

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...

Our usual pot-pourri of subjects this month. For those of you who have an eye for such things, we can recommend the 'Canberra Exhibition on the P&O Heritage website

(<http://www.poheritage.com/the-collection>).

It centres largely on the various design criteria inside and out but also contains interesting pictures of the ship being built at Harland & Wolff's Belfast yard. And whilst we are on such things, who said shipbuilding yards are nasty, noisy, dirty places? Our friends at gCaptain beg to differ. See <http://tinyurl.com/ShipyardPhotos>. We may as well continue with this shipbuilding theme and gaze upon the charms of Rosie the Rivetter, from a famous US WW2 poster. Rosie was in fact Geraldine Doyle (1924-2010), pictured at age 17 and we are sure that she would have made short shrift with any inopportune remarks from a gang foreman! Rosie had a sister-in-arms, as it were, called Wendy the Welder but sadly we could find no similar portrait of this equally fearsome sounding lady. As our young Tracey appears round the editorial door with what she calls 'a

cuppa char', your editor is suddenly filled with trepidation.

However, there is much that is BI in these pages apart from these jottings of shipyards. A veritable cornucopia of correspondence from readers, a marvellously impressive boat belonging to an actual sea-going BI-er, a tale of a family tree, our famously obscure "Where are we now?" competition and a plethora of photographs and a piece from that *meister* writer John Prescott all await you, dear reader.

As the northern hemisphere begins to pack up its summer holiday suitcases (and the southern one recovers from its first snow in thirty years - at least in the case of Auckland apparently), your editor begins to think longingly about the sun-baked hills of the Luberon in southern France where he will be working out what to put in the next edition of '...calling BI'. Perhaps

your photographs or maybe a yarn or two from your days with BI - he'll look forward to reading them on his return.



## FROM THE WAGES FRONT...

Remember those dear dead days of £13 a month as a cadet? Earning over \$250,000 in shipping? Well pat yourself on the back as you are now officially ultra-rich and as such will be taxed accordingly, at least in the US where President Obama is targeting higher earners.

Although many people have to rely on a lottery win to earn \$250,000 - surely we are *all* rich in shipping, aren't we? Marine recruitment agency Spinnaker Consulting has done a bit of research to find out what shore-based shipping staffers are pulling down around the globe. They analysed salary data provided by shipping employers for 4,300 shore based staff and found that in shipping a mere 2.2% earn base salaries of \$250k and above. Another 40% earn more than \$100k and a third of them top \$150k. Despite all those sexy rumours, only 1.5% earned a bonus in excess of 100% last year and you might be surprised to learn that just 2.4% landed a bonus of 50-100%. Some 91% earn bonuses of under 30% of salary.

So who does get all those big bonuses then? No surprise that the loadsamoney brigade - those with bonuses above

100% - are chartering and freight-trading staff with a few senior executives such as CEOs, CFOs and general counsel thrown in. A similar picture emerges for 50%+ bonuses but with some senior ship management staff and senior operations staff creeping in. Unsurprisingly, the dry cargo market fared much better than the tanker market in bonus terms last year, with higher proportions earning bigger bonuses in dry than in wet across chartering and ship management staff. Proportionately, three times as many dry chartering staff earned bonuses in excess of 100% and twice as many between 50-100%.

Interestingly, operations staff fared no better in the dry bulk market. It's difficult to say why. What is unarguable is that operations staff, particularly those with strong contract of affreightment experience became much better paid during the boom years as owners and operators realised the need to deliver repeatable high levels of customer-service. Whereas once they were second class citizens, senior operations staff in particular can earn very respectable salaries nowadays.

Maybe your editor should start charging for this newsletter...?

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

## FROM THE SUBSCRIBERS.

It is always a pleasure to hear from subscribers and this recent missive from Peter Glass in France was particularly welcome. "Just to say how much I enjoyed reading the latest issue of '... calling BI'. I had read the article by Peter Murphy previously in Sea Breezes, but it was good to see it again and I am sure that many an old BI hand must have enjoyed reading it.

So too the letter from Eoin Bruce. He obviously found the BI very much to his liking and who can blame him after what I have heard about Stricks. A good friend of mine served his time with them and could not wait it get out. He even found the Clan Line pretty good after Stricks. Eoin mentioned two of the Captains he sailed with, namely, Stan Turk and Duncan Raine and one C/E, John Smith, all of whom I sailed with. The latter two were wonderful guys but Stan could be a bit touchy. He was Second Mate and I was Cadet Third Mate on the *Urlana* in the early fifties which counted for very little in Stan's book. The Captain was G A Patterson (Puggle Pat) who was one of the great BI characters. I could write a book on him alone.

*Waroonga* also brought back many memories. I stood by her in the builder's yard at Scotts of Greenock and then sailed on her as Second Mate on her maiden voyage to South Africa on charter to T & J Harrisons and thence to Oz on the second voyