection from Heywards Heath Ticket Office. Typical Bank Line as I was later to discover, short and to the point.

Upon my arrival at Hull railway station, I was met by the company agent, who advised me that I would not be joining the ship until the following day once she had been refloated from the dry dock. I was taken to a hotel for the night. I do remember being kept awake for some hours by whom I assumed were drunken Hull fishermen, all dressed in their then fashionable garish suits with bellbottom trousers. I watched their rowdy behavior and antics from the safety of my upper floor room, the window overlooked the courtyard of the adjacent pub. There were more than a few scuffles I have to say. Anyway, it passed the time as I was otherwise unable to sleep due to nervous excitement and not knowing what to expect the following morning.

The drive seemed longer than it really was but eventually we pulled up at the designated dock and there she was, freshly painted black hull with red boot topping, riding high, just out of dry dock. A few minor rust stains about the white upper works and buff masts and derricks but really quite smart in appearance. After all, she was a working vessel, so this was to be expected. The ship was just as I had envisaged. I had learned from the agent that the vessel had arrived from Bunbury in Western Australia with a cargo of Rutile/Illuminite sand, prior to entering dry dock for periodic surveys and maintenance.

It was planned that she work her way back, towards the Far East by way of various ports and carrying different cargoes. To me this appeared the perfect scenario.

I was met at the top of the gangway by a youngish fellow, perhaps a year or two older than I, dressed in overalls. He introduced himself as the "senior apprentice" with a tone of authority to his voice, "welcome on board". He shook my hand, "please follow me". He took one of my bags. I was ushered to what was to become my communal cabin, where I placed my kit and was introduced to a fellow apprentice. There were three of us in the cabin. The cabin was situated on the officer's deck, starboard side, with two portholes, quite large, three bunks, one stand alone and a two – tier arrangement. The showers and toilets were adjacent to the cabin. The accommodation was sparse but clean and livable." You are the junior, so the top bunk is yours and so is that locker" he said gesturing with his hand. "Gather your thoughts then I'll take you to meet the Old Man and Harry Tate" (who the hell is Harry Tate I thought to myself). I followed without question and as directed.

I was feeling somewhat nervous as the senior apprentice knocked on the Captain's cabin door. A moment later the Captain appeared at the door."I am the Captain" he stated, offering his hand. "Welcome on board – do come in". John departed and left me alone in the Captain's presence.

My eyes wandered and I was impressed with the highly polished woodwork and brass fittings about his accommodations. The Old Man was in his mid or late forties, graying hair and wearing horn rimmed reading specs parked at the end of his nose, he was clean shaven and of slight to medium build; I thought I detected a faint Australian accent but never did discover if he was an Aussie. I passed over my passport, and discharge book for safe keeping. Being an Indentured Apprentice I was not required to sign ship's articles. Sea time, total earnings and length of service were all recorded on the back of my parchment testimonial. The meeting was quite brief but included a quick beginner's guide to the rules and regulations applying on board, what was expected of me and how I should conduct myself. I was warned off drinking as I was under legal age. Then directed to go and see the Mate. I later discovered the Captain to be a very mild-mannered person, despite the glare over the rim of his glasses.

The senior apprentice introduced me to the Mate (who's name, I really did think was Harry Tate, up until then). Not much was said other than to tag along with the senior apprentice who would instruct me what to do. My first meal on board was reasonable and sufficient in quantity – at least I would not starve if all else failed I thought to myself.

The ensuing days consisted of deck work and more deck work from 7 to 5. We were tasked with sorting and stacking pile upon pile of discarded dunnage. After a day or so we sailed from Immingham for Bremen, where we were to load a full load of coal for Noumea, New Caledonia. Our stay in Bremen was quite an education for me as to the ways of a sailor. One evening I was on cargo watch with the 3rd Mate. It was about 1am and I was walking down the main deck proceeding aft to cook the mandatory bacon and eggs. As I passed the hospital porthole, I noticed the light was on, this struck me as being odd at that time of night. The deadlight was down but sitting on the porthole lugs rather than being in a fully secured position. This left a large gap, through which I could see clearly, right into the hospital. My curiosity got the better of me and I peered in. I had not bargained for what I saw.

All our crew were Hong Kong Chinese, amongst them was a Pantry Boy who did minor food preparation, the cleaning and washing up of cooking utensils and crockery for the officer's saloon. He was about 20 years of age. There he was, heavily engaged in aggressive lovemaking with two of

the most hideous looking whores imaginable. He was totally oblivious to me eye balling him. I stood there spellbound for about 5 minutes taking all this in before I rushed back to inform the 3rd Mate. Needless, to say, who did the eyeballing for the remainder of the watch!

Time started to pass quickly as I settled into my new job. We sailed from Bremen bound for the Panama Canal and although always busy on board, boredom soon started to set in. Shipboard routine did not help me, I only remembered the days of the week by the meal menus.

Having transited the Panama Canal, we set off across the Pacific Ocean towards Noumea, eventually arriving 56 days after having departed Bremen. By this time, I was starting to become accustomed to life on board a Tramp ship.

From Noumea we went to Nauru for phosphate which we took to Cairns and Newcastle (NSW). It was at Newcastle I became the organizer of ship's parties with the Nurses from the local Hospital. I can still remember the phone number and whom to ask for almost 60 years after the events.

Our next fixture was coal from Newcastle (NSW) for Nagoya in Japan. It was great for me being back in the Far East (I resided in Hong Kong). Japan was a great experience for me, never to be forgotten, but after a couple of weeks at Nagoya we departed and sailed right past Hong Kong bound for Singapore, where we bunkered and stored, on our way to Calcutta.

Actually, I did not mind India. Although we were in port 4-6 weeks at a time, we at least could attend the "Swimming Club." I remember suffering from a Verruca (Plantar Wort) on my right heel, it was very painful. I guess picked up by walking on wooden decks bare foot. I had visited the doctors a few times previously but lotions and ointments they prescribed did little to improve my anguish. In desperation I collared one of the Indian medicine men who ventured on board and asked if he could do anything, he shook his head from side to side in confirmation and acknowledgement. He sat me down and brought from his bag a small animal horn. He placed the wide end over the painful spot and began to suck. After a few minutes of pain, the Verruca was out, complete with its roots. I paid him off with thanks and an additional bonus, a few packs of "Lucky Strike", and then rushed to the medical locker to clean and douse the small wound in antiseptic and cover with a dressing. After all, the surgery had not been conducted under the most hygienic of circumstances, nevertheless it cured me, the condition never reoccurred.

We then did several voyages on the India Africa run, between Calcutta, Madras, Colombo and East African Ports, mostly Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam. We usually carried cargoes of Sisal, Gunnies, Jute and sometimes raw Cotton in bales with a smaller quantity of mixed generals. Mombasa was my favorite, mainly because of the excellent Mariners Club, numerous BBQs, soccer matches and on Sunday Eggs and Bacon provided by the Padre following church service. Dar-es-Salaam was another great spot in those days.

It never ceased to amuse me each time upon our arrival in Calcutta; I always had a good laugh when a leaflet was received from the Port Authority for posting on our notice board – it basically discouraged crew from bathing in the cool waters of the River Hooghly as it was infested with numerous sharks and crocodiles...going by what I observed it was so polluted and if one was stupid enough to swim or fall into that river a stomach pump would be needed urgently...otherwise curtains, no need to worry about sharks and crocodiles!

Eventually, we were taken off the India-Africa trade. On our last trip to India, before sailing from Calcutta, we received on board a Stowaway. This was an "Official" Stowaway. He was a Hungarian national, and about 25 years of age. Apparently, he had stowed away on another one of our ships

from Australia, wrongly assuming it was bound for Europe. Unfortunately for him he ended up in India instead. Anyway, the Indian authorities decreed he be deported back to Australia on the first available ship that was Australia bound – that so happened to be the “Weybank” as we were scheduled to load Phosphate at Christmas Island (Indian Ocean) for East Coast of Australia.

The Stowaway was a nice guy, hard – working, and no trouble. He worked with us every day, was well looked after and well fed. Everyone took pity on him and at night he was generally slipped a couple of cans of beer, mostly by the engineers. At night he was locked in the Hospital and the door key deposited with the Duty Officer on the Bridge in case of emergency. Having loaded at Christmas Island we departed for Australia, south bound across the Great Australian Bight.

A few days out from Flying Fish Cove the ship suffered a significant explosion and fire in the Engine Room. Some problem with the thrust pads melting. This occurred around 7am as I was just about to start the day’s work. I was in the vicinity of number 2 Hatch at the time when there was a sudden almighty explosion and a cloud of dark smoke loomed somewhere aft of the bridge accommodation. Fire parties soon contained and quelled the fire and started to vent the engine room. The fire had been quite extensive, and the normally immaculate engine room was a sad sight – we apprentices, along with all the other deck crew, were assigned to scrape off all the blistered paint and clean up the mess whilst the engineers concentrated on repairs. It was all quite a frightening experience and one that I shall not forget.

To cut a long story short, after some 4 days drifting in the Indian Ocean, the engineers got the job going again but we were instructed by our Owners to proceed to Albany for more permanent repairs.

Once our Stowaway heard we were calling at Albany he became very subdued. We later learned it was from Albany he had stowed away after having allegedly caused one of the Town or Port Official’s daughter to become an expectant mother. Upon our arrival, he was taken into custody by the local police. However, we did later learn that if he had returned to any other place in Australia, except Albany, he would likely have got off scot free. The last we saw and heard of him was being marched down the gangway under police escort.

By this time, I had managed to survive as a Bank Line apprentice for almost 10 months, and I must say that whilst it was hard work, it was a happy ship, and I was enjoying the job. Time passed quickly and every day was a new experience with something new to learn. There had been several crew changes on board, the senior apprentice had finished his time and signed off in Calcutta and one of the engineers was promoted and transferred to another ship whilst in the same port. Other than that, the original crew remained intact and I must say it was quite a jovial throng. I was fortunate, the Hong Kong Chinese crew proved to be great friends to me, they taught me a lot about seamanship, which was all made easier by the fact I could speak Cantonese having been brought up and residing in the Colony. Little did I know I was to sail once again with the same Chinese crew on my next Bank Line ship?

Eventually we discharged our cargo in Newcastle (NSW). In those days port stays were typically about a week or more so we had ample time for partying again. We ended up doing 3 or 4 more round trips to Nauru and Ocean Island on the phosphate run. It wasn’t bad because we had a good variety of discharge ports, amongst which were Bluff and Lyttelton in New Zealand, Risdon in Tasmania, as well as the Australian mainland ports of Newcastle, Port Kembla, and finally Melbourne. We apprentices could earn some additional cash by assisting the stevedores sweeping up in the tweendecks as they were always short of trimming and cleaning labor.

Upon completion of discharge at Melbourne we washed down the hatches then lay idle awaiting orders. This was most unusual and was the cause of many rumors and speculation such as imminent crew change since we had been on board over one year by this point in time. However, it was not to be.

During our stay in Melbourne, we received a visit from two Chinese businessmen whom I was instructed to meet at the gangway and escort to the Masters cabin, as they had been expected. They were from Hong Kong and were impressed to learn of my fluency in Cantonese when I was delegated, along with the Chief Officer, to give them a tour of the vessel. Their visit was very discreet as no one on board was advised by the Master as to the nature of their business. This obviously fueled even more speculation amongst officers, during evenings gathered in the smoke room. The consensus was that we may next be bound for China. We were to be proven wrong however when, after some two wonderful and relaxing weeks in Melbourne, tied up at South Wharf doing nothing, we received orders to proceed to our well-known stumping ground, of Newcastle (NSW), to load coal for Singapore.

To our great surprise, upon arrival at Newcastle, the Master informed all of us that the vessel was to be sold and once having completed discharge at Singapore we would be proceeding to Hong Kong where the vessel was to be delivered to her buyers. Obviously, this was music to my ears, especially since I learned I would be taking my leave in Hong Kong. Needless to say our Chinese crew was also delighted. This also explained the visit of the two Chinese gentlemen in Melbourne.

There were no parties in Newcastle this call because most wanted to save their money for shopping in Singapore and Hong Kong. The loading was uneventful and soon we departed for Singapore. We transited the spectacular Great Barrier Reef and Torres Straits before entering the Java Sea. The weather was fine and there was an air of excitement about the ship, a sort of Channel Fever. As we navigated across the Java Sea, I recall the sea being like glass, distant smoke wisps from active volcanic islands, the occasional shipwreck stranded on isolated coral atolls or indeed the fingers of smoke pointing skywards on remote horizons depicting the hull down location of another ship. It was a classic tropical voyage and so hot inside the accommodation that I took to sleeping on the boat deck under the stars.

It was not long before we made landfall, the mountainous terrain of the Karimata Straits, which separates the Indonesian Island of Bangka from what was then called Borneo (modern day Kalimantan). The Karimata straits signal the southern approaches to the South China Sea and only a couple of days steaming from Singapore Straits at the western end of which lies the Horsburgh Lighthouse, standing guard like an ancient sentinel. The small island of Pedro Branca on which the lighthouse is situated makes for an excellent fix when entering the Singapore Straits. The Islet of Pedro Branca lies approximately 30 nautical miles to the east of Singapore. In those days there was no VTSS in the Singapore Straits and it was a bit of a free for all with ships going every which way.

I have clear memories of our last port before signing off. Arrival at Singapore was late afternoon, and our British Pilot took us to anchor in the Eastern Working Anchorage, not far from the Amber Beacon Light, located on the Eastern Causeway of Singapore. The anchorage was somewhat crowded with not a lot of swinging distance between ships. The lights of Singapore, quite close to hand, were always conspicuous and comforting, the coming and goings of all the small craft with the distant sound of their "put put" engines disturbing the stillness of the night and the wafts of smells and occasional noises drifting seaward from the shore.

The host of vessels, both old and new, at anchor close by to us; ships owned by Blue Funnel Line with their names derived from Greek mythology, John Manners all named something "Breeze", Jardine Matheson – names prefixed by "Eastern", Williamsons, "Inch" something or other together with numerous ancient tramps sold off, to the newly emerging collection of Far East operators. The list was endless. Amongst others, the Straits Steamships' "Raja Brook" a small vessel that used to run a passenger cargo service exclusively between Borneo and Singapore, with her slightly larger sister "Kimanis" engaged on a similar trade to Malaysia, Singapore, and Borneo. It felt as if I was almost home.

Following completion of port formalities, the lighters started to arrive alongside, together with hoards of stevedores, and the odd bum boat with the usual milk girls peddling their wares. Someone must have given the local tailors a wink as we had several visit on board, all offering cheap suits stitched in 24 hours. This appealed mainly to the junior engineers, who ordered readily. The finished product looked quite good but with what I assumed to be single stitching due to the fast tailoring, durability had to be questioned. The Sew-Sew ladies also arrived, generally more elderly women who came on board to offer sewing, laundry, and repair services. They were very useful indeed, but they seldom spoke any English. However, they knew what was needed of them when it came to sewing and were all affectionately called "Mary" or "Aunty Mary" if language or name problems became an issue.

At Singapore I was placed on anchor watches (6pm to 6am) which suited me fine and allowed me a bit of free time to go ashore during the day. I spent many memorable hours of solitude mulling through my thoughts, this, coupled with those rapid Oriental sunrises, awakening sounds and now too familiar fragrances that aired with the rising sun, all made for a good start to every day and I was thankful that Asia was my home. I just could not imagine living anywhere else, and so far, enjoying my chosen career.

Whilst at Singapore I managed to spend the best part of one day ashore; I meandered around the spots that were favorites amongst seamen at that time; Change Alley and the Straits Settlement Cabaret in Anson Road but being relatively early in the day it was closed so I wandered further down the street to Toby's Paradise Bar which opened early most days. Following a swift Tiger there followed a quick visit to look at the notice board in the Cellar Bar, just across the road from Clifford's Pier. Whilst the Cellar Bar had an unobtrusive entrance once having descended down the front steps it was quite large inside and was famous amongst seafarers at that time for its notice board advertising jobs. If anyone needed a job in Singapore it was unnecessary to write letters of application, all that was required was a phone call to the various numbers that corresponded to the advertised vacancies on offer. It covered all ranks, from 3rd Mates to Masters, from Junior Engineers through to Chief Engineers, Electricians and Radio Officers.

