



News of the BISN company, its ships and staff, its history and *histoires*, of ships and sealing wax, nautical natters, maritime miscellanies and swinging of lanterns

## FROM THE EDITOR...

Who would have believed it? "...calling BI" is two years old with this edition! Your Editor's thanks go to those who suggested the idea in the first place, to the many contributors who have provided the bulk of your reading but mainly to you, Dear Reader, for providing the continuing reason that gets your Editor excited after all these issues.

A truly great silly season story appeared recently in many newspapers and on the BBC when a 12 foot crocodile was spotted in the English Channel near Boulogne. The French authorities reacted with the precautionary closure of some beaches. In the event the creature turned out to be a piece of wood. Animal welfare experts said that crocodiles needed water temperatures of around 30 degrees C to survive and this was unlikely in the Channel. Local restaurants reported large sales of the classic French fast food *Croque Monsieur*. Still on the sea creature theme, your Editor read recently that penguins mate for life. Not surprising really - a better looking one is hardly likely to come along.

This website <http://www.historicnavalfiction.com/> is a must for, er, fans of historical naval fiction. Your Editor frequently dozes off in his chair with such books of maritime derring-do, hearing in his imagination the creaking of old tarred stays and the slap-slap on the side. And if any readers imagine that we are talking of other than ships here, they can stay behind after class.

With all the recent chat on the Biship staff website about food on various BI ships, your Editor can recommend <http://www.historicnavalfiction.com/index.php/general/merc-hantman-fiction/122-the-terrible-voyage> .

The UK-based P&I Club manager, Thomas Miller, in celebration of its 125th Anniversary, is supporting the renovation of what is believed to be the oldest ship still afloat in Africa, the 38m long motor ship "*Chauncy Maples*". The ship is to be transformed into a floating clinic to bring primary health care to half a million of the world's poorest people living around Lake Malawi. Funds are now being raised by the Oxford-based [Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust](http://www.chauncymaples.org/).

We are indebted in this issue to David Mitchell for his potted history and unearthing from his bulging attic several items relating to the BI 'K-class' ships, on which he sailed (see the Little Black Book extract in our last issue). We look forward to your own memories. Thanks also to David Hammond for yet another crew list. Other contributors are also gratefully acknowledged. And a great many thanks to Tom Kelso for donating extra raffle prizes to our charity fund raising raffle next month. So now there's even more reason to invest in a few tickets! You have bought your tickets, haven't you? Check the back page.

See you in Newcastle! Seize the opportunity to buy your Editor a beer or two!

Enjoy your read!

## FROM THE CONFERENCE FLOOR ....

It's a bit late to tell you about a conference that has taken our eye, but your editor feels it would be remiss of him to ignore it. The 44th Maritime History Conference at Exeter University in UK will showcase such intriguing topics as "*Using tattoos to express individuality in the Victorian Navy*" and "*Britain's colonial naval volunteers and the forging of identity during the Second World War*". Unfortunately the conference starts on 18th September, so there's not a lot of time to contact [Claire Keyte](mailto:claire.keyte@exeter.ac.uk) to book your place on what promises to be an interesting weekend. Your editor regrets his non-attendance, but it does raise the question as to what the other 43 conferences featured. He'd love to know.

In a related theme, the UK's [National Maritime Museum](http://www.nationalmaritimemuseum.org/) is showcasing an exhibition of Alan Villiers' photographs some which record his voyages aboard Arabian dhows (1938-39) record what he saw as the 'last days of sail' in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the coasts of Arabia and north-east Africa .

Villiers captures the age-old Arabian sailing traditions and coastal trade routes, the great skills and hardship endured by the sailors and pearl divers- a unique way of life that has now passed.

Melbourne-born Alan Villiers (1903-82) was a journalist, writer and photographer whose passion for sail took him to sea on the last square-riggers. They are recorded in his best-selling books and thousands of photographs. The exhibition runs into October.

To mark the centennial of marine explorer and filmmaker Jacques Cousteau's birth, the [Cousteau Society](http://www.cousteau.org/) is relaunching his remarkable ship, *Calypso*, as a touring educational centre. The *Calypso* was sunk and badly damaged when a barge in Singapore accidentally rammed it in 1996, a year before his death.

The renovated wooden ship will include the Cousteau-designed mini-submarines, the underwater scooters, aqualungs, diving suits, cameras and other emblematic equipment used during his expeditions.

