



News of British India, its ships and staff, the history and 'histoires', of ships and sealing wax, nautical matters and a miscellany of maritime musings

Issue 1: September 2008

## FROM THE FUTURE

WELCOME...

to the first edition of "...calling BI"!!

This occasional emailed newsletter will update you on all things BI, some things marine and any other things that may tickle the fancy of your editors. We are a FREE publication for any subscriber and we are NOT taking attention away from the BISN website or the various message boards. Indeed, we will link in with them and gather any interesting strings of discussions. We have found that many who log onto the various pages do so infrequently and "...calling BI" will alert these to the various sites and events being offered.

We will offer reports from the various reunions, comment on matters of the day, as well as indulging our humour in little *divertissements*. Space will be given to your views and stories, as far as (bandwidth) space allows – but no vitriol, please!

What we will NOT do is hassle you to become a subscriber - even if it *is* free! "...calling BI" has no wish to worry your spam filter. You must actively apply for a subscription (see link later). The readership of this newsletter is NOT restricted to BI Group members or ex-BI personnel. The only qualification you need is an interest in BISN Co and maritime matters. Under NO circumstances will this

information be divulged to any other party - in most cases even your editor won't know for whom he is writing!

And remember, your Editor is not an expert – we'll get things wrong, probably upset a few along the way but an

expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing.

"So, explain about the flags then"

Simple - they are the International Code of Signals flags representing GTZY - the BI fleet call sign. Every ship in the world has a unique call-sign, but GTZY was allotted to One Aldgate so they could send the same message, say, about a special bonus for all the hard work, to each ship in the fleet at once. Much like today's multi-texts on a mobile phone. Not that your Editor can remember seeing that message, of course....

And later in this issue....

FROM THE PAST....

FROM THE PASSENGERS....

FROM THE NEWS....

## FROM THE PAST....

### Long time no see...

The long awaited season of reunions is almost upon us, kicking off with the 10<sup>th</sup> UK BI Reunion, being held this year in Runnymede on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Bookings for Runnymede 2008 are going well and organiser Sue Spence expects the following numbers at the moment (August 2008): Dinner: 186; Curry Lunch: 113; Boat Trip: 122; Ice Breaker: 106

Your contact is Danny Ravn at [jdravn@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jdravn@bigpond.net.au) who will also send you an up-to-date guest list on request. Your editor is very sad that a family wedding prevents him from going, so say "hi!" to everyone from me.



Being a mere deckie, another event that is unlikely to let me in is the BI Retired Engineer Officers Association annual luncheon and reunion in Glasgow (truth to tell, I probably wouldn't be able to understand all that

arcane talk of crossheads and kilo-joules anyway!). The next reunion will be on 18<sup>th</sup> September 18, 2008, so get your skates on. Any former BI engineer or electrical officer who is not a member of the association

can contact the Association's secretary James Slater email: [james.slater@zen.co.uk](mailto:james.slater@zen.co.uk) or phone 01706 351190 or 07702 124840 for information.

Photograph by © L. H. Johnson

It is definitely not too late to book for this reunion, which is being held close to London and within easy reach of Gatwick and Heathrow airports. Contact Mrs Sue Spence for details at [bi@johnmspence.plus.com](mailto:bi@johnmspence.plus.com). I know of at least one ex-BI engineer coming from as far away as Vancouver - make mine a double kilbaggie, Nigel!!

The dates are carefully chosen to allow you time to pack your bags and get a few airmiles on your credit (9022 of them according to Google). Off we go to the BI Reunion in Fremantle on 15<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

Final arrangements for the Fremantle reunion are in progress; currently (Aug 7) 172 people are booked to attend with a very good representation from overseas. You'll have to be quick, though, because the organisers were accepting late bookings only up to the end of August. There is a block booking of rooms at the Esplanade Hotel at competitive rates available. The cost per person in Australian Dollars is \$25.00 Registration Fee and \$350.00 for the five 'official' functions.

Don't just sit there in front of your screen - click on the links and

**BE THERE!**



# FROM THE PASSENGERS....



## PRIDE OF THE ARMADA ...

In early January 1965, the ss Kenya of the British India Steam Navigation Company, better known as the BI Line, was tied up at the dock in Cadiz, Spain. The Kenya, with its distinctive black funnel with two white bands near the top, looked majestic. In contrast, the grey winter skies blended with the black polluted oil slicked waters and the garbage strewn dock with its drab delapidated dirty brown stone warehouses.

## MAIDEN VOYAGE

From London to the Bay of Biscay  
And past the straits at Gib  
By Malta through the blazing Med  
To Suez and Port Said.

While we were on the upper deck  
Ensnoced in quarantine,  
In sick bay for we had the mumps  
So said doctor MacBean.