I recall, after posting a few letters to friends from the GPO (now Fullerton Hotel) I then proceeded to enjoy a delightful lunch of my favorite local dish – mixed Satays on wooden skewers with Banana Leaf fish head curry. I bought the latest "Sandoz" slim line, Swiss wristwatch, with my money earned from helping stevedores in New Zealand but since time was marching on, I did not have the chance to visit the "Worlds" as was my original plan. I quickly returned to Clifford Pier just in nice time to board the prearranged launch back to the anchorage, very satisfied with myself and my outing.

We weighed anchor one afternoon after we had delivered all the cargo, we moved slowly to the eastward leaving Singapore to fade in our wake. Soon, we had dropped off our Pilot and were

proceeding at full sea speed towards Horsbrough and the South China Sea. Hong Kong was only 4-5 days steaming away.

By late afternoon the following day we could clearly see the mountainous terrain of the Anambas Islands, off our port beam. We headed northeasterly into the South China Sea enjoying moderate conditions. The ship was alive with activity, everyone doing last minute things, whether personal or job related, in preparation for our arrival in Hong Kong. Telegrams were being sent to families advising of imminent return. I could say with confidence, most crew on board were very happy at the prospect of being home in a very short period of time, not least of all yours truly. Even our Chinese crew was joyful and chattering away with big grins on their oval faces. There are some who declare that the only time a Chinese will smile is when they are either eating or counting money, the situation that prevailed on board dispelled that theory.

Upon our arrival at Hong Kong, our Chinese Pilot boarded us from his sampan like motorboat exactly on time and navigated us through the last of the eastern approaches of Lye Ye Mun to Hung Hom immigration anchorage that was located in Kowloon Bay close to the Kai Tak airport runway. We were surrounded by the breathtaking views of the moment. We had truly arrived. Many on board had not previously been to Hong Kong and were frankly awe struck by the panorama.

Within two hours Pratique had been granted and we were underway again heading for one of the Typhoon Buoys that had been allocated to us and to which we would make fast for the last time. Our anchor chain was lowered to the water and the boatmen that were in attendance did the needful for us. I was home at last, after 16 months and 10 days. It was 30th October 1962. I stood on the bridge wing motionless for what seemed like an eternity eyeing the scene that lay before me, the changes during my absence seemed endless and my excitement at being home started to boil over

After we had been at the buoys about two hours a group of officials arrived on board, they represented the new owners. Along with them came their joining officers and crew. We spent a few hours, showing them around the ship, and familiarizing them with the various aspects of the old lady, she was now almost 20 years old after all, but still as solid as a rock. There was a new European Captain and Chief Engineer. As the sun was dipping all officers and crew signed off ships articles and were ferried ashore. Officers sent to hotels and crew to their respective abodes. The ship had officially changed ownership.

As I boarded the launch that would take me ashore, I looked over my shoulder to say a last farewell to my old friend; her funnel by this time had been painted all black, looking like an inverted dustbin and a new name painted on the stern "Silver Moon" – Hong Kong, which I could just make out in the fading daylight. A new house flag fluttered atop her signal mast. In retrospect, the time I spent on board was some of the happiest and most productive days of my life. I owe much to those who devoted time and effort in passing on their knowledge and helping mould and prepare me for future voyages. I was no longer a first tripper!



The end of the road – A tired looking, “Weybank” sold 30th October 1962 to Hong Kong interests for continued trading. With her newly painted all black funnel she quickly faded into obscurity and became just another “Hong Kong Dustbin”.

I enjoyed a happy 2 months leave in Hong Kong, before being instructed to join the “Leverbank” at Hong Kong on 1st January 1963. I considered myself fortunate, because the “Leverbank” was engaged on the Orient – Africa Liner Service which meant frequent home calls at Hong Kong.

End

Paddy Henderson's Burmese Venture

By Geoff Walker



The house flag of P. Henderson & Co., of Glasgow. A vertical red, white and blue with a small Union Flag in the center. P. Henderson & Co, also known as Paddy Anderson & Co was a Scottish ship owning and management company. The company was founded in 1840 as a partnership between Patrick and George Henderson, who initially operated chartered vessels to Australia, then to New Zealand. Patrick Henderson was a merchant, who had three brothers, two also being merchants, working for an agent at the Italian port of Leghorn. The third brother, George, was a Sea Captain. Together, the brothers invested in a ship, the Peter Senn, and the business started to blossom, but tragedy struck when Patrick died in 1841, and the business was taken over by his brother, Captain George Henderson. In 1848, George went into partnership with a young man, James Galbraith. James showed outstanding abilities and successfully expanded the business from merchants, to become ship owners and ship managers, when in 1848 they established the Albion Line.

Their concept was to carry Scottish emigrants, cargo and Royal Mail to Australia and New Zealand on their outbound leg of the voyage, and to secure cargoes from Australia and New Zealand for the return voyage to the UK., but they encountered difficulties in attracting sufficient return cargoes. As a remedial action, and in attempts to fill their homebound ships, they decided to try calling at Rangoon, which was then the principal port of British colonial Burma, situated on the Irrawaddy River. So, during 1865, Henderson and Co established the Irrawaddy Flotilla & Burmese Steam Navigation Co in co-operation with the Denny companies, which provided a vast water transport network to the interior of Burma.

There was an abundance of cargo from Burma which benefitted their ships considerably, so in 1870 P. Henderson & Co., inaugurated a steamship service, between Glasgow, Liverpool and Burma. The incorporation, of the British and Burmese Steam Navigation Co (BBSN) in 1874, followed the opening of the Suez Canal, and carried passengers direct to Burma. BBSN took over the fleet of steamships on the Burma route, and appointed P Henderson and Co., as managing agents. Meanwhile, the Albion shipping company, which Henderson's had earlier established became the dominant British company in the New Zealand trade, and holders of the lucrative mail contract. They also introduced the first refrigerated sailing ships between New Zealand and the UK. Sailing ships were used due to the limited number of coaling ports which were required by the newer steamships.

Progressively, as more coaling ports became available, steamships increased trading potential but required high capital investment which were beyond the scope of P. Henderson or the Albion Shipping Company to meet in their own right, and so in 1882, the Albion Shipping Company amalgamated with Shaw, Savill and Company to form the Shaw, Savill and Albion Company Ltd. The death of James Galbraith in 1884, the driving force of P. Henderson & Co marked the end of an era of when private capital was the norm for shipowners.



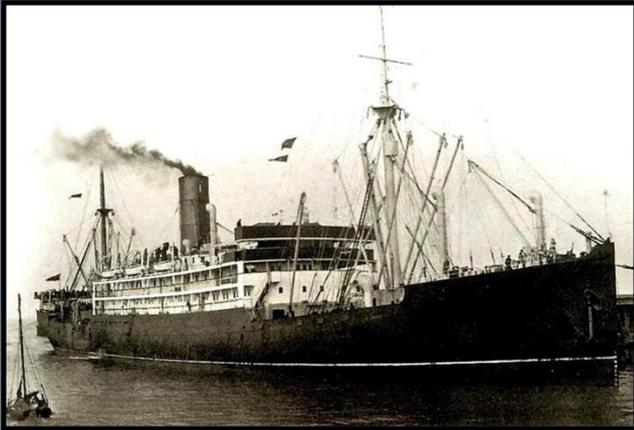
Left, the Peter Denny built in 1865 by Duthie of Aberdeen belonged to the Albion Shipping company. She operated the New Zealand route, mostly carrying emigrants from Scotland.

After the amalgamation, P. Henderson & Co remained as managers and loading brokers for the new company in Glasgow. British and Burmese Steam Navigation Company Ltd., remained as a ship owning company along with another member of the group, the Burma Steam Ship Company Ltd., both being managed by P. Henderson & Co. British colonial rule in Burma lasted from 1824 to 1948, which resulted from the successive three Anglo-Burmese wars through the creation of Burma as a Province of British India, known as British Burma, to the establishment of an independently administered colony. Final independence being granted in 1948.



Left, an early poster of Paddy Henderson promoting their UK to Rangoon service via the Suez Canal. The post independent years saw a decline of the Burma trade, which was one of the factors why Elder, Dempster Lines chartered P Henderson's fleet from 1947 onwards and took over the company in 1952. Under Elder, Dempster stewardship and modernization, P Henderson fleet continued in service, with some new motor ships being delivered

until the early 1960s. But due to the Suez crisis and nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1954, the trade between UK and Burma all but ceased causing a rapid decline in the company's fortunes over ensuing 8 years of disruption, as most cargo and mails were routed via India.



Left, the Paddy Henderson liner "Amarapoora". She was built in 1920 for the Glasgow – Liverpool – Rangoon service. At the outbreak of WW 2 she was requisitioned by the British Admiralty for use as a hospital ship. She was purchased by the Ministry of Transport in 1946, became an emigrant ship in 1948, was renamed Captain Hobson in 1951, and

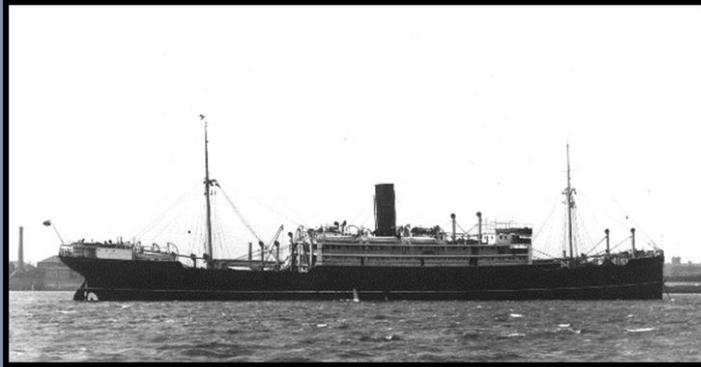
eventually went for demolition in 1959.



Left, another Paddy Henderson Poster advertising their freight and passenger service, between Burma, and the UK.

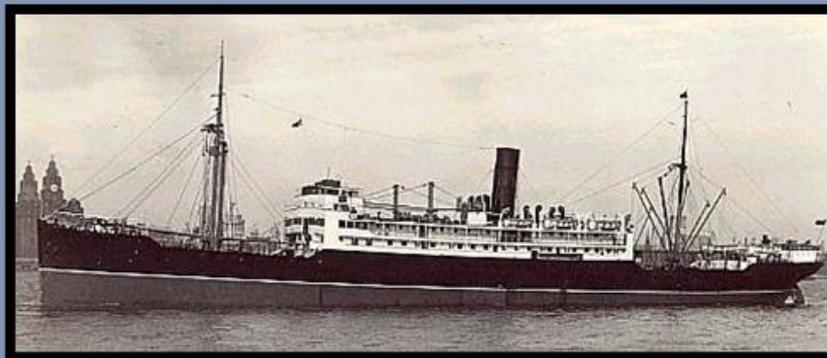
The Paddy Henderson fleet suffered badly during both world wars with many ships lost. In 1905 a P Henderson steamship, the cargo ship Ava, ran aground and was wrecked 9 nautical miles off Maulmain in Burma. Henderson's quickly replaced the ship with a new Ava built the following year, but the new ship's career was cut short in the First World War, when she disappeared in January 1917 with the loss of all 92 persons aboard. She is presumed to have been sunk off the south coast of Ireland.

That year P. Henderson lost one more ship to enemy action. On 8 July 1917, the U-boat U-57 torpedoed the passenger cargo ship Pegu (pictured below) off the south coast of Ireland. Fortunately, all but one of those aboard survived. A replacement Pegu was built in 1921.

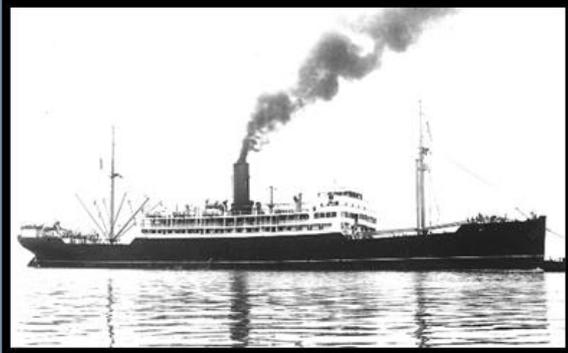


Just after the Armistice with Germany was declared, P Henderson lost yet another ship: on 19 December 1918, the passenger cargo ship Tenasserim was destroyed by fire in Rangoon.

P. Henderson also endured greater losses during the Second World War. On 24 November 1939, the Pegu ran aground close to the Crosby Channel, off Liverpool. She broke her back and was wrecked, breaking into two sections.



On 13 July 1940, the German commerce raider and auxiliary cruiser Atlantis sank the British & Burmese SN Co. & Burmah SS Co. (P. Henderson as managers) passenger cargo liner Kemmendine by gunfire, in the Indian Ocean about 700 miles south of Ceylon whilst on a passage from the UK. to Rangoon via Cape Town. All the crew were taken prisoners and transported to Europe where they remained until the end of hostilities.



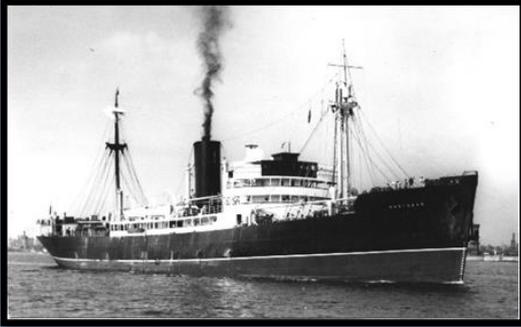
On 9 April 1942, the passenger ship Sagaing – pictured left, was in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) at the port of Trincomalee, when aircraft from a Japanese aircraft carrier attacked her and set her on fire. Her crew abandoned ship but then she was sunk by gunfire. The wreck was later raised from where she lay in Malay Cove, relocated and deliberately re-sunk, to be used as a pier.

On 1 August 1942, the cargo ship Kalewa collided with the Dutch liner Boringia off the coast of South Africa. Kalewa sank but Boringia survived the collision and rescued everyone from the Kalewa.



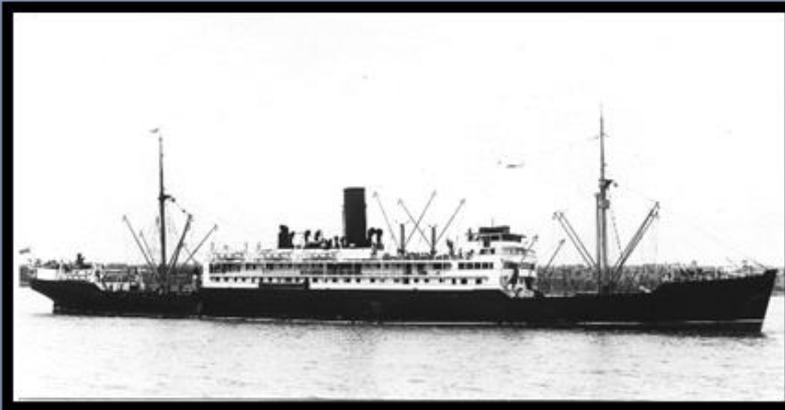
P. Henderson's heaviest war losses were during 1943. On 2 April, the German submarine U-124 torpedoed the cargo ship Katha off the coast of Portugal, killing six of her crew. On 9 May U-123 sank the passenger cargo ship Kanbe by torpedo, off the coast of West Africa, killing all 66 people aboard. On 24 July, U-199 torpedoed the cargo ship Henzada off

the coast of Brazil killing 2 crew members. Left, the MV Kadeik built for Paddy Hendersons in 1952, Although part of the P. Henderson fleet she was mostly operated by Elder, Dempster Lines.



Left, the British and Burmese SN Co's, 1950 built ship Martaban, under P. Henderson & Co management. She was sold for continued trading in 1964 to China Merchants' SN Co Ltd and renamed Hai Ho. She was then sold to shipbreakers in 1971 but gained a lastminute reprieve, and was resold as a going concern with a name change to Ken Ho. She was finally demolished in 1975 by Taiwanese breakers.

Yet another war loss, on 17 June 1943, U-81 sank the passenger ship Yoma in the Mediterranean. Yoma had been converted into a troopship, and the sinking killed 484 troops and crew. The ship was owned by British & Burmese S.N. Co. Ltd. and Burmah S.S. Co. Ltd., under the management of Paddy Henderson & Co.



The very elegant Pegu, built in 1961, for British & Burmese SN Co. (P. Henderson as managers) she was one of the last ships to be delivered under the Paddy Henderson banner. Between 1964 and 1975 she sailed for Elder, Dempster and Guinea Gulf as one of the group fleet ships, finally being sold for continued trading. She continued to serve various foreign owners, prior to being sold for scrap in 1982

In 1965 Ocean Steamship Co acquired control of the Elder, Dempster group. In 1967, following the Six-Day War, Egypt closed the Suez Canal, so Ocean SS Co discontinued the Burma route and transferred Henderson's last three ships to Elder, Dempster. By 1970, by this time all shareholdings had been transferred to Elder, Dempster and the Henderson name disappeared into obscurity with their last vessel being sold in the same year.



Since concept by the Henderson brothers in 1840, Paddy Henderson's ships frequent and became familiar sights in the Burmese, Indian Ocean, and African trades, before their eventual demise in 1970. Their presence in the Burmese trade, became iconic and indelibly stamped for over a Century. Their innovation, drive, and farsightedness as shipowners and managers is a matter worthy of great veneration.

End

Negotiating the Reefs around the Paradise Islands

By Geoff Walker

It must be said that my time in New Guinea and the Paradise Islands must rank amongst my most romantic of nostalgia. I was fortunate to live and work in New Guinea, Bougainville, Lihir, and Simberi, including such exotic places as Palau as well as the less exciting like Nauru and Ocean Islands. Over my years spent at sea and working in the region I can say with hand on my heart that they were some of the most enjoyable and the adage that PNG only attracts Missionaries, Money-makers or Misfits is entirely untrue.

My first introduction to the "Paradise Islands" was in 1973. I had been offered a post as Master on one of the Pacific Island Navigation Company vessels trading around the Pacific Islands but during the process of seeking alternative new challenges away from a seagoing life, I came across an advert in an Australian newspaper, for a Cargo Superintendent based in Bougainville; to be precise, the Port of Anewa Bay, which is a stone's throw away from the Islands colonial City of Kieta. With tongue in cheek and full of self-confidence, I sent off a quick letter to the advertiser, thinking I would hear no more. To my great surprise, I received a prompt response, in which I was requested to attend an interview. My permanent home and place of abode was Hong Kong, but it just so happened I was visiting Australia at the time so attending an interview in Melbourne was an easy task.

I arrived at the plush offices of Bougainville Copper Ltd, (BCL) which was a subsidiary of the Australian Mining conglomerate Rio Tinto; the interview lasted well over an hour during which I was shown a short film outlining the lifestyle of expatriates working for the company on the Island. At the conclusion of the interview, I thought that I may have a 50% chance of success. Anyway, to simplify matters after about one week I received a letter informing me that my application had been successful and asking for details of when I could depart for the Island. The Visa process was a little laborious but within two weeks I was firmly seated on an Air New Guinea flight to Port Moresby and then on to Aropa Airport, Bougainville.

I found Bougainville Island to be breathtakingly scenic, with spectacular rain forests, volcanic landscapes, mountains of all shapes and sizes and magnificent flowers and beaches. The drive along the coast from Aropa Airport to my house in Arawa was spectacular, passing lush, manicured street plantations and gardens as well as Palm lined roads along the route. Arawa was the satellite town, mainly constructed by BCL. It was the Headquarters for the North Solomons Province and had taken over from Kieta which was the old Government cum Colonial Town where the senior Government officials resided, such as Police, Immigration, Magistrates and District Officer (Kiap-known formally as district officers and patrol officers, who were travelling representatives of the British and Australian governments with wide-ranging authority, in pre-independence Papua New Guinea). Right up until independence in 1975 many of the senior Government positions were held by expatriates mainly from Australia or New Zealand.

In contrast to Kieta, Arawa was a modern well planned suburban city, featuring a Hospital, School, Library, several large Supermarkets and all the other usual conveniences required by a transient community of mainly expats. My accommodation was a recently constructed "Queenslander" type residence on stilts, nestled in amongst numerous similar houses within the township. All the residents were expatriates, so it was a fairly tight knit community prone to lots of BBQs and partying.

At that time Bougainville was a relatively orderly place but as it became closer to Independence Day there were a number of worrying incidents. Unrest was mainly stoked by local ringleaders, who were all jockeying for their piece of the potential political or financial pie.

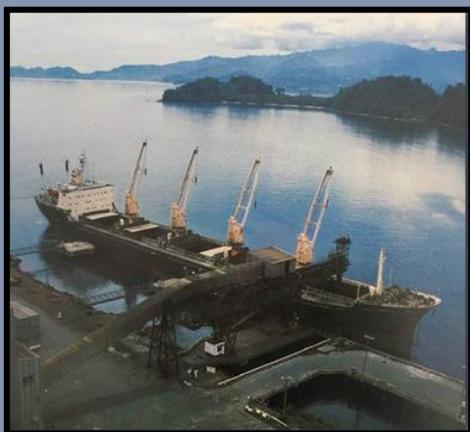


Above is a schematic map of Bougainville Island and surrounding areas. Arawa is centrally located on the Island's northern coast and is the township mainly constructed by Bougainville Copper Ltd.



This was a typical standard house provided for expats by BCL at Arawa during 1970-80s. My house was of similar design but somewhat larger than the one depicted in the image above. These homes were laid out in uniform roads, in all there were about 500 such houses of varying size in Arawa. Generally, the rule was, the larger the house, the more senior the occupant, within BCL hierarchy. Competitions became the norm between the residents to see who could achieve the most beautiful manicured garden. The island was prone to regular earthquakes, known locally as Gurias – when these occurred the houses shook alarmingly, aided by the fact that they were on “Legs”. I never heard of structural damage being sustained to the houses. The worst was everything falling off the shelves in the Supermarkets.

Not long after my arrival, I was interviewed by the Port Manager and Harbor Master and given the opportunity to take on the role of Assistant Harbor Master/Port Pilot since I had previous experience sailing as Master. The Port of Anewa Bay was a private Port, having been totally constructed by BCL, so it stood to reason they assumed full responsibility for the Port operation. So, after a period of training I was officially appointed and issued with a license to conduct vessels of unlimited tonnage in and out of the Port. During periods when no ships were in Port, the stevedore labor was gainfully employed cleaning and beautifying the Port area. Hence, Loloho Port was always immaculately clean and adorned with attractive flower beds and tranquil rest areas. It was very picturesque and environmentally friendly.



The image shows a fine caption of a “Handy Size” Bulk Carrier typical of the era, loading Bulk Copper Concentrates at Anewa Bay. The facility was capable of handling vessels up to 45,000 dwt with a minimum of 13m of water available alongside the main wharf. The Cantilever was in a fixed position, so vessels warped along the jetty in order to load different hatches. An average sized Bulker of about 25,000 dwt generally took about one day to be loaded. The load out rate of the Cantilever being 1000 tons/hr. Obviously, for the larger vessels it was correspondingly longer.



Other regular callers were American “LASH” ships, which remained at one of the anchorages to offload their laden Barges, then, reload the empties. The LASH Barges usually contained steel Ball Bearings from America, which were

used in the Mine crushing plant. Piloting these ships was interesting mainly because the Americans did not use much of our more traditional nautical jargon; “turns” instead of “revolutions” or “left or right full rudder” rather than “hard aport or starboard”, etc. etc. The image below shows a typical American “LASH” ship, quite large but ungainly in appearance. There was one very sad occasion I remember, we received a radio message from one of the “LASH” ships shortly following its departure, asking if we had located a crew member as they were missing one man. Regrettably, we were called upon the following day to recover a body from the water, just off Banaru Reef. This was a very gruesome affair, indeed.

We had a fair number of regular General Cargo vessels calling, mainly China Navigation “Chief” ships, or chartered vessels such as the German ships “Wesser Carrier” and “Pacific”, both of which were on long term charter to BCL operating between Australia and Bougainville. They replenished the food and provisions as well as machinery and project cargoes required by the Mine. My phone used to run hot with people enquiring as to the arrival dates of these ships. The idea was so that the callers could be first in line at the Supermarket to purchase the fresh produce and groceries as it arrived on the shelves. I remember Potatoes, Onions and Citrus fruits were always in short supply.

The Port had a main wharf (on which a large loading cantilever was situated) with dolphins allowing the ships to warp along the wharf to simplify and aid their loading into respective cargo holds. At the Port complex there was a large concentrator plant and Power Station, in the south west sector of the cove was a Tank Farm which was connected to a SBM for the discharge of Tankers, In addition there was a small coastal ship jetty which was frequented by small LCT type coastal vessels, used extensively throughout the Island for servicing the Copra and Cocoa plantations that fringed Bougainville’s coastline.



Above is a chart of Anewa Bay and approaches, showing the Pilot Boarding ground, Kurukiki and Takanupe Islands, Karikiberia and Bora Shoals, Arovo Island, Marowa Point (and passage), Dokome Point and Anewa Bay. Pilotage took approximately 45 minutes all going well, but embarking or disembarking the Pilot from vessels could delay proceedings due to high swells outside the Reefs

There were a couple of anchorages at Anewa Bay, all be it they were in relatively deep water, mainly used by Bulk Carriers awaiting a berth. Anewa Bay operated between 6am to 10pm daily. The Port commenced operations in 1970 with the first export cargo in 1972. We regularly received 3 or 4 ships calling every week, so with undertaking the Pilotage and Draft Surveys I was kept fully occupied. The Port only had 2 Pilots, so we shared the workload.

The Pilot Boarding ground was 1mile N.E of Kurukiki Island (outside the reefs). The pilot would guide the vessels inward between Takanupei Island and Karikiberia Shoal, passing clear of Bora Shoal then directly towards Dokome Point and the adjacent Wharf, SBM or anchorage, whichever the case may call for. Pilotage was compulsory for all ships calling Anewa Bay and a Pilot was available anytime during the Port's working hours of between 6am and 10pm daily. Outbound ships were taken right up to the Pilot Boarding Ground, well clear of the reefs.

The Port provided one small underpowered Harbor Tug of about 500 BHP, aptly named "Loloho", after the beautifully serene and very popular beach, of the same name in the bay adjacent to the Port. The Tug was adequate for assisting in the berthing operations but lacked the "Grunt" for offshore towing. It also doubled as our Pilot Boat.

The movement of Tanker vessels was restricted to daylight hours only. The Pilotage was not difficult, but one needed to exercise extreme caution in the event of the sudden heavy rain showers which quickly rendered Radar useless and reduced visibility to zero. Fortunately, these rainstorms, although relatively frequent, at certain times of year, did not last long.

One of my secondary functions was to oversee the maintenance of the lights, beacons, and other marine assets within the Port limits. Considerably more concentration was required when securing Tankers at the SBM, especially since the approach was closer to one of the fringe reefs, but with due diligence it was entirely a safe operation.

We would regularly pick-up General Cargo ships from Kieta Port, and bring them to Anewa Bay. For this we used the narrow but deep passage between Marowa Point on the main island, and Arovo Island, which was a small but exotic resort island, popular with BCL staff as a weekend get-away (or hide-away for some). Taking a ship through the narrow passage was always an exciting event for holiday makers at the Resort.

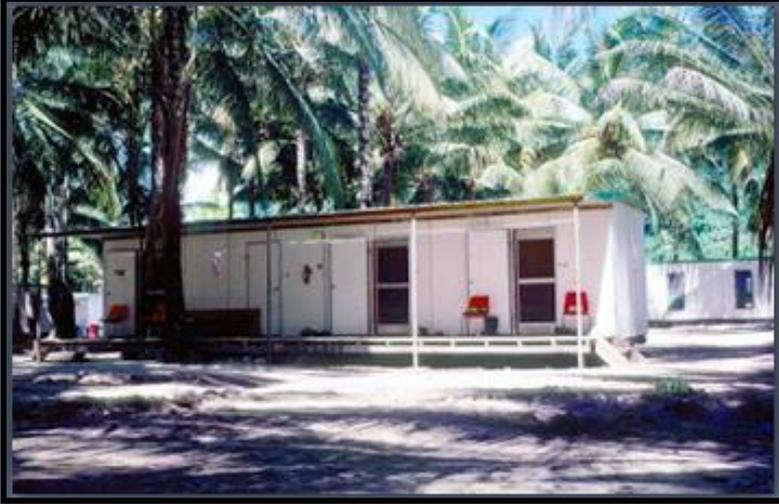


The remote and secluded Arovo Island, showing the Resort clearly visible and sole feature on the island apart from the landing jetty and magnificent beach. A wrecked fishing boat on the south beach was the only other distinctive attribute. I have no idea as to authenticity, but locals claim the wreck is the home of a giant sea snake. Mind you, I myself have seen very large sea snakes, when

piloting ships in the Anewa Bay area.

Bougainville had a wonderful selection of silver sanded beaches from which to select but most popular amongst the expats was the one at "Loloho" located in the next bay to the Port. It was completely unspoiled and pristine in every way. There was a small residential camp there where single expats working either at the Port or supporting facilities, resided. This was known as Camp 6 and consisted of small purpose- built dwellings, known as "Dongas". This was an altogether delightful place with the small houses scattered amongst the Palm trees very close to the beach. It

also sported a small outdoor Bar and drive-in style cinema. There were a number of these “Dongas” designated as weekend rentals which were extremely popular with BCL staff.



A typical “Donga” used by single expat staff at Camp 6 or as weekend rentals for married BCL personnel. They were very compact but comfortable self - contained units complete with all facilities.



The magnificent, Lolohe Beach. It was serene, peaceful, and safe at which to swim. There was a reef about 200m offshore that dropped away steeply into the abyss. This acted a barrier against some of the Pacific Ocean’s more unwelcome guests of the deep.



Another view of the wonderful Loloho Beach, just a little further along the coastline from Camp 6. Loloho Beach was also relatively void of sand flies, mainly due to the anti-malarial fumigation that took place in the Camp 6 living compound.

There was no Television available in Bougainville so for visual entertainment one was limited to either the outdoor Loloho drive-in or hired movies. I think, from memory the movies were available from a shop in Arawa. Drinking, BBQs or partying were the alternatives. Fishing was also a popular pastime. So, the Loloho beach was a main attraction.

There was a fair share of marital casualties as relationships became strained or broke down, especially where no children were involved. I think this was mainly due to the boredom experienced by some expatriate wives and the very sensible self-imposed restriction they placed upon themselves with a view to their own personal safety. I really enjoyed my time on Bougainville and revelled in my work. However, as independence approached there was an increasing amount of unrest between the local factions and it was only a matter of time before expats were drawn into taking one side or the other. Hence, from the mid-70s onwards there was a progressive exodus of families from the Island, mainly wives and kids initially. Inevitably the husbands followed. I too was caught up in this dilemma and left prematurely prior to my contract expiring. Matters deteriorated rapidly until eventually in 1989, when mining operations were officially halted on 15 May, due to militant activity, and the Mine has remained closed ever since.

There is talk and a planned referendum amongst the Bougainville residents, concerning the Mine's future scheduled to be held sometime before 2020, but I fear reactivation of the Mine site may be more of wishful thinking rather than an exercise in economic reality. Going by the current state of deterioration of facilities and equipment it would prove a mammoth undertaking. However, one could be wrong.

End

A Quick Glimpse of the Illustrious Chinese Junk

By

Geoff Walker

Sailing through the central China Sea, traditional Chinese Junks could still be regularly seen in the open ocean until the early 1980s, especially in the area of the disputed Spratly Islands and Parcel Islands, albeit in reducing numbers as the years progressed. The China Sea island groups consist of many treacherous islets, cays, reefs and atolls but were rich fishing grounds for numerous south China coastal communities and remain so to this day.

Many of the Junks seen in the later years still follow traditional Chinese design and shipbuilding techniques, but the majority had been retrofitted with auxiliary diesel engines. Motorized sailing Junks formed the bulk of Hong Kong's fishing fleet well into 1960-70s when they were eventually phased out and replaced by purpose wooden built fishing trawlers. However, employment of the Junk continued in a variety of ways in Southern China waters until the mid to late -1980s.

Those remaining active were mostly engaged in fishing or as ship to shore cargo transports in such places as Hong Kong, Macau and Southern China ports. Nevertheless, an occasional glimpse can still be seen to this day in some of the smaller ports of China and Vietnam, as well as in a few of the more remote parts of Indonesia, but sightings are becoming increasingly few and far between. Even when navigating the main inland rivers of China such as, the Yangzi or Pearl Rivers; in the higher regions of the Yangzi, around the city of Chongqing in Sichuan one can still see some traditional wooden vessels, in spite none of them being wind reliant, instead usually fitted with motors. Sail power had mostly disappeared by the mid 1980s. In the Jialing River, a tributary into the Yangzi River at Chongqing, the coxswain of a ferry boat, whilst on a passage down the river from the city of Hechuan, reported that the last sailing Junks he had seen was around 1988-1989.