Built at the height of the Second World War in Seattle, *Calypso* was commissioned as a British minesweeper in 1943. She was acquired in 1950 by the Irish millionaire Thomas Loel Guinness, who leased it to Cousteau for a symbolic one franc per year. It was outfitted to Cousteau's specifications in 1950, including a mobile lab to support his research and a unique "false nose" used as an underwater observation chamber.

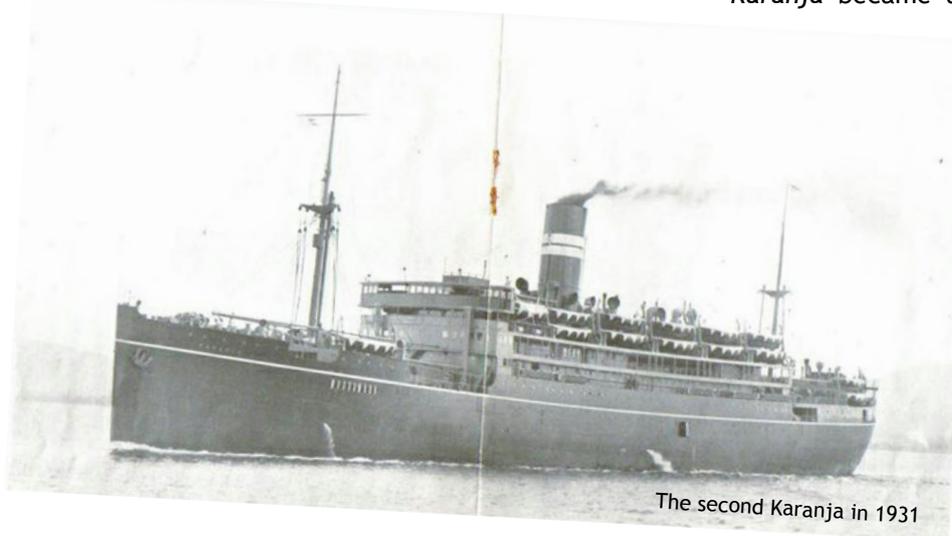
<http://www.cousteau.org/about-us/calypso-restoration>

To send in your views, notes, photos, brickbats or spare gold bars, please click on any "...callingBI" logo

## FROM THE STORY OF THE K's ....

From 1900 until war was declared on 4th August 1914, the BI expanded at a phenomenal rate taking delivery of 87 vessels. Amongst those on order, but not delivered until 1915/17, were three ships destined for the Bombay-East

After service as Landing Ship *Keren* in WW2, *Kenya* was bought by the Ministry of Transport for the Royal Navy, eventually finding another life as Sitmar Line's *Castel Felice* until being broken up in 1971. *Karanja* became a Landing Ship Infantry



The second *Karanja* in 1931

Africa-Durban service from Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson's Newcastle yard; *Karoa*, *Karapara* and *Karagola*. All three served in a variety of transport roles throughout the war, *Karapara* as a hospital ship.

(Large) in July 1941. On 12 November 1942 whilst off Bougie as part of Operation Torch she was bombed, set on fire and abandoned. At the outbreak of WW2, 103 ships made up the BI fleet. By 15th August 1945 (VJ Day) this had been reduced to 53. As victory came nearer, Government restrictions on merchant ship building were relaxed and by January 1947, only 24 new ships were in service. Immediately the war had ended, orders were placed for eighteen more, including *Kampala* (10304gt) and *Karanja* (10294gt). Delivered in August 1947 and October 1948, these were to be the largest built for a BI India based service and were in essence a modernised version of the pre-war 'K's from the same yard, Alexander Stephen & Sons.

After WWI, Lord Inchcape (as J L Mackay became in 1911), was asked by the Government to dispose of surplus standard emergency ships built for the war effort and captured enemy tonnage. BI losses had totalled 22 vessels, so thirty seven were acquired at bargain prices to replace these, with the fleet building up to 161 ships in 1920.

Throughout the 1920's, 48 mainly new-build vessels replaced obsolete tonnage allowing service improvements in standards of accommodation and speed. Dominant amongst these were the 'M' and 'D' classes for the UK to East Africa and India services, some of which survived to the early 1950's and in 1923, another 'K', the *Khandalla*, to meet demands on the India-Africa run. She survived WW2 along with her sisters, eventually going to the breakers in 1950/51.



The shock of the world slump following WW2 had severe effects upon world trade and for nearly a decade little new tonnage entered the BI fleet, but the major exceptions were two 'K' class, the *Kenya* and *Karanja*, ordered in 1929 for the India-East Africa service as upgrades to the earlier 'K's. *Kenya* (9890gt) entered service in December 1930, followed by *Karanja* (99891gt) in March 1931.

Throughout the fifties and into the sixties they traded from Bombay to East and South Africa calling at Karachi and Seychelles until in 1966, *Kampala* was turned round in Dar es Salaam as a result of changing patterns of trade. This signalled the beginning of the end, but despite this, there was still enough in the route for *Karanja* to be refitted





# Karanja Times.

THE INDIAN OCEANS LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPER  
VOL III NO.42      FINAL EDITION      15th JULY 1973

This is the last edition of one of the last surviving ship's newspapers. Its end marks the sunset of the tradition of News Letters, popular as far back as the reign of King Charles II (1649-1685) which were distributed at coffee-houses and public establishments such as wayside inns.

The ship's newspaper came into its own with the establishment of the GYZZ Wireless SHIPPRESS which broadcast items of world news, sports news and stock exchange reports twice daily in morse which--unlike the unreliable reception of speech at sea--is nearly always readable.

The Karanja Times was reborn after the disbandment of the official GYZZ SHIPPRESS as the brainchild of 2nd radio officer Stephen Jackson who lives in Torquay, Devon, in England, on 4th October 1972. Mr Jackson, blessed with a perception unusual in an age singularly lacking the 'human touch', realised that people prefer to "read" the news rather than have it none-too-clearly gabbled over a loudspeakers by a disembodied voice.

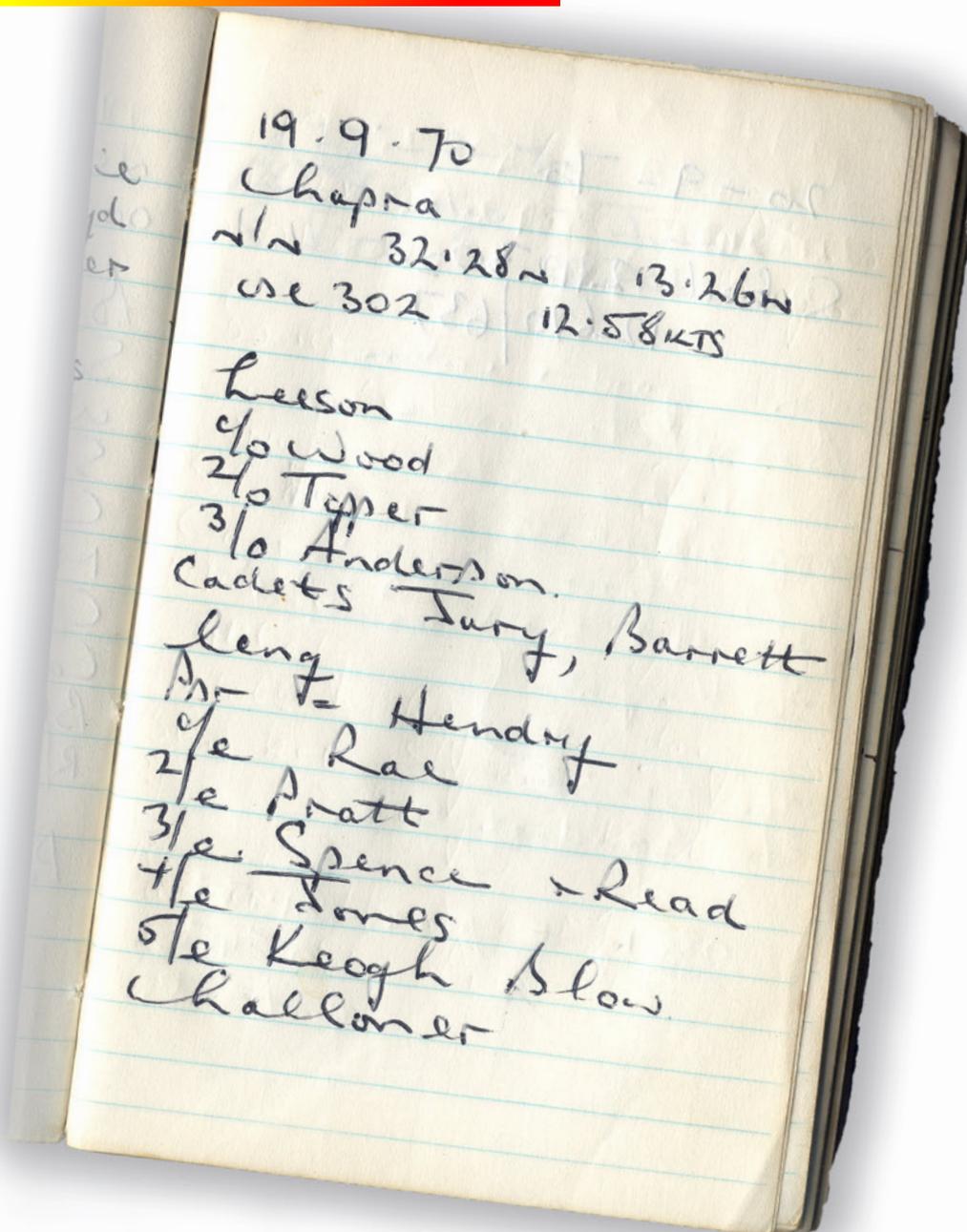
Since its rebirth the Karanja Times under the able editorship of radio officer Jackson, has been loyally supported by a few Karanja Engineer officers and Navigating officers who have given generously of their free time to keep the paper going. A special mention should be made of maintenance engineer Pete Dixon, the artist whose creation and presentation of the KARANJA KEN, A.B. cartoons have brightened the lives of hundreds of passengers: not to mention those of ship's officers.