Through Suez down to Aden  
To B.I. was the toast  
Round the Horn of Africa to  
Mombasa on the coast.

We were on the maiden voyage  
The new pride of the line  
The S.S. Kenya, British India's  
New ship on the brine.

When the Red Sea lead us on  
We missed nanny Yvette,  
For while we all remained abaft  
She roamed as doctors pet.  
And what seemed very interesting  
Is that some years later on  
We were diagnosed with mumps again  
Something must have been wrong.

From London to the Bay of Biscay  
And past the straits at Gib  
We took the Kenya's maiden voyage  
I'm telling you no fib  
And when we reached Mombasa  
Who came to meet us there,  
But my father on the quayside  
With swimming pool green hair.

Neil McLeod, US

Most of the passengers had just finished lunch when word spread that a Spanish frigate had entered the harbour. Many rushed up on deck and watched the Spanish man o'war make her way, unaided by tugs to attempt docking at the wharf which was at a right angle to the Kenya's bow.

After several attempts the filthy salt encrusted war ship with black tar like smoke belching from her funnel positioned herself parallel to the dock and a lusty cheer went up from the assembled passengers.

Little did we realise that this was just the start of the seamanship demonstration by the inept crew. A line was thrown, only to fall short into the oily water which lapped at the side of the dock. An enthusiastic cheer erupted from the passengers. A second, a third and a fourth attempt was made to throw the line, each time the cheering grew louder, much to the consternation of the captain who could be heard shouting obscenities and seen pacing frantically on the open bridge.

Spain's naval pride was at stake. The captain in an attempt to save face, flew from the open bridge to the stern deck, snatched the line from a not-so-able seaman and with a mighty heave threw the line towards the dock. The tension mounted and again the crowd cheered as the line splashed back into the water below. Meanwhile the frigate was drifting further from the dock.

Three or four officers rushed to their commander's side and after much hand waiving they summoned another fine rating. The rating rushed of to return within minutes with a gun. The cheering passengers on the Kenya fell silent trying to anticipate what the gallant captain would order. We realised quickly that it was not the intent to execute any of the passengers, rather they used the gun to shoot a line ashore, where several sailors pounced on the line, saving the day and hauled in the rope to secure the frigate to the wharf. A louder cheer erupted, before the passengers sought the warmth of the bar to toast the Pride of the Armada.

Kenneth Miller, Canada





## USCG acts on response plans

THE US Coast Guard has confirmed that it has started to enforce requirements for owners and operators of large non-tank vessels to prepare and submit plans for responding to a worst-case oil spill from their vessels.

Should a non-tank vessel be found operating in a US port or waterway without a properly submitted response plan, the cognisant coastguard captain of the port will exercise authority under the Ports and Waterways Safety Act of 1972 and impose operational controls on the vessel, as necessary, to safeguard the port.

"...callingBI" acknowledges some of our information derives from other e-zines. In this issue, we thank our friends (Chris Hewer and John Guy) from **Maritime Advocate Online**, which is a weekly digest of news and views on the maritime industries, with particular reference to legal dispute resolution ([contactus@AfterOfficeHours.com](mailto:contactus@AfterOfficeHours.com)) and from **BOW WAVE** (Sam Ignarski), published each week to the transport, insurance, shipping and finance industries ([sam@wavyline.com](mailto:sam@wavyline.com))

Aaah! the joys of modern sea travel...! Whilst waiting for a ferry in Kirkwall on Saturday, July 26, I read a sign that said, 'Due to the Northern Isles sports this weekend, sailing times have changed. More information on 872044'. The answer message on 872044 said, 'Office closed until Monday. See information at port'. Wonderful place, Orkney!

Even BI didn't get up to this.... 12 Aug A group of 20 sailors set off for a circumnavigation of Africa on board a replica Phoenician ship the "Phoenicia". Details and progress of the ship can be found on the website at:- <http://www.phoenicia.org.uk/>

**We will NOT be sending "...calling BI" UNLESS YOU ASK FOR IT!**

To subscribe, merely email [lyn.johnson@biship.com](mailto:lyn.johnson@biship.com) with your name, whether you were shore staff, sea staff or may be you are just interested in the company. Further details would be appreciated, of course, such as rank, deck, engine room, passenger, *et cetera* but only if you wish to. NO details will go further than our subscription files. AND IT'S FREE!

Your contributions are welcomed - for instance, I need a good picture of the Bankura, in which I served as an apprentice around 1962-3 plus a crew list of that time....thanks in anticipation! And see also the call by John Rees at <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/BIship/message/35079> Get writing and we could put you in our next issue. All featured authors will be acknowledged and attributed, unless you specifically ask no to be.

What do we have that *you* want? Let us know at [callingBI@biship.com](mailto:callingBI@biship.com)