A typical wooden modern day Taiwanese fishing vessel closely formed along Chinese Junk Hull design.

A number of modern motorized wooden built Junks, without sails, with their distinctive Banana shaped hulls, are still used as the backbone of the large Taiwanese fishing fleet. These vessels are fitted with diesel engines and refrigeration plants and designed as true blue water vessels to freely roam far and wide into the Pacific Ocean and beyond in search of fish, in particular Tuna. In many cases they can stay at sea for prolonged periods, since they work from factory or mother ships, which take and process their

catch, then replenish them with water, diesel fuel and provisions. Taiwan remains one of the few places where traditional Junk building skills still exist on a commercial scale. Other smaller Junk building shipyards may still be found on the banks of the Pearl River, at its lower reaches and estuary, bordering Macau.

The English name “Junk” derives from a combination of the Javanese “Djong” (meaning a large ship), the Portuguese “Junco” and the Dutch “Jonk”, as a consequence of these ships being used extensively throughout the Dutch East Indies and the noticeable presence of Portuguese navigators in the Southern parts of China during the colonial era.

The original “Junk” was developed during the Song dynasty (960-1279) from a basic design that emerged around the 2nd century but had been progressively refined, although always maintaining its traditional design features of inner compartments separated by bulkheads each accessed by separate hatchways and ladders (intended to minimize flooding if the hull was holed), low freeboard and high poop deck. None of these vessels carried a central keel. Instead they used dagger boards and large stern rudders, which were far more advanced than any western ship design of the times. These sailing Junks were extensively used by Traders as cargo carriers, fishing boats or indeed as floating storage hulks as well as houseboats. They varied in size from small to very large and could feature a variety of rigs, all using heavy Bamboo for main masts, in the earlier versions. However, all varieties used elliptical, fully battened sails (battens used were of Bamboo), and were flat bottomed, which made them ideal for navigating up shallower rivers and coastal creeks, meaning they could sit comfortably and upright on the sea bed during periods of low water. They were generally constructed from light woods, although later built of Teak wood after 17th century. There was a slight variation in design between those Junks constructed for specific trades around Malacca (Malaya), Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia but the modifications or refinements never deviated much from the basic overall design concept and were only incorporated to facilitate local requirements.

These sailing ships were extremely good at sea and provided superb sea handling qualities. They were sleek yet robust in their structure which assured their sea handling capabilities as well as excellent hull integrity and seaworthiness. Eventually the Chinese used these vessels for military purposes which later developed into a large imperial Chinese navy.

During the era of Chinese Admiral Zheng He, (a renowned Chinese seafarer and explorer of the Ming dynasty during the 15th century), had a large naval fleet of Chinese Junks with a substantial expeditionary force placed under his command with the intention of seeking new trading routes and plundering treasures. This fleet of some 300 Junks explored as far west as India, Ceylon, the Persian Gulf, East and South Africa. The fleet also included the largest Junk ever built, the legendary nine-mast treasure ship which was 400 feet long with a 150 feet beam. Admiral Zheng He’s fleet traded mostly in Ivory and Spices whilst developing diplomatic ties with other countries visited along his route of discovery.

However, during the Ming dynasty (15-16th century) commercial seaborne trading was banned by the then Chinese Emperor. This caused a temporary decline in shipbuilding expertise and a downturn in the

However, during the Ming dynasty (15-16th century) commercial seaborne trading was banned by the then Chinese Emperor. This caused a temporary decline in shipbuilding expertise and a downturn in the number of vessels constructed during the period. Nevertheless, Chinese junks resumed their Asian trades during the 16th and 17th century, in particular to Southeast Asia and to Korea and Japan, where they competed with Japanese, Portuguese and Dutch ships. The Junks employed in these trades were usually 3 masted and ranged in size between 200-800 tons, each carrying about 130 crew members, upward of 100 traders, together with numerous passengers.



Nowadays, the area of the South China Sea within the **9 Red Lines** is claimed by China but hotly disputed by other region countries, the most contentious areas of which are the Spratly and Paracel Islands. During the 17th and 18th century these disputes were non-existent, per se, and the shoals were common fishing grounds used by all coastal states bordering the South China Sea.

Chinese Cargo Junks in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor. The battened sails, high poop deck and low freeboard are clearly visible in this image. One of the sail batten advantages was it restricted the tearing of sails to between the battens if they were blown out, which allowed the sail to remain partially useful, which is also illustrated in this image



Credit: Reportedly a SCMP image

Bamboo battened sails and low freeboard. The keel free hull and sail arrangement made for a very stable sailing platform and inland river craft. Junks such as this were commonplace in such places, as Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Macau, Saigon, Sing A classic Chinese Junk. Clearly highlighted is the apore, Malacca and various Indonesian ports. There was also a regular lucrative sea trade between Manila and southern China.



The Chinese Junk was at the forefront of Imperial Chinese exploration in the Middle Ages and is a true icon. It is therefore fully entitled to take its pride of place in Chinese history, along with its smaller derivative the "Sanpan". The Sanpan is a Chinese - Malay small wooden boat, many of which had a canvas shelter constructed on deck, allowing them to become places of

permanent abode, giving rise to the term "Boat People", such as the "Tanakas" who were a migratory group from China who lived on boats, especially in Malaya, Thailand, and Vietnam. The name "Sanpan" is of Cantonese decent, which loosely translated, means "three planks".

These are strictly sheltered watercraft and are usually propelled by means of a single sculling oar called a "Yuloh". At best they may also be used as inshore fishing boats. These small vessels are still conspicuous in large numbers in most South East Asian ports and like most things have become reliant on small diesel engines or outboard motors as a primary means of getting about. In the shallower waters of Asia, in such locations as the Klongs of Thailand, as well as the Mekong River of Thailand and Vietnam, many have been fitted with "Longtail" outboard motors for shallow water use. However, nowadays the of small wooden type craft that frequent Asian waters term "Sanpan" may be used more generally, to describe a wide assortment of small wooden vessels.



"Big sisters and baby sisters" – Junks and a solitary Sanpan

Nowadays, Junks are more readily found in the guise of modern Junk-rigged sailing vessels built for recreational purposes. This modern variety may be seen in yachting Marinas, worldwide and are usually built of expensive Teak with luxurious interiors and fittings – a far cry from their original concept!

End

A Sailor's Waning Memories of Old Kai Tak

By Geoff Walker

Many a ship's crew has joined or paid-off in Hong Kong. Charter flights first commenced in the mid to late 1950s with old four engine propeller airliners, typically taking almost 2 or 3 days to or from the UK to complete the Journey, which included several refueling or even lay over stops en-route. By the 1960s regular scheduled services were becoming available and a viable option to ship owners wishing to carry out crew changes in distant places around the World. Hong Kong was one of those locations. It is now the norm, and no one gives a second thought about joining or leaving a ship at Hong Kong, or anywhere else for that matter, by air. Flights are so frequent, offering rapid point to point conveyance.

The late 1950s onwards set the scene for ship crew charter flights. Most seamen travelled on charter flights arranged by the Company, the service was mediocre and basic with no frills, to say the least but over the years, things improved on airlines such as British Eagle, Airworks-London, Lloyd International, Caledonian, Donaldson International, Dan-Air to name but several. Eventually, crew movements were booked on regular flights operated by the main-stream carriers and the "Seaman's Charter" was phased out. There were concession fares for ship's crew, but I think these may also be a thing of the past.

Hong Kong was one of the ports used quite extensively for crew change charter flights, the airport was known as "Kai Tak".

Kai Tak Airport was established by a Mr Ho Kai and a Mr Au Tak (hence the obvious name) who formed an investment company to reclaim land in the Kowloon Bay area for development, during 1912. However, their intended plans failed, and the area was purchased by the Hong Kong Government to be used as an airfield. In 1924, a Flying School was established with a small grass airstrip, also used by the RAF. Over time there was an amalgamation of the flying clubs to form the Hong Kong Aviation Club, which still exists.

By 1928 and the introduction of flying boat services, a concrete slip was built to accommodate the sea planes that used Kowloon Bay as their landing area. A control tower and aircraft hangar were built in 1935 and 1936 saw the establishment of Hong Kong's first airline.

During the war years and occupation between 1941-1945, the Japanese used forced labor to improve the two concrete runways, namely, 13/31 and 07/25 (so designated depending on the direction and reciprocal compass direction of the runway, for example 13/31 meaning 130 deg/310 deg). During the process of construction, the Japanese demolished the historic Kowloon Walled City and Sung Wong Toi memorial, (a tribute to the last Song Dynasty Emperor) as the materials were required for the new runway construction. After the war years, between 1945/46 the airport was used as a Shore Establishment for the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm which was known as HMS Nabcatcher and in 1947 it became HMS Flycatcher Royal Naval Air Station.

During 1946 the Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department was formed and took up office, and also, Cathay Pacific Airways was incorporated, operating DC3 aircraft from Kai Tak to Manila and as far afield as Australia. Between 1946 and 1958 the founding partners of CPA, also operated a Catalina Flying Boat service between Hong Kong and Macau, as they saw an opportunity for shuttling



passengers and shipments of Gold bullion. This was the only option because Macau did not have any runway. Hence CPA purchased a war surplus amphibian Catalina from the Philippines.



By this time Macau had gained a reputation for, and was considered to be, the prime location for wheeling and dealing in precious metals, primarily Gold and Silver bullion in the Asia region. The air service was known as the "Macao Air Transport Company" (MATCO) which, once inaugurated, became known as the "one cigarette hop", airborne just long enough to smoke a single stick. However, in 1948 the Catalina, nick named "Miss Macao" on charter to MATCO for flights between Hong Kong and Macau, and other regional cities, became a victim of Hijacking. Whilst on a routine flight between Macau and Hong Kong with 26 passengers and crew on board, 4 armed hijackers took over the plane demanding it be flown to a remote destination where looting of the bullion could take place. However, the perpetrators failed in their attempt when one shot the Pilot, causing his body to slump across the flight controls and the

aircraft to quickly nosedive into the Pearl River. There were 26 fatalities, the only survivor being the leader of the hijackers.

Eventually, in 1960 a new Piaggio P136 amphibian was purchased and operated by a company established by Stanly Ho and Roger Lobo; both leading investors holding considerable financial interests in Macau's gambling casinos. The point to point flying time was just 15 minutes and the service operated until the mid - 1960s, when suspended due to severe silting at the Macau end landing area, caused by a build-up of silt and sediment from the Pearl River. It was subsequently superseded by a Helicopter service and a fast Hydrofoil Ferry service.

By 1954, with the constant growth in aviation air traffic, the Hong Kong Government decided that a modern purpose-built airport should be constructed on the Kai Tak site. This called for the building of a new runway 13/31, extending seaward, which was completed by 1957, whilst runway 07/25 remained unchanged and in part became the new airport apron for aircraft. It was around this time in 1955, that the airport made its movie debut, featuring in the film "The Night My Number Came Up", which did much to quietly place the airport on the map as an Asian aviation hub.

Prior to the mid-1950s, at this point in its infancy, "Kia Tak" was no more than two concrete runways surrounded by mountainous terrain. The so called, airport terminal was little more than a "Dairy Farm" soda fountain only a short distance from the tarmac that accommodated the parked aircraft. Matters remained that way for some years. There was no airport security as we know it today, with passengers slowly ambling to and from the parked aircraft, in a leisurely manner.

Air services continued to expand and increase in frequency with the introduction into service of



the new Bristol Britannia by B.O.A.C on the London-Hong Kong-Tokyo route (see left). At this time, they became the largest aircraft to use the old land based, runways together with Pan Americans DC6 and Qantas Super Constellation aircraft which also operated regular schedules at the time.

It was in 1958 that work on the new NW/SE runway that extended into Kowloon Bay was completed and it opened for operations in 1959 when the first ever night flight into Hong Kong was made by a Cathay Pacific DC3, who by now was operating a growing fleet of Lockheed Electra passenger aircraft to facilitate their expanding number of Asian routes.

A new Passenger Terminal for Kai Tak International Airport was opened in 1962 to handle the ever increasing, numbers of passengers, whilst in 1974 the lengthening of the seaward protruding runway was increased to an overall length of 3,390m or 11,130 ft.

To coincide with the lengthening of the runway in 1974, a new state of the art Instrument Landing System (ILS) was installed for use with runway 13. This greatly enhanced the safe use of the runway during periods of adverse weather and limited visibility



Above, pictured taken during 1971 before the runway length was increased. The ships are at the Quarantine Anchorage which was active at the time. I recall on many occasions anchoring at the Quarantine Anchorage in Kowloon Bay whilst waiting Pratique, standing on the Bridge and being mesmerized by the number of aircraft landing and taking off from the near-by runway.



This Bristol Britannia 312F of Lloyd International Airways G-AOVS, pictured above, was a regular caller at Hong Kong, seen preparing for departure on a return charter to Brussels, during 1968.

Lloyd International was set up in 1961, to specialize in tramping the Far East air routes, specializing in Ship's Crew movements and the growing Air Freight market. Lloyd international Airways commenced operations with a DC4 acquired from Icelandic Airlines. Its first deployment was a series of charter flights from the UK to several Far East destinations, engaged in carrying ship's crews. It soon developed the business which led to the acquisition of two further DC4s in 1962. This airline was one of the pioneers in providing charter flights for ship crews between the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, also, to and from other Asian points.

For my part, I do distinctly remember my first experience of joining a ship by air – it was during my apprenticeship sometime during 1963. I had been on leave in Hong Kong and was required to rejoin my ship "Leverbank" (southbound on the Orient - South Africa Service) at the port of Bangkok. I was a loner as there were no other crew members travelling with me.



The aircraft was a DC4 (or maybe DC6?) belonging to Air Vietnam or Thai Airways (I can't quite remember which), but the same vintage as pictured left, although it may have been chartered and operated on their behalf by some other airline, because all the flight deck crew were European. The cabin crew was Asian. By modern standards it was only a short haul flight and from memory it was of about 3.5 hours duration.

I was very surprised because the aircraft was virtually empty. The flight from Kai Tak to Don Muang was reasonable and uneventful, if not a little noisy. I found it to be bit daunting since most of the other passengers appeared to be Buddhist Monks, all dressed in the saffron colored robes. Having arrived safely, I spent the night and most of the following day in the delightful Erawan Hotel, awaiting the laborious Immigration formalities to be concluded, before being taken by the Agent to Klong Toei and boarding the ship where she was berthed. This was followed by another 4 days alongside before departing for Singapore and all points west, towards South Africa. What a delight, but it was normal in those days!



Kai Tak's International Airport as it was in the mid - 1950s. The airport terminal building was basically a small cafeteria with an adjacent Airline kiosk and check-in area. Everything was very "lay back" without the security we experience today.

A new "Temporary" building was opened in September 1959 which was a big improvement and a sign of better things to come in 1962. At least passengers were bused to and from the parked aircraft on the apron



Above left can be seen the new temporary airport terminal at Kai Tak. Above right, the easy stroll across the apron to board the aircraft, before the new temporary terminal was opened in 1959.

During the early 1960s ship's crew changes were generally happy affairs, especially for the homeward bound crews with much joviality evident amongst them, many having been away from home for up to 2 years in some instances. Inbound crews to Hong Kong were usually taken directly to their ship, only overnighing at a hotel in Tsim Tsa Tsui (usually a 3 Star) if for any reason the ship had yet to arrive in Port. However, overnighing in Tsim Tsa Tsui was no hardship since that was "action headquarters" as far as sailors were concerned.

Below is a first - hand account, by one who made such a journey (albeit a different part of the world), from Bathurst in the Gambia, to Blackbushe in the UK, during 1956 at the completion of a 20 months voyage, which had taken him twice round the world.

Authored by A R Rawlinson who experienced one of the early crew change charter flights in 1956,

" We were paid off from the twin screw ship IRISBANK after a 20 month voyage twice round the world and with some side trips. I was 3/0. The location was Bathurst in the Gambia, West Africa, and it was the early autumn of 1956.