I can think of no more fitting tribute to the Karanja Times than a few poignant lines from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam...

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel Half a line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

Chief Radio Officer M.B.H. Benyon





FROM THE ARCHIVES (a)....

land and the elevation of the photographer the location is Mombasa. Many thanks to all the readers who contacted us; you are stars indeed!

In our last issue, we asked if you can identify this old picture a reader found on the internet. True to form, several of you contacted "... calling BI" to say that the ship was, in fact, the *Karoa* (1915-1950), sometime between 1924 and 1932. *Karoa* did not have a crow's nest like her two sisters *Karapara* (1915-1950) and *Karagola* (1917-1948). *Karoa* transferred from the India-East Africa service in 1932 to Calcutta-Singapore.



In the photograph, at her stern on the port side is what looks like an East African Harbours tug and given the lie of the surrounding

# FROM THE NEW YEAR....

As the year begins to drag to its inevitable close, our minds are directed to that amazing and indispensable tome, the BI Calendar. Produced by [Tony Bernthal](#) as a labour of love, it is also a veritable work of art. Tony has contacted "...calling BI" to see if any readers have pictures of ships or memorable BI 'dates' that could possibly appear in this 2011 edition. Contact Tony via email by clicking on the link above.



PLAQUES SHOWING THOSE BAPTISED USING THE BELL



## JANUARY 2010



Sunday 24	MODASA sold for scrapping at Blythe for a price of £61,000 in 1954
Monday 25	SURADA 1 launched by A & J Inglis, Glasgow in 1902
Tuesday 26	SURADA 2 torpedoed by U-188 in the Arabian Sea, off Socotra Island, in 1944. Ivor LLOYD requested this to be include as he was on board at time.
Wednesday 27	RHONA assisted at the evacuation of Singapore 1942
Thursday 28	GOZARIA launched as WAR PIKE by W.Gray & Co., West Hartlepool in 1918
Friday 29	Robert John Leslie BOWMAN christened on board Sirdhana at Bombay in 1972
Saturday 30	BAMORA 2 delivered by Harland Wolff Ltd., Govan in 1961

**Weekly Notes:** From Sandy Bowman. I served on SIRDHANA as 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate in the 1970's and took her to scrap in Taiwan. When living in Bombay my son was born in 1971 and we had him christened on the ship, using the ship's bell, on 29th January 1972. When she was scrapped I was given the bell which has now been used in the christening of my 3 children and 7 grandchildren. In the picture you can see the wooden plaque which sits over the bell and has small plaques with the dates and places of all christenings.



Sunday 15	CHUPRA
Monday 16	DWAF
Tuesday 17	AR
Wednesday 18	
Thursday 19	
Friday 20	
Saturday 21	