The airstrip itself was corrugated steel used for make-shift runways, and the aircraft that arrived from London with the relief crew was a Viking. We were not to know it, but these craft had been involved in recent accidents, including a bad one landing at Blackbushe Airport South West of London not many months before our trip, when many people had been killed.

The relief crew passed us on the road to and from the so called, airport so we never met and there was no hand-over as such. This was a company charter flight, and the crew were colorful characters, sitting with their feet up and a pair of binoculars held to their eyes, at least this was the case when the door opened to the cabin and we got a peek inside. They were following the African Coast northwards.

When we took off, someone asked the pilot to fly over the ship which he did, swooping down over the masts. I felt OK but suddenly the sweat was running from the inside of my hands. The young stewardess confidently told me it was nerves. I wasn't so sure, thinking to myself it might have been seeing an attractive young female so close up.

Inside the cabin was a peculiarity of this type of aircraft, namely, a great big steel beam running thwartships, ie. from wing to wing, presumably to keep them up. Whatever the reason, it meant all and sundry would have to step over the thing to progress either to the front or back of the plane. It was maybe 9 inches to a foot high, and no problem to mariners used to the weather cills into accommodation areas. I thought how odd it was to design a plane with this feature, and my opinion remains the same today.

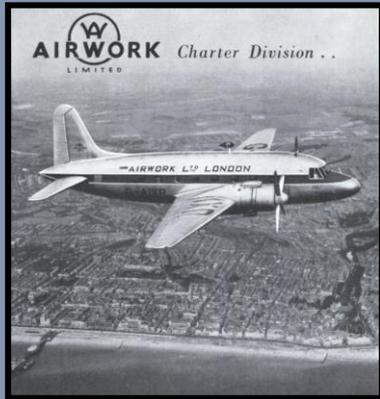
This was to be a 2day trip, and we landed and spent the night in the Rock Hotel, Gibraltar. It was heaven, hot baths, great food, civilization after quite primitive living, on a 25 year old ship. In those years, baggage restrictions were unknown, and I clearly recall having a huge teak elephant from Burma with me that filled one large suitcase out of 9 that I carried home! In the morning, we continued on, and made for Beirritz for a fuel stop before going on to land at Blackbush on a lovely warm evening. One of the lasting memories that will remain with me forever was the coach trip up to London and the pay off. The only word that does it justice is magic. Twinkling lights flashed by as we drove past the many pubs, and it looked like heaven. If this sounds like an exaggeration, I should explain it was what nearly 2 years away visiting mostly primitive places around the world did for me. Under a very strict (but fair) Master, I had spent my watches out on the bridge wings, fair weather or foul. That, plus endless days pumping cold water for a wash, and enjoying only one bottle of beer a week. What a contrast!"



The Vickers Viking, a typical type of aircraft used in the mid 1950's for short or medium haul flights, including those used for ship crew changes, such as mentioned above. There was an upsurge of this kind of charter flight from the 1960s onwards.

Below is an "Airworks" Brochure advertising Charter flights, this operator was very active, in the "ad hoc" charter market for moving personnel, especially to the Far East, in particular Singapore and Hong Kong, during 1960s.

I am sure many a sailor will remember the experience of a flight to or from their ships on one of "Airwork's" aircraft. The airline was also chartered to the MOD for the transportation of troops stationed in the region. Larger 4 engine airliners were used on the long haul Far East routes.



Outbound crew flights operated by "Airworks" usually departed from either London Gatwick or Southend Airport in the UK. "Airworks – London" was later merged, and became part of British United Airways

Hunting-Clan was another very engaged charter operator of the era. Hunting-Clan was a result of an amalgamation between the Hunting Group and British and the Commonwealth Shipping Company – who were owners of Clan Line, hence the name. Hunting-Clan's first commercial Britannia service left in late January 1959 and during the following 10 days airlifted 170 seamen of various nationalities from the UK to India, from Germany to Japan and then returning from Hong Kong back to the UK. Numerous other seamen's charters were operated over ensuing months to the Far East from the UK. In April 1959 Hunting-Clan (B&C) was awarded a MOD trooping contract to operate 6 flights per month, carrying troops from London to Singapore and Hong Kong. Several UK shipping lines entered the airline business. For example, many will remember this era seeing passenger aircraft such as BOAC-Cunard. The early 1960s signaled Air travel for sailors had well and truly arrived.



A very sleek looking Bristol Britannia owned by the British and Commonwealth shipping consortium.

Cunard Eagle Airways became another major player with maritime connections during the 1960s. Below is a photo of one of their 707 aircraft, winging its way to destinations unknown. The Donaldson Shipping Line took a healthy interest in Caledonian Airways, and the Lyle Shipping Group was yet another shipping company to take a financial stake in British Caledonian Airways.



By the late 1960s – early 70s scheduled services to and from Hong Kong had developed significantly and the tendency for shipping companies to charter flights for their crew movements started to dwindle in favor of the scheduled carrier. It became more economical to use scheduled airlines offering a wider choice of services, usually at a discounted fare structure for bona fide seamen.

Who amongst us can recall those heady days when we joined by air or went home by air? Airport Handovers were relatively common along with the dodgy flights we may have experienced. I have vivid memories of once leaving a ship in Warri, Nigeria. We boarded a small twin engine aircraft, maybe a 20 seat, commuter type, and proceeded to take off from a jungle airstrip in a ferocious thunderstorm. We barely cleared the trees at the end of the runway as the aircraft struggled into the air trying to gain altitude. We flew all the way to Lagos at tree top level, just below the cloud base, at what seemed like only a few feet above the jungle canopy. The single Pilot was a local and kept telling us not to worry as he had done the trip many times, nevertheless, it did not inspire much confidence. One hiccup with the engines and we would have ended up amongst the trees. All the passengers were deadly silent during the trip and visibly shaken, we all thanked God when we at last regained Terra Firma at Lagos.

We then had a several hour transit whilst awaiting our Caledonian Airways connection to depart for London Gatwick (via Kano) – it goes without saying that alcohol flowed freely whilst we waited. I think the BCAL cabin crew understood our nervous state and anxiety once they heard of our earlier exploits. They looked after us superbly, for the duration of our long - haul flight.

The 1970s and 1980s saw unprecedented growth in Kai Tak's air traffic which placed the airport under an excessive degree of strain and caused it to continually work at full capacity. The encroaching residential properties around the airport boundary also caused serious noise pollution for nearby residents, necessitating the introduction of a night curfew at Kai Tak between the hours of 11.30 pm and 6.30 am, which hindered airport operations. These factors caused the Hong Kong Administration to seek alternative locations for a new airport. After much deliberation, the Government decided on Chek Lap Kok as the chosen site, just off Lantau Island.



Left, a dramatic photo, concentration at its maximum! It shows an aircraft on final approach to Kai Tak Airport's runway 13, just before touching down. The skill of the Pilot is remarkable. The image is an optical illusion obviously, but it does give a good idea of the serious noise pollution experienced by nearby residents or those living under the flight path, this was only one of the factors that expedited the

construction of the Chek Lap Kok airport project.



By the 1990's Hong Kong's new airport at Chek Lap Kok was moving ahead rapidly. Left, can be seen the mammoth reclamation that was necessary to bring this venture to fruition. The new airport, entirely on reclaimed land between two islands, Chek Lap Kok and Lam Chau. Once completed it had increased Hong Kong's land area by 1%. The airport officially opened for business in July 1998.



A Bird's Eye View of Chek Lap Kok Airport as it stands today. There are muted rumors of further extensions, yet again, amongst other things to include an upgrade to Freight Terminal capacity.



The relatively new Cruise Ship Terminal constructed on the old seaward pointing runway 13. Hong Kong aviation facilities have moved a long way since those humble beginnings in the 1950s and when the old Cathay Pacific DC3 made that first night landing at Kai Tak in 1959.

End

Navigating the Equatorial Regions of S. E. Asia

By Geoff Walker

My time served on general cargo ships sailing through the equatorial latitudes of South East Asia and the South West Pacific hold deep nostalgic memories for me. Not only was the trade interesting, but the environment and its unique ambience was most agreeable. Endless, blissful days working cargo in remote ports, many not even marked on an Admiralty Chart, or up meandering rivers at jungle clearings, loading logs or other dressed lumber, along with a variety of different cargoes such as spices, coffee, sago, copra, and the like. Memories of visits to nonchalant and exotic ports, each indifferent to time, sitting in small friendly bars or "Warungs", even on the beach under the gently swaying palms eating freshly BBQ'd sea food, or just drinking beer watching the world go by, until it was time to return aboard.

The job on board the ship to a large extent, looked after itself in many respects. Being on the same vessel on a regular run, loading the same routine cargoes, most knew what was required and just went ahead and did it. Hence, free time was in abundance. I can well recall many an excursion (some rather boozy and boisterous in a friendly manner, I must confess), in such places as Sabang, Madan, Palembang, Semarang, Surabaya, Makassar, Manado, Balakpapan and Samarinda to name but a few. Perhaps prudent not to go into too much detail in this narrative.

The beauty of the equatorial region is stunning, always clear blue sky, lush mountainous terrain with the odd smoking volcano, the calm deep blue or turquoise waters, the shimmering silver sandy beaches and reefs, visible to the eye as their corals reflected the sunlight from their shallows, (being a mariner I obviously tried my best to steer clear of them).

Most of these exotic ports were flanked by the Java, Molucca, Banda and Celebes Seas and extended the entire length of the Indonesian Archipelago and insular islands. Proceeding further East through the Arafura Sea one arrived at Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, as well as the Islands of the South West Pacific, all of which made up the string of the "Paradise Islands", also renowned for their splendour, beauty and pristine waters. We visited the "Paradise Islands" every 2nd voyage.

Most ships used in these trades were not overly large which enabled them to navigate up the winding rivers or navigate through narrow passages between reefs. Usually, they were tweendeckers with four wide hatches (to help accommodate logs and a variety of lumbers). All were fitted with good cargo gear and multiple derricks to ensure full sustainability. The average size would be about 5000 grt. Most ships engaged on these trades were very well maintained, beautifully presented and purpose built for the tropics with large windows and highly varnished timber doors that opened out onto the officer's deck. The ships were not airconditioned so they were all fitted with reinforced mosquito doors which could be locked from inside, these sat just inside the main timber cabin door frame, so at night the main wooden door could be latched open, leaving only the mosquito door to allow good through ventilation and cooling breezes to enter the cabin, whilst keeping the mosquitoes out.

So it was that officers and crew seldom left these little beauties, not only because of the vessel's themselves but also because the trade in which they were engaged. Many officers had Asian wives and resided in Asia and occasions carried their families with them aboard ship. Food and living conditions on board was excellent in most cases. I recall with vivid clarity, nights spent sitting outside on the deck having a few libations, under a canopy of brilliant stars and dancing heavens.

In fact, we did this almost every evening since the weather was nearly always so benign and predictable.



A map of the Indonesian Archipelago and the adjoining Seas

The Java Sea is a relatively shallow sea by comparison to some other waters in the Indonesian archipelago and is scattered with numerous coral reefs and atolls in some sections, many concealing their own stories going by the number of wrecks sitting askew, high and dry on some of them.

A typical voyage for us would commence at the port of Sabang on the Island of Pulau Wei, off the northernmost tip of Sumatra Island, the port is situated on the northeastern coast of Wei Island. Sabang lies at the northern entrance to the Strait of Malacca and is the first port of call in the Malay Archipelago for vessels coming from the west. The harbour, built in 1887, is sheltered from the strong winds and heavy swells of the Indian Ocean. During my time trading in the area, Sabang only had a single wharf that was capable of accommodating a couple of ships, hence much of the cargo was worked at the anchorage. Nowadays the port has developed into a major hub and now boasts a modern container port and terminal.



The beautiful haven of Sabang, at the head of the Malacca Straits on Pulau Wei, ca 1960-70s. A highly cultured township which cherishes its semi - autonomous privileges.

Medan was usually our next port of call, located on the east coast of Sumatra, butting on to the Malacca Straits. I have memories of this being a bit of a boisterous town, with its share of nightlife, to suit most sailors. Medan, capital city of North Sumatra Province, situated on the Deli River, some 25 km upstream from its mouth, is where the city's port (Belawan) is situated. The largest city in Sumatra and the fourth largest in Indonesia, Medan is the marketing, commercial, and transportation center of a rich agricultural area sustaining major exports tobacco, rubber, and palm oil estates. Coffee and tea are also grown in the vicinity and exported. Medan, has now developed into a tourist center, and features the Great Mosque (the largest in Sumatra) and the Palace of the Sultan of Deli. Belawan Port is a major exporting center for oilseed expellers. Shipped in bulk and sometimes in bags for use as animal feed. During my years we always loaded bagged expellers from Belawan. Major upgrades were undertaken to the extensively deteriorated cargo berths and improvements made to dry bulk and palm oil loading systems. It is now a modern port with container, general cargo and palm oil export terminals. The township close to the port area still retains its charm and is still a playground for visiting seafarers (as well as others).



Stevedores waiting to board at Belawan



The old port, of Belawan ca 1970s

Palembang is the one of the oldest and most cultured cities in Southeast Asia. It was once the capital city of Srivijaya, a powerful Buddhist kingdom that ruled much of the western Indonesian Archipelago and controlled many maritime trade routes, including the Strait of Malacca. Palembang was incorporated into the Dutch East Indies in 1825 after the abolition of the Palembang Sultanate. It was designated a city on 1 April 1906. Api-Api Port is in fact, now one of the biggest ports in Indonesia. The location is some 42 miles from Palembang City. The new port has been operating since 2013 but when I traded there, we only had a few rundown wharves from which we worked cargo with our ships gear. The port was a sort of terminal for the intra-province steamers, a few still under Dutch flag at that time. However, the center of entertainment was not far away and popular with our Hong Kong Chinese crew.



Some perilous waterside dwellings on the Musi River close to Palembang Port. The muddy colored water is indicative of the high level of silting the port experiences.

Floating Veg and Fruit Market at Palembang.

Note the muddy colored water.



Semarang's Port is located about 5 km from the city center. It was constructed in the nineteenth century by the Dutch colonial government, for use in exporting sugar and various agricultural products coming from the hinterlands in central Java, replacing a heavily silted, pre-colonial port. The Port of Semarang was developed to make the city a port city and to export commodities from Java to

international destinations. Despite the addition of new port facilities, Semarang Harbor remained narrow. At that time, the maximum size of vessel that could be docked at Nusantara Pier was ships with draft of no more than 5 meters or \pm 3,500 Tons, deadweight. Ships with draft greater than 5 meters still had to anchor outside the harbor, or offshore which is \pm 3 miles from the main dock. Like most other ports it maintained its cultural charms, layback atmosphere and many sailor's haunts. It is believed Governmental approval, has now been granted, for considerable expansion and upgrade of the port.

Surabaya was one of our main hub ports. Surabaya Port known as Tanjung Perak is the second busiest seaport in Indonesia, located at Surabaya, East Java. It is the main port for the eastern part of the island of Java. For us this was the busiest of all the ports we visited. It had a good swag of general cargo berths, even during my time in the 1960-70s, and a close anchorage which was always crowded

with smaller cargo ships and palm oil tankers. It was a favourite with our crew members because of the wide variety of nighttime entertainment, most within easy reach of the docks. For the crew it was paradise with such places right outside the dock gate.

It was particularly interesting to me because of the many large oceangoing Dhows that were hipped up at the jetties loading their cargoes, in the old port area. Most being readied for their trips to Makassar.

For our ship, distances between the various ports were relatively short, some consisting of just one overnight passage. The balmy weather conditions were wonderful and the weather mostly placid and calm. We were seldom very far from the coast, so the spicy sweet smells of the tropical shores drifted out to sea over great distances, especially at night. Sitting in a deckchair, with an iced Gin and Tonic and gazing at the dancing heavens above, added to the pleasurable experience.

Navigating in the Java Sea at night called for extra vigilance. As mentioned, many Dhows used the route to Makassar – being of wooden construction they did not provide the most definitive radar echoes. In the main, they were also poorly lit, so often the Dhow crews would throw buckets of sea water or hose down the main sail so as to reflect a stronger radar signal and warn an approaching ship. Another trick was to use powerful flashlights to illuminate their wet sails. It was all quite effective. They made for a wonderful sight wallowing in the calm seas, reflected or silhouetted against a background of silver moonlight, as they sought whatever breeze there was.