Weekly Notes



## FROM THE ARCHIVES (b)....

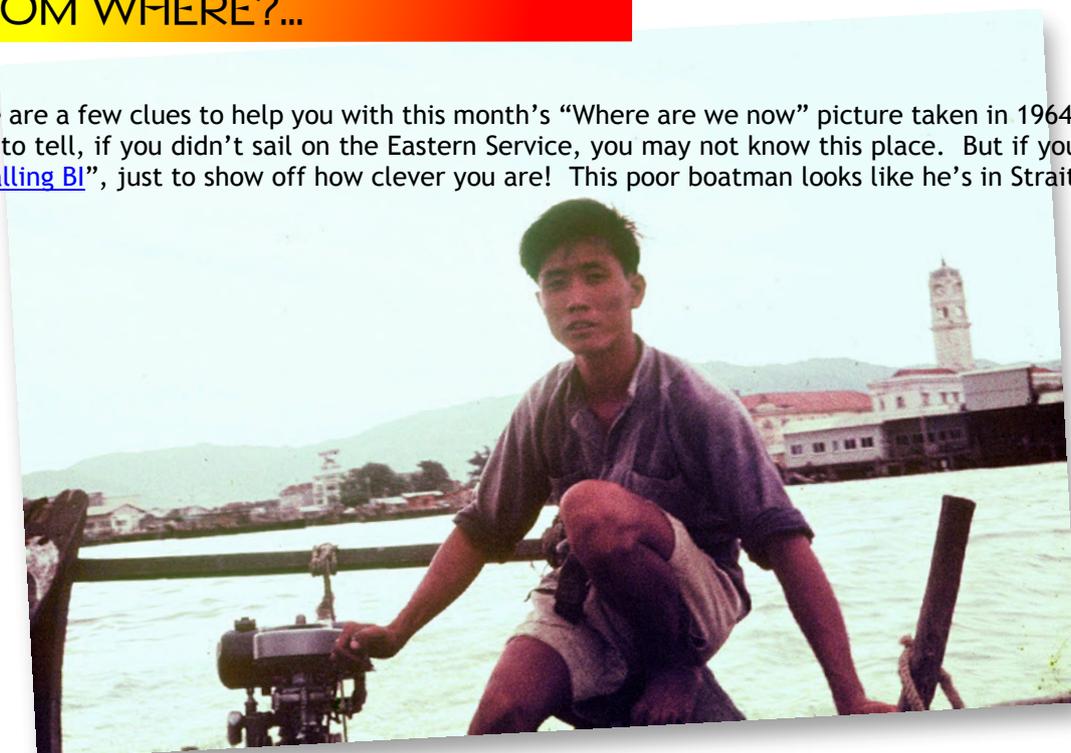


Reader Mike Bellamy has written into “...calling BI” to say that last year he was in Singapore for a wedding and stayed at a gem of a boutique hotel in Temple Street in the heart of China Town, The Temple Inn. In the corridors were various pictures of old Singapore, etc including this one of a BI ship which he is unable to name - any ideas? Mike’s last BI ship was the *Bombala* in 1971, where he served as Chief Officer.



## FROM WHERE?...

There are a few clues to help you with this month’s “Where are we now” picture taken in 1964 by Ted Treacher, but truth to tell, if you didn’t sail on the Eastern Service, you may not know this place. But if you do, drop us a line at “...calling BI”, just to show off how clever you are! This poor boatman looks like he’s in Strait-ened circumstances.





# Matiana jigsaw raffle in aid of Seamen's charities



The staff at “...calling BI” are very pleased to offer this old BI jigsaw puzzle and related handbook for the 1922 built *Matiana* as a raffle prize to help Seamen's charities.

The going rate for these BI jigsaws, when they turn up, is between £25/£50 unless luck is on your side and the item is missed by a serious bidder in auction ... and they don't turn up very often! Chad Valley made a series of four for the BI, including this one of "*Matiana and Dwarka*" by artist James Greig dating from 1933. It has to be said that the box containing the jigsaw is tatty, but all the pieces are pristine and present.

Other items of BI memorabilia are also being offered as prizes. These include five copies of the “*Woodara Review*”, published between 1924-1930, five copies of the “*Nardana Review*”, published between 1930-1933 and a copy of the illustrated programme of an on-board production performed by the *Nardana* Repertory Co between London and Bombay on 23rd February 1934.

The raffle will be drawn at the BI reunion Friday night dinner in Newcastle at the beginning of October, but you don't have to attend to participate. To ensure the widest possible participation, raffle tickets are available now from [callingbi@biship.com](mailto:callingbi@biship.com). Payment can be made by cheque at only £2 each (a mailing address will be given in response to your e-mail requests) or via PayPal at £2.50 each (to cover PayPal transaction costs) to e-mail address [eljay01787-ebay@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:eljay01787-ebay@yahoo.co.uk) You can even pay cash if you happen upon the “...calling BI” editor in Rick's Bar or some other such low dive. You can buy as many tickets as you like!

All money raised will be donated to the Seafarers UK and other charities in the name of the ...calling BI Newsletter.

**Please be generous and open hearted!**