Makassar (the Port's name is Ujung Padang), lies at the south western tip of the Island of Sulawesi and is situated on the Makassar Straits. To the west lies Kalimantan and to the east Sulawesi. The strait is a major traffic route within south east Asia and connects the Celebes Sea in the north and the Java Sea in the south. It is a conduit for large ships transiting to and from the Lombok Straits. Ujung Padang has developed into a major regional port, especially a bunkering port. However, it still retains its quaint old-worldly charm, and is a hub for many of the cargo Dhows still used today.

With three jibs flying from a novel, triangular bowsprit, and separate topsails for lighter winds, the ketch rigged Pinisi, offered easier handling of its smaller individual sails and more flexible sail combinations for different wind strengths. This became a vital advantage as engineless Pinisi grew from 20 to 300 tonnes to meet a pressing need for shipping in the early decades of independence after WW2. The versatile rig came to dominate long-distance trade routes across the archipelago, until motorization of this fleet was completed in the 1980-90s. Makassar has a long tradition and heritage of this unique style of boatbuilding, and which remains active until this day.



Nowadays, Ketch rigged Pinisi are still used for trading extensively throughout the Indonesian Islands. Island cruises have now become popular amongst tourists seeking a different experience. Left are depicted two Pinisi used for tourist excursions around the islands.



So typical of the wonderful sunsets experienced almost daily, in equatorial regions, as seen from Makassar (Ujung Padang).



A busy scene of down-town Makassar, typical of any Indonesian city of the 1970-80s. Not much change over the years except for the large shopping malls that have become a sign of urban modernization and development. However most Indonesian cities retain their culture and charm for which they are renowned. Makassar

is one such city.

The excellent, spicy Indonesian cuisine, is plentiful with a choice of so many eating venues, ranging from open roadside eateries to 5 Star luxury restaurants. Most regions have their own signature dishes, it so happens in Makassar, like so many other Indonesian provinces it has its own favorites such as, Coto Makassar, Barongko, Pisang Epe, Mie Titi or grilled Sukang Fish, to name but a few.



One of Makassar's signature dishes – Grilled Sukang Fish. Once tasted one will always come back again for a second helping.



Pisang Epe – a Banana delight

On my ship, it was customary once or twice per week, for the ship's cooks to prepare Asian food for the Officers, it rotated between Chinese and Indonesian. The cooks were absolute "top notch", knowing exactly how to prepare the various dishes to suite our mainly European palates. These Asian menus were considered a treat and whenever oriental food was on the card, the Saloon was always full and no one went ashore until after dinner, if we were in port on the day. Indian Curries featured on the daily menu as one of the choices.



As can be seen from this image of a traditional cargo Dhow loading at Makassar, a wide variety of merchandise and goods are commonly carried. The Dhows engage quite large crews as not only are they required to undertake the handling of the heavy sails, but also to load and discharge cargo.

One of the main sea routes for these Dhows is between Surabaya and Makassar.

At the northern end of Sulawesi, just at the tip of the "hooked" Sulawesi Peninsular, or more correctly the Minahasa Peninsula, lies the city of Manado. It is the second largest city in Sulawesi after Makassar. The

Sulu Sea, which adjoins the Sulawesi Peninsular is very serene and idyllic but is prone to Piracy, so caution is required, so being prudent mariners, we always kept our distance from fishing boat

fleets or unidentified craft. The coastal regions of Sulawesi that form the peninsula are extremely beautiful, with their silver sandy beaches, swaying palms, and off-lying coral reefs, along with a scattering of small coastal villages. No doubt many of their inhabitants being fishermen and perhaps part time Pirates! Or perhaps the reverse!

One is immediately charmed by the old township of Manado with its captivating buildings, temples, churches, and shrines but above all by its thriving China Town and markets. These markets never failed to fascinate me, and I could spend hours literally wandering about looking at the wide range of goods for sale, more often than not, arriving back on board with several wonderful Batiks, a few small carvings with exquisite workmanship, or some other interesting items. My cabin was like a mini museum with all the cultural memorabilia and knick-knacks.



Through the afternoon heat haze, an image of the rambling city of Manado.

Another panoramic view of the sprawling city of Manado. Sulawesi Island's second largest, and most populated city.



Manado was formally a stronghold of the Dutch, during their colonial period and a focal point for the once thriving international spice trade. It is not a very spectacular city but appealing nevertheless, and interestingly, whilst Indonesia is primarily a Muslim country, the city of Manado has a high Christian community amongst its population.

Our Indonesian sojourn usually terminated at Manado, by which time our ship was generally near full. Once loaded we would speed our way towards Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Singapore before repeating the round voyage, usually commencing again at Sabang. I often thought how much

people paid to cruise through this region and how fortunate I was getting it all for nothing, and even getting well remunerated for the privilege. However, it was a very sought-after job amongst seafarers, during the 1960-70s when we spent days in these wonderful places, prior to the globalization of containers and the changes it brought to shipping. With us being paid in USD our earnings stretched a long way in Indonesia and other Asian destinations, much to our delight.

The change of Government in Indonesia in 1966 was in sharp contrasts with the immediately preceding period, between 1958 and 1965. Fresh economic policies were encouraged once again. These policies had enormous and swift success. Much of the hitherto highly visible corruption was reduced (certainly not eradicated completely). Hyperinflation was eliminated, investment picked up strongly, and genuine growth was accelerated, which in turn provided a relatively lucrative period for the shipping industry, operating within the region.

Whilst not wishing to be seen, as standing in the way of progress, it was a sad day when most things became containerized and the sailor's life changed forever. During periods of deep nostalgia, I feel so lucky and privileged, to have experienced the last of a shipping era. Now I can only revisit these wonderful days, through the mists of nostalgia, which like everything else in life, fades with the passage of time.

End

Australian Coastal Steamship SS. Casino 1882 - 1932

Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company Ltd.

By Geoff Walker



The iron Steamship SS Casino was built in 1882 by Gourlay Bros & Co Ltd., Dundee, Scotland, originally for B.B. Nichol of the Newcastle and Hunter Steam Navigation Company – Sydney, Australia. However, the company known as Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company Ltd., which had been formed in March 1882, took delivery of the SS Casino the same year, so the ship never did visit Casino the town on the Richmond River in NSW, after which it had been named.

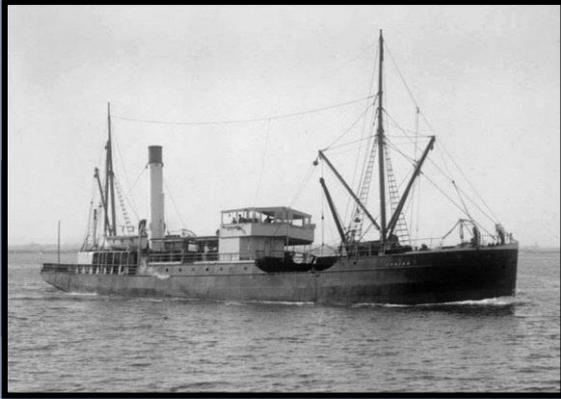
The ship departed from Dundee on 18th March 1882 on a voyage to Sydney, via the Cape of Good Hope. En route, the ship stopped in Warrnambool, a small port in the western region of Victoria, to replenish her almost depleted supply of coal bunkers. Whilst in Warrnambool, where she was also fixed to load a cargo of potatoes for Sydney, the Directors of B.K.S.N. learned of the vessel's arrival in the port, so being in the market to procure such a vessel, they inspected the SS Casino and decided to purchase her. Thus, ownership of the ship was transferred to the Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company (Belfast being the earlier name for Port Fairy). Having completed her voyage to Sydney and landing her cargo of potatoes, the SS Casino then returned to Melbourne to begin the west coast service, under the flag of her new owners.

SS Casino was a three mast, riveted iron single screw coastal vessel with a length of 160 feet. She was a single deck, iron framework, schooner rigged coaster, with an inverted compound two-cylinder, 65 horsepower coal fired steam engine driving one shaft, with a single boiler, and 3 furnaces. She had her machinery and boiler room located aft. The ship also carried sails and during her early days, she was sometimes rigged as a topsail schooner as the ship's large spread of canvas helped improve her speed, thus reducing the amount of coal she consumed. She also had a capacity to carry 25 passengers.

Port Fairy was busy with competing steamers from various other companies in the early years, transporting a variety of general cargo and passengers, but the SS Casino became a premier vessel on the west Victoria coastal route, especially amongst the passengers that used her services.

On 10th July 1932, off Apollo Bay, near Cape Otway in Victoria, she keeled over and sank after striking the seabed, whilst attempting to berth at Apollo Bay jetty in heavy seas. Unknowingly her hull had been pierced with the fluke of her anchor. She put about again and headed for the beach but sank. The steamer was subsequently wrecked about three hundred yards from the shore, with the loss of 10 lives. From a crew of 16 plus 2 passengers, there were only 8 survivors.

The ship had become renowned for her longevity of service to Victoria's western coastal trade - sadly meeting her demise on the eve of celebrating her 50th anniversary. The ship had a colorful history, spanning some 2500 voyages



Left, the SS Casino, following the removal of her center Mast. She had been modified sometime during 1924, at which time the central Mast was removed

The Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company also operated several other ships in Australian coastal services; Casino (1882-1932), Bellinger (1884-1887), Dawn (1885-1896), Coramba (1932-1934) and Wannon (1935-1939



(Port Fairy Historical Society

Museum)

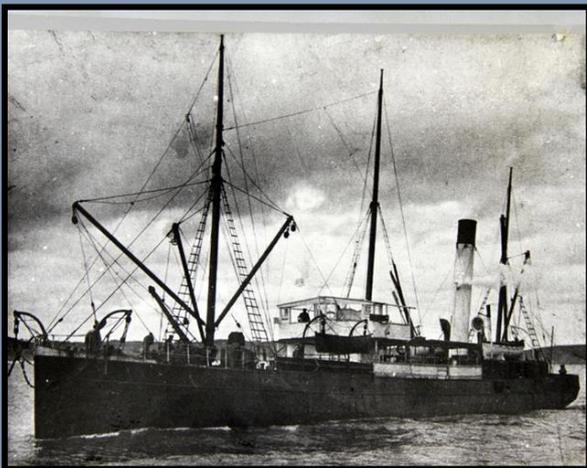
An early photo of SS Casino at Port Fairy, Victoria, prior to 1924 as the ship still has 3 masts. Due to her size, navigating SS Casino in the narrow river was hazardous and incidents were not unknown. The steamer had several brushes with disaster; it collided with another ship off Point Gellibrand, ran aground on a reef near Grey River, and was beached at Warrnambool while entering Lady Bay, during a power blackout. Following each incident, the steamer was repaired and returned to its West Coast service.



A Memorial for the SS Casino at Port Fairy. A bluestone cairn supporting the Casino's propeller and the town wreck bell. On one side a bronze plaque carries the names of all ten lives lost, on the other side is a bronze plaque marking the 100th anniversary of her registration, dedicated in 1982

(Port Fairy Historical Society

Museum)



An interesting vintage photograph showing the SS Casino approaching the Victorian coast, presumably approaching Apollo Bay and Port Fairy. Note that the vessel still retains its central Mast, so the photo must be dated prior to 1924 when the center mast was removed.

Following their catastrophic loss, the Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company stopped its vessels from using Apollo Bay as a port. The loss of SS Casino was a death knell to coastal cargo and passenger transport in Victoria generally, when only a few years later in 1936, their steamer Coramba whilst on a passage from Port Fairy to Melbourne disappeared without trace and loss of 34 crew, in a fierce gale. The Belfast and Koroit S. N. Co ceased to operate in 1939 with the advent of road transport and communications. The SS Casino was a grand little ship that served the State of Victoria very well over a prolonged period. Regrettably, she met an undignified end, but nevertheless her memory continues to live on in local history and, nostalgia as well as being a very fitting "Moment in Time".



Australian Coastal Steamer "SS Casino". A scale model from the Author's collection.

End

Spanning the Meridians of Time – A Sailor’s Journey through Change

By Geoff Walker

The early 1960s was a very interesting juncture for a young person to embark upon a seafaring occupation. The Industry offered new horizons and solid development with the prospect of an exciting career and long-term employment. By this time international shipping had basically recovered from WW2 and had entered a period of transition and renewed growth, in which there still existed a very visible mix between old and new tonnage in the global fleets. Many of the World’s major ship-owners were involved in modernizing their fleets, whilst newcomers to the fold engaged in establishing themselves by procuring and operating discarded tonnage (acquired at very competitive prices) that had become available on the market as a consequence of world fleet upgrading and expansion. These vintage ships gave many of today’s shipping giants their first start in the industry.

This short, non-technical article outlines the changes in the World Shipping Industry during the period 1960 to 2004 as seen through my eyes and is the basis for my nostalgia on the subject, albeit veiled and now somewhat clouded, due to the mists of time

On occasion, I sit in my garden, usually with a cold beverage. I reminisce over the many years I spent at sea. I always become nostalgic when I think of how it used to be and the changes within the industry, ashore and afloat, types of ships, the modern seafarers and the transition and changes I have witnessed between when I first went to sea as a deck apprentice in June 1961, and my swansong voyage as Master in December 2004. I tried early retirement but frankly I was not ready for it, so I worked in various managerial posts ashore to keep myself busy. There was always someone needing the experiences gained over a span of 40 or so years spent at sea.

A visit to any of the World’s larger ports around that era would show any enthusiast a variety of ships; the ex - WW2 Types with their classic rigid lines, mainly using steam as their primary form of propulsion, which was in sharp contrast to the sleek new motor ships being delivered in increasing numbers, during the early and mid - 1960s.

By middle of 1968 there were 7 major global seagoing merchant fleets, each with more than 10 million dwt tons, accounting for 65% of the world tonnage. During the post war years 1955-68 the total world tonnage increased overall by 120% of which Tanker fleet expanded by 160% and Dry Cargo fleets by 104%. Many sailors consider 1960 - early 70s to be the “Boom” years with no shortage of jobs, but also signaling times the changes to the industry started to take hold and become most visibly evident. Although these golden years were before the serious onset of global containerization, other deep - rooted changes had started to manifest themselves.

There came about a change in the caliber of person wishing to follow a sea-going career, due in part to the reduction of shore - based training establishments, and then recently revised training schemes; academic achievement seemed to be the main criteria, rather than a combination of both good schooling and aptitude towards the profession. This was most noticeable amongst Cadets where there was a relatively high percentage of wastage amongst the intakes, many leaving the occupation to follow other careers, after only a few years, or in some cases less. I hasten to add this did not apply to all but it soon became very obvious industry wide on a global basis. Also, external factors seriously influenced the situation.

Firstly, the fuel shortages of the early 1970's, which caused many sea-going jobs to quickly dry-up worldwide, created an influx of Asian Officers, many undercutting each other in terms of pay scale in order to secure a berth, a number of which (prior to STCW) may have been holders of questionable licenses, all at the expense of the traditional well qualified and experienced (but more costly) European officers. Not only that, but there was a noticeable decline, in the professionalism and efficiency amongst the Bridge teams during these years, especially until STCW gained a foothold. Most evident was that one gained the impression many did not really want to be in the job, there was a marked lack of sincerity and commitment demonstrated by a good number. The first thing after joining was that the calendar was posted in their cabin and they crossed off the day's religiously, presumably counting down until pay-off time?

Secondly, the lack of new blood and training during the late 1970s and 1980s caused serious shortages of good quality and qualified crews - this continued thereafter, for a number of years. On British Flag ships it was particularly damaging because the "Thatcher" years had virtually decimated the UK shipping industry anyway, with consequential damage to recruitment and training of new intakes, which caused a huge overall reduction in UK tonnage and shipbuilding.

These two elements allegedly aided and abetted by "back room" accountants, the Industry started to lose its hitherto nationalistic image in many ways, due to the emergence of Flags of Convenience (FOC), introduction of cheaper crews; diversification of crewing was claimed to be a necessity in order for many ship owners to survive but in reality, I suspect in many cases it was just ice - cold opportunism, more likely in the interests of increased profitability. This, coupled with the ongoing fuel instability and continued crew shortages, impacted on the entire industry and triggered changes that took place at a quicker than predicted pace.

Always hovering in the background was the increased awareness of global containerization expediting the rate of change, not only to the physical design and performance of the ships but also in transportation concepts which were to ultimately have such a significant influence on the future make-up of the entire shipping industry; no doubt expedited by the manning and fuel cost issues. It was during this time that we all observed the downturn, and in some cases demise, of some of the World's most iconic and most historic shipping fleets.

Many fleets lost their national identity, being reflagged, in some cases to less stringent Flags of Convenience, fleet sizes reduced due to an unprecedented disposal rate of older and uneconomic tonnage, and with some, it brought about the reduction in size or demise of long, well established shipping concerns. Ship's crew requirements were reduced due to the remodeling, down - scaling and re- organization of fleets, this necessitated many crews to enlist on FOC registered tonnage. However, at the other end of the spectrum, there emerged many fledgling ship-owners, particularly in Asia, who offered attractive wages, good terms and conditions, together with real promotion prospects to those ambitious officers willing to join on longer term contracts. There is a myth that these companies were mainly "Fly by Night" operators and whilst some were dodgy to say the least, the majority was solid, of which several have now become recognized as "Captains" and "Leaders" in the shipping world.

During the 1970-80s, at which time the shipping industry remained more or less self regulating, coupled with the rapid expansion of third-world operators, it became increasingly common for some ship owners to disguise true beneficial ownership of their vessels, by hiding behind a "Corporate Veil", with each ship being owned by a single ship company, the ship being that company's only asset. These, one ship companies, were little more than a brass plate in a lawyer's office in some obscure location such as Panama, Somalia, Liberia, Honduras, or St. Vincent,

amongst others, where it was very difficult or almost impossible to identify the ship's true ownership. This had far reaching implications; if the ship was involved in any kind of serious incident, it meant the owners could quickly close down their offshore company and walk away from any and all liability by disappearing overnight, into obscurity. Similarly, some ship operators literally abandoned their vessels and crew, usually leaving the crew with unpaid wages, no vitals and destitute, with no means of support. It was not uncommon to see such ships under arrest, lying derelict, around the world's ports.

One good example of this was a case in Malaysia where an SD 14 class of vessel (flying some obscure FOC), allegedly owned by PRC interests, capsized and sank at the jetty with only the upper works remaining above water. The ship lay there for some time because, according to reports, the owners could not be located and had closed up shop and disappeared more or less overnight. The consequential damages resulting in costs to the Port (or their insurers) for salvage and wreck removal, pollution prevention, not to mention loss of revenue to the Port due to the wharf being out of commission for a number of months, must have been significant. Although this case was in the 90's it does however typify the ease by which avoidance of liability can be as simple as closing down all communications, switching off the computer, and disappearing into the sunset.

I became one of those who decided to jump ship in 1965 and "Go East", a decision I have never regretted because I found most of the Asian ship operators I sailed with, to be very decent and honorable employers, operating good ships to high international standards. In fact, I know many of my contemporaries who worked for Asia based ship managers or owners, share my views on this. I firmly believe the dodgy ones were in the minority, but unfortunately, they are the ones that made the headlines and tarnished the good name of most others, trying to run a decent show.

My years working for Asian based ship-owners, was in the main most satisfying. During these years I watched changes take place in our industry, sailing on various categories of dry cargo, special purpose, and container ships. It was a time when the number of crew was dramatically reduced, with a more multi-task or general - purpose role, expected of them. Mixed crews became the norm, but over many years I never experienced any racism or animosity amongst the various ethnic groups on board. As sea we all wore the singular brand of being "Sailors" first and foremost and relied on each other for our wellbeing and safety. There was never any scope for ethnicity on the ships in which I served. The introduction and implementation of STCW codes by the IMO during the mid-late 1970's, also did much to improve the standards of training amongst diverse crews from the younger and developing maritime nations, although it did take time to become fully effective. Much stricter oversight of crew competency came about as a result.

From the late 1970s onwards, with the introduction of more state-of-the art shipboard technology, one was required to become more technically savvy. The introduction of the micro chip, ARPA, Satnav, GPS, AIS (Automatic Identification System) and more latterly Dynamic Positioning (DP), ECDIS and GMDSS made us all wake up with startling rapidity, and realize we were now entering a new phase of shipping and moving into 21st century. Sextants were put away, to be fondly dusted off and used only occasionally. By the 1990's electronic equipment was looked upon as more of less standard equipment, although the demise of the Radio Officer with the introduction of GMDSS did not fully come about until February 1999; the loss of this position on board ships was regrettable but many R/Os took the opportunity to retrain and return to sea as Electro-Technical Officers (ETOs), once they had re-qualified.

The introduction of SMS (Safety Management System) and follow - on DOC (Document of Compliance), for owners and managers were great improvements because it introduced more regulation into an industry which hitherto had been largely lacking, being left to its own devices to govern and administer, with differing standards, and with varying degrees of success. It forced the improvement of international standard for safer ship management and operation of ships and it introduced more stringent rules for pollution control and prevention, supported by a system of regular formal audits imposed by regulatory authorities and conducted by their specialist auditors.

The origins and implementation of such codes (as part of SOLAS) date back to the 1980s when they were phased in progressively until finally becoming compulsory in 1998, this was mainly due to string of serious marine accidents during the 1980s, raising alarming concerns over poor ship management and operations standards in shipping. As a consequence, arose a litany of procedures and checklists, substantially increased safety awareness, regulated working methods, improved health and safety, and shipboard security and environmental consciousness and perception. Many seamen complained about changes at the time of its inception, complaining about “Red Tape”, additional workload etc., but in retrospect, I am sure those who initially objected now appreciate the benefits these codes have since provided to the industry. This period also brought about the introduction of the Ship Safety Officer, and Ship Security Officer amongst serving officers. Likewise, ship owners, operators and managers were obliged to make similar corporate appointments to oversee Safety and Security policies were observed, both ashore and on board the ships under their jurisdiction.

These intervening years also triggered major changes to an already reforming, but still mainly a self- controlling industry. Fewer and fewer of the classic general cargo ships of earlier years were to be seen so readily, plying the oceans of the globe. By this time most of the world’s major operators of this type of ship had sold them off cheaply for demolition or to smaller 3rd world countries who capitalized on their few remaining useful years of service, by operating them “on the smell of an oily rag” in most cases, prior to their final demise.

It became a sad time to witness the disposal of fine ships, many less than 15 years of age – when normally their life expectancy would be around 20-25 years, in some cases longer in the top tier liner companies. These ships were now being replaced by a more sophisticated and flexible multi-purpose class that slotted readily into the changing market; and which were able to cater for a wider range of ports, due to their self - sustaining and multi-task characteristics and ability to include a much higher proportion of containers into their onboard cargo carrying capacity. Most importantly, they were far more fuel efficient and economical to operate.

The major global demolition yards, mostly located in Taiwan, China, and India at this time, had a field day as huge amounts of “uneconomic classified” tonnage flooded the market, and was sold off. This heralded once again, the slimming of many major ship-owners, or causing the emergence of very large shipping conglomerates, brought about by the merging of a variety of, hitherto more modest shipping empires. Some smaller, but efficient operators, who were genuinely struggling to survive, were also swallowed up and absorbed into larger groups, then rebranded, losing their traditional identity.

The larger and now more visible shipping conglomerates were becoming more and more intent on serving fewer ports, but rather by using a major international array of “Hub Ports” such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Yokohama, Rotterdam, Felixstowe, and the like, to which containers and cargoes could be consolidated or distributed, and which became known as the “Hub and Spoke” concept. This proved to be a highly efficient means and brought about the introduction of

smaller class of container vessel, which had a TEU capacity of 4-500 and which was to become known as the “Container Feeder” and in many ways completely reorganized shipping and trading strategies.

Newer ships of this period seemed to have lost their heart, soul and character and appeared completely void of any such vibes, in comparison to those of the 50, 60 and 70s. Later in life whilst a Pilot, I recall boarding ships and thinking to myself how “Sterile” the modern ships seemed to be, lifeless and without spirit. This, I think was one of the most important changes felt by mariner’s, and sets off a lot of nostalgia; ships were no longer a home from home with an atmosphere of being cosy, comfortable, welcoming and friendly, but rather having no personality whatsoever, and simply a floating workplace that held no appeal at all.

I served my waning years at sea on “Container Feeders” but like most seafarers I ultimately succumbed to the temptation to work ashore. So, after a lengthy period spent mainly sailing in the Far East, I swallowed the anchor – much to my wife’s delight. She had sailed with me frequently, but I must say, in all honesty, she never really enjoyed it, always worrying in case we got “lost” once land dipped below the horizon, her fear when sailing mid-ocean at night in pitch darkness or feeling seasick even in the most benign of conditions.

After I moved ashore, for me it became a case of quickly assimilating to corporate policies, internal work systems, and adapting to the office culture and the inevitable politics. Previously I had never been involved in any kind of corporate shenanigans or intrigue; such was all alien to me as a simple sailor, since aboard ship these matters seldom if ever arose.

Changes were not limited to the ships but also ashore. In the early stages of ISM/SMS, because it was still a bit of an “unknown”, some staff felt as if they were under constant scrutiny. I quickly found that there were two categories of management within the shipping fraternity, namely, those managers in their 30’s usually University graduates, generally smart but with limited practical knowledge (in most cases), but with many holding big egos; and those in their late 40-50s mostly ex seafarers with solid practical and managerial experience. With the former, I often experienced these elitist types looked upon us ex mariners with suspicion, as if posing something of a “threat” that jeopardized or conflicted with their own position, a trend I came across repeatedly. The older and more experienced category, viewed us ex seagoing types as an asset, because of the level of proven experience we brought to their camp, and it was extremely refreshing when they listened and then acted appropriately, based on the recommendations or course of action we may have proposed.

These diverging work ethics, cultures and social behavior of certain people, I learned to live with, accept, and handle in an appropriate fashion, never becoming involved, but at times it was not without frustration. One interesting aspect was the “management by committee” syndrome with some managers unable to take the personal responsibility of making a decision, for fear of being wrong and subsequently ostracized. One’s day became bogged down with meetings, mostly fruitless meetings about meetings, which frequently ended up, side stepping or circumventing the main issue at stake, achieving very little, but it made the indecisive and insecure types feel better. Another office trait I observed was how many were reluctant to accept any form of self or corporate criticism (no matter how well intended) and quickly responded by engaging in the blame game culture, instead of looking for positive and remedial solutions to issues or challenges that arose. Of course, whilst not limited to Asian work places and cultures, it became annoying but I was fortunately able to steer well clear of it all and just looked on with distant amusement, but sometimes unable to avoid the occasional wry smile and chuckle to myself. Nevertheless, when

working in both Singapore and Thailand, I did detect a slight undercurrent of rivalry between local office staff, all vying for the bosses eye; not so in Hong Kong or Korea.

One laughable tendency was that, even though their work had usually been fully completed by the end of the working day at 6 pm, junior staff would sit around the office “pretending” to be busy until the boss left for the day, then there would be a mass exodus. On many occasions when working late I found that it became necessary to remind many staff to go home, once their work was completed.

During all my years ashore, in order to mould a more coherent work force, I made a practice of putting on a “Sundowner” for staff on Fridays between 6-8pm, at a local Bar or Hotel. It was open to all employees and proved very popular with staff of all levels. It did much to harmonize staff and generate a Team spirit. My wife was very creative and hosted a ladies evening for staff wives at our apartment on the last Wednesday of each month with an array of Chinese, Thai and Japanese culinary delights on offer. Sometimes these gatherings went on until midnight and I almost had to expel the guests. I tried to avoid these ladies gatherings because the noise of the chatter and laughter was a bit overpowering for me. I preferred the solitude of a quiet drink elsewhere during these events.

Weekends were a nightmare, and the “Blackberry” became my worst enemy. If, for example, there was any kind of issue or incident (even of the most minor nature) every man and his dog became involved. To ensure they were seen to be 24/7 employees, everyone in the company from top to bottom was “CC’d”. The outcome was the continual (and I mean continual) “Beeping” which drove one to insanity. Most of the messages were repetitive and superfluous. It took me some time to stamp this out and introduce a “Prioritized System” of communication, where cascading was limited to those who needed to know and not “a cast of thousands”.

As a relatively recent retiree and looking back and pondering over what it used to be like, I sometimes ask myself if my analysis of the merits and faults of change I have experienced within shipping are a little too severe and jarring to the senses, but on reflection I feel they are in the main balanced and justified.

With today’s technology and transport revolution already well advanced, what of the future? Fully automated ships controlled from a desk top computer in some far distant and remote office, rather similar to piloting a drone, which will undoubtedly lead to fully autonomous ships? Will ships continue to be crewed like we know today, or will there be only a Master and handful of elite technocrats? It would appear anything is possible in this computerized and robotic day and age.

It is not unrealistic to anticipate a fully autonomous ship within a few years, using highly sensitive Radar, GPS cameras, sensors and lasers to navigate around conflicting traffic, and ultimately dock and undock, since the technology already exists. This is all feasible but is it practical? Will the IMO and other International Regulators let it all happen? It remains to be seen and only time will tell. What will today’s Mariners think of it all; not if but when, it actually eventuates?

Nevertheless, whenever asked if I could turn back the clock, would do it all again? My resounding answer would be YES. I was very fortunate to have experienced the very best years the shipping industry could offer, for which I will always be grateful.

End

SHIPPING TAIPANS OF THE CHINA COAST

By Geoff Walker

The name “Taipan” is afforded to those who hold the highest reverence and respect in Asian commercial circles. Loosely translated it means “Big Boss”. The emergence of the “Taipan” dates back to when Hong Kong was first colonized by the British in 1842, and the earlier “Hongs” of nearby Canton. “Hong” was the name given to those who controlled the warehouses and trading enterprises. In a futile attempt to stem and control the flow of Opium into China, the Chinese limited foreign ships trading with China to the port of Canton.

Of course, no matter what your perspective may be, development of foreign shipping in China is all linked one way or the other to the cessation of the first Chinese Opium War. Trade, shipping and the subsequent opening of five Chinese Ports to foreign trade – these were to become known as Treaty Ports, agreed in the Sino-British Treaty of Nanking in 1842 which ended the first Opium War, the opening of the Treaty Ports was in addition to the island of Hong Kong, which had earlier been ceded to the British in perpetuity by the Chinese.

The establishment of Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports afforded great opportunity to expatriate businessmen in which to expand their ventures, into what was considered a rich untapped market. These ports, other than Hong Kong, included, Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Ningpo (Ningbo), Fuchow (Fuzhou) and Shanghai. Accordingly, major trading houses of the times (mostly British) quickly developed these ports into major trading bases, building warehouses, wharfs, and offices for the staff they stationed in these venues, to facilitate their operations. These business enterprises catered for every need of both the expatriate and Chinese community, including essential services, amongst which one of the main was regular shipping services.

As part of the Treaty of Nanking, these expatriate entrepreneurs obtained “most favored” trading status and privilege, allowing them to dominate the market, by what must be considered both scrupulous and unscrupulous means. In most cases there were only a few major players in the race for dominance of the lucrative trade, the “Big Bosses” which became known as “Taipans” by mutually unspoken agreement. Being people worthy of great respect, business ability and achievement, the name “Taipan” was thus generally understood amongst most Oriental ethnic communities of the era. It lives on to this day, although a more modern interpretation may be “Tycoon”.

The foreign trading houses set about founding their own communities within China, which became subject to their own laws and customs, living as if in their country of origin. In real terms, it was a foreign occupation of China in all but name. Where the city had an exclusive area set aside for foreigners, this was called an “enclave”, but in cities with fewer numbers of foreigners then they lived among the local Chinese population. These “enclaves” were also sometimes called “concessions” which implied they were given away by agreement, again this was not always true, since a “concession” was a foreign leasehold where land could not be subleased back to the Chinese, and only chosen Chinese were allowed to enter.

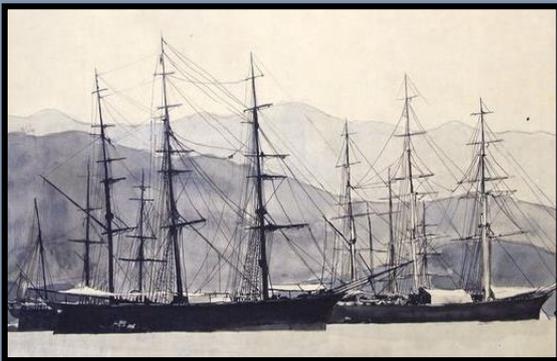
In some of the larger “concessions” such as Canton and Shanghai, foreigners lived in their own settlements under foreign not Chinese law. Many fine buildings were constructed, and an expatriate police force formed with Expatriate Officers in charge. Many of the fine stone buildings survive to this day, most notably along the Bund in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Wuhan. And so, it was, that a few notable British trading houses gained an iron grip on the movement of merchandise

through these Treaty Ports and to a large extent was the foundation on which many built their shipping empires of latter years.

It should be remembered that the catalyst for the coming about of the Treaty Ports was shipping, and the rights to trade with China. But with the establishment and mixing of foreign and Chinese influences it only became a matter of time before cheap labor was exploited and immorality, bribery, gambling, drug abuse and the importation of diseases such as Smallpox, Syphilis and Typhoid became common place. It is worthy of note that it was not only the foreigners that benefited from the newfound trading opportunities, but also the Chinese through their subsidiary role as a "Compradores", many of whom amassed vast fortunes from such activities.

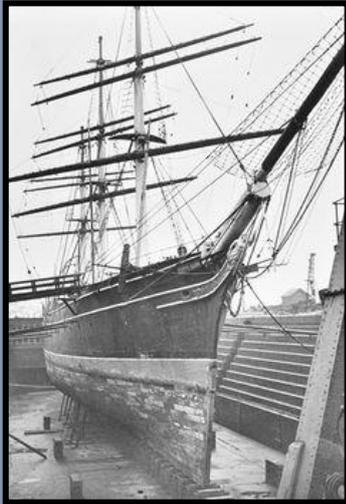
Without going into the minutiae and circumstances of history, suffice it to say that the establishment of the Treaty Ports enabled sailing ship, and later steam ship networks, to become legally established in China, and to those so involved, they became known as "China Traders".

Between 1845 and 1875 a considerable number of specialized Clipper Ships were built for the China Tea Trade. These ships were distinctive by their rakish bows, narrow beam, and lofty sail arrangements. Some of the more famous ships of the era were the "Ariel", "Taeping", "Cutty Sark", "Fiery Cross", "Thermopylae" and "Serica". A first line ship such as "Ariel" or "Thermopylae" could easily set thirty or more sails in favorable conditions, and any clipper taking part in the tea races of the mid-1860s might average 11 or 12 knots in moderate conditions, at a time when the steam fleet made eight or nine knots and would need to coal four or five times on a voyage between Britain and China.



Tea Clippers at Pagoda Anchorage, Foochow during the mid - 1860s. Foochow was one of the Treaty Ports and featured significantly in the export of tea from China.





Jardine Matheson House Flag and brochure of the era.

The fine lines of the Tea Clipper "Cutty Sark" shown whilst in drydock. A clipper ship could achieve a day's run of over 300 nautical miles, in favorable conditions. A passage time of between 99-105 days from Foochow and the UK was typical for Tea Clippers of the era. Races were conducted by vessels on the highly competitive tea trade route from China to the UK. First arrivals in the UK, carrying the new season tea pickings demanded the highest market prices, and with that went the largest bonuses to Captains and the crews of their ships.

By the start of the 1900s the two largest "Hongs" were Jardine Matheson and Company and the China Navigation Company, both ship owners and traders. Between them lay a "friendly" competitiveness and rivalry. The big bosses of these companies were known as "Taipans".

Jardine Matheson & Co was founded in 1832 by William Jardine and James Matheson. Working from an initial base in Canton (Guangzhou) they commenced trading in Opium within Asia region, but also Cotton, Tea and Silks, all of which were high value goods. Regular runs were made between Canton and Calcutta. It was during this period experimentations with the new emerging steamships were conducted, which they chartered.

In 1844, only two years after the British Colony was established, they moved their headquarters to Hong Kong, also opening a branch at Shanghai to give access to trade in the Yangtze basin. They used their new bases to develop and expand their trading activities along the China coast, using the Treaty Ports as their main conduits of entry in and out of China. After their early experiments in steam, Jardine's became more involved in steamships introducing them into services in the mid-1850s on the Bengal - China trade. At about the same point, regular services were introduced along the China coast Treaty Ports with occasional diversions to Japan. So, in 1873 a subsidiary, the China Coast S.N Co. was formed to operate between Chinese ports and Japan.

Jardine had launched a cargo shipping line from Calcutta in 1855 and began operating on the Yangtze River. The Indo-China Steam Navigation Company Ltd. was formed in 1881, and from then until 1939 maintained a network of ocean, coastal and river shipping services, which were managed by Jardine. In 1938, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the company bought four ships, Haiyuan, Haili,

Haichen and Haiheng from the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company; these vessels were subsequently operated between Hong Kong and Tientsin (modern day Tianjin).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jardine, Matheson & Co. had become the biggest and most influential of all the foreign trading companies in the Far East and had by that time expanded its interests and activities into such sectors including shipping, cotton mills and the construction of railway facilities. The company continued its expansion in China and by the turn of the century and early decades of the twentieth century had ventured into cold storage, packing and the brewing business. By this time, the company had also become the largest cotton spinner in Shanghai.

A new service from Hong Kong to Manila was opened in 1885. The Indo-China Steam Navigation Company Ltd. was formed in 1881, and from then until 1939 it maintained a network of ocean, coastal and river shipping services, which were managed by Jardine.

The ensuing years saw the further development of their businesses in China, including shipping, save for WW2 war years, but after the war and the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, conducting business within China became more difficult, so in 1954 Jardine Matheson and Company withdrew from China and refocused on Hong Kong, where they re consolidated their business and made the headquarters. A Far East - Australia service was introduced by the company once operations had returned to normal after WW2. Due to increasing competition by the end of 1955 passenger trade between the Far East, Straits and Bay of Bengal was abandoned and the same year, Auckland was added to the Australia service.

Shipping always played an important role in the expansion years of Jardine and in 1835 the firm had commissioned construction of the first merchant steamer in China, the "Jardine". She was a small vessel intended for use as a mail and passenger carrier between Lintin Island, Macau, and Whampoa Dock. However, the Chinese, draconian rules relating to foreign vessels, were nervous about a "coal fired ship" steaming up the Pearl River to Canton, so an edict was issued by the Chinese warning that she would be fired on if she attempted the passage. On the Jardine's first trial run from Lintin Island the forts on both sides of the Bogue opened fire and she was forced to turn back. The Chinese authorities issued a further warning, insisting that the ship leave China. In any event, by this time the "Jardine" required repairs and was sent to Singapore.

However, increasing competition from Indian and Japanese companies caused a steady decline in business and in 1974 ICSNC, London was liquidated. ICSNC, Hong Kong moved into the bulk shipping business in conjunction with the Wah Kwong Group and became involved in the Gearbulk consortium and pool of container ships. At this point the company diversified into other avenues of business.

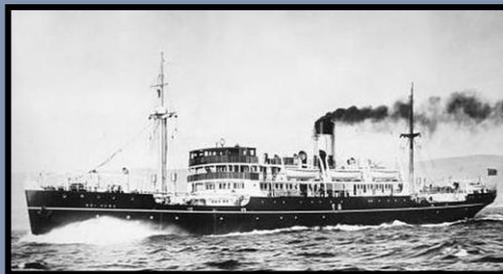


Typical crowded Pearl River scene ca 1915 showing various river steamers



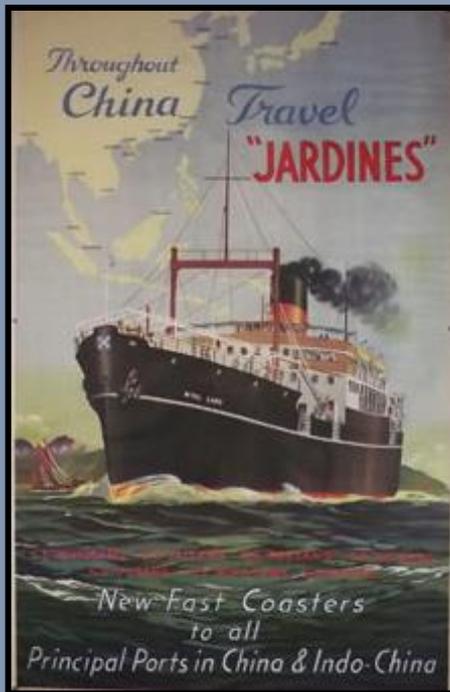
The small Jardine ship "Liwo" built at Hong Kong by Whampoa Dock Company in 1938. She became a casualty of WW2 when in action off Singapore during 1940.

The steamer "Hai Heng" purchased by Jardine in 1938 from the China Merchants SN Company and used on the Hong Kong to Tientsin (Tianjin) route.





From a Jardine brochure advertising their fast regular Far East China Coast service with sister ships "Wosang" "Esang" "Yusang" and "Mingsang"



Another brochure from Jardine, advertising their China and Indo-China services.

They operated a handsome fleet of small to medium sized cargo ships throughout South East Asia during the 1950-60s. However, a few of their ships did occasionally carry passengers.

In their heyday Jardine ships could be seen in India, Indo China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Chinese coastal ports, South Korea, the Philippines and as far south as Australia on a regular basis.

In later years when they became associated with Wah Kwong and Gearbulk, their ships could be seen globally, as not only did they facilitate regular Far East regional services, but they also became engaged in the tramp market with their bulk carriers.

There can be no doubt that Jardine Matheson was, and still is, considered one of the original founding "Hong" of Hong

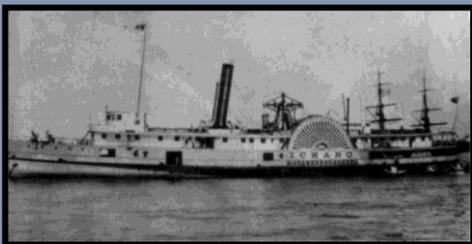
Kong shipping and business circles. They have since acquired widely diversified business interests, not only in Hong Kong but throughout Asia and Europe. They are irrevocably intertwined with Hong Kong and Asia and will remain as one of the founding companies which influenced trade and shipping in the Far East. Not only do they retaining their iconic business status but will also continue to have their Chief Executive known as the "Taipan".

Another one of the founding “Hongs” was the China Navigation Company, known simply as CNCo. The company was founded by John Samuel Swire with the view to providing paddle steamer services along the Yangtze River. By the early 1870s John Samuel Swire was convinced that there was an opening for increased steam shipping on the Yangtze River and as he was unable to interest other shipping companies to develop the trade, he decided to establish a new company himself to expand the business opportunities he envisaged. Hence, The China Navigation Company was incorporated in London in 1872.

In 1973 CNCo had 3 ships on the Yangtze River trade, since their acquisition of the Union SN Company, secured them 2 additional vessels, as well as leases on properties in Shanghai and other Chinese river ports. This was a period of intense expansion for CNCo and by the mid-1870s their scope of operation had been increased to include Canton and Pearl River ports and by the late 1870s encompassed the Shanghai to Ningpo and Shanghai to Tientsin routes. This, however, was a period of fierce competition causing some operators to pool their ships. So, in 1883, the “Coastal Boat Ownery”, which had been formed as a sort of co-operative to look after coastal traders and their ships, was absorbed into CNCo. This merger gave CNCo greater access to ships and by 1890 their expanded fleet consisted of some 29 ships. The enlarged fleet enabled CNCo to broaden its field of operation which by this time included Yangtze River ports, most south China coastal ports as far as the Pearl River, the Philippines, greater South East Asia, Australia, and Japan.

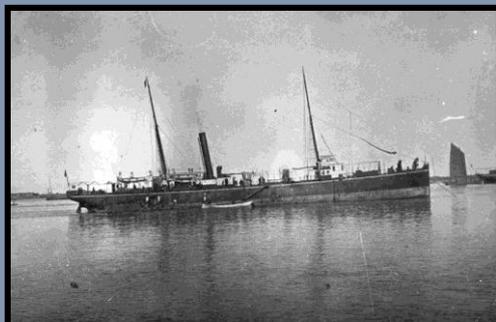


An early China Merchants SN Company brochure advertising their passenger services to Tsingtao and Pootoo by “SS Poo An”



The paddle steamer “Ichang” built in 1873 for the China Navigation Company.

The “Newchang” built in 1877 and operated by the “Coast Boat Ownery” until she became one of the vessels transferred to CNCo in 1883, forming part of the fleet’s expansion.



The 20th Century created many difficulties for shipping concerns operating in the China and South East Asia trades. These campaigns against non-Asian owners usually took the form of increased nationalistic sentiments, boycotts, and disruption to their shipping routes due to China’s internal civil instability. CNCo continued to operate until 1940 at which point their ships were requisitioned by the British Admiralty for war service. In late 1945, at the conclusion of hostilities, the CNCo fleet was returned to their owners’ which enabled the company to resume operations at Shanghai and Hong Kong. Once ships and property that had been seized by the Japanese was returned, normal working operations slowly resumed.



“SS. Whang Pu” built in Hong Kong for CNCo in 1920, by their subsidiary company Taikoo Dockyard. Over ensuing years of CNCo’s expanding shipping business, Taikoo Dockyard built many vessels for the company over coming years.



“SS Shenking” built in 1931 by Scotts of Greenock for CNCo. Depicted alongside at one of the Chinese river ports, circa mid 1930s

The Far East interests of Swire’s was placed under the stewardship of their Far East Trading Company “Butterfield and Swire” and managed through their principal offices in Shanghai and Hong Kong. The B&S office in Shanghai tended to assume responsibility for the management N and S China coastal ports and shipping services whilst the B&S office in Hong Kong did likewise for Indo-China, Thailand, the Philippines and the Straits shipping and trading affairs. The management of Taikoo Dockyard and Taikoo Sugar Refinery was assumed by their Hong Kong office.



A Taikoo Shipyard built ship for CNCo “SS Shuntien” launched in 1934. She was later torpedoed by submarine U-559 in 1941. She had a sister vessel “SS Shengking”.

A fine vessel with more trending lines of the times, built for CNCo during the 1960's by Taikoo Shipyard, "MV Kweilin" built in 1962, as one of several sister vessels. Photographed at Hong Kong.



The "MV Kuala Lumpur" passenger vessel operated between 1960-71. She was the ex - Troopship "Dilwara", purchased from the British India SN Company. The vessel was engaged in cruising then as a "Haj" ship carrying pilgrims, primarily from Malaysia to Jeddah



Above, CNCo's popular passenger cargo liner 'MV Changsha', a regularly engaged on the Far East – Australia run during 1960-70s, she had a sister vessel "MV Taiyuen".

Also, in the 1960s, CNCo initiated a passenger cruising business creating a specialist market operating seminar cruises from Japan. CNCo successfully dominated this market for almost 20 years.

In 2003 Bank Line Ltd of London (an iconic British tramp and liner shipping company) was acquired by Swire and operated as part of their shipping conglomerate until 2009, when Bank Line ceased all operations.

Bank Line had for many years provided a westbound round-the-world liner service linking Europe to the South Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea. During later years, this service was operated by 4 x 20,000 DWT Finish built ships named Speybank, Arunbank, Foylebank and Teignbank which were converted in the United Kingdom for the South Pacific service. These ships, while still managed by Bank Line, were renamed to Mahinabank, Tikeibank, Gazellebank and Boularibank, and sent to Singapore for drydocking and extensive refits prior to integration into the CNCo fleet. However, due to the economic downturn of 2009 the round-the-world cargo liner service was terminated and all 4 of these vessels were sold out of the fleet in late 2009.

The end of Bank Line's ships was not without incident. On 28 April 2009, on her last complete voyage in round-the-world service, Boularibank was attacked by Somalian pirates 120 miles northeast of Socotra Island at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden. Fortunately, this attack was foiled, whilst another converted Finish built ship, Foylebank, briefly featured in the 2000 drama film "Cast Away" as the ship that rescues the character portrayed by the American actor Tom Hanks



Swire operated (ex - Bank Line vessel) the Finish built "MV Mahinabank"



Another of the ex-Bank Line Finish built vessels operated by the CNCo, “MV Boularibank”

So, it was in 2009 that CNCo relocate its headquarters to Singapore and established The China Navigation Company Pte Limited, as a subsidiary of The China Navigation Company Limited (UK registered parent company). Thus, Singapore assumed the role as Far East Headquarters, away from their traditional Hong Kong base. The company has evolved since its inception in operating niche trades on the Yangtze River and along the China coast to establish its current position as one of the leading providers of multipurpose liner shipping services with a specific focus on Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands.

End

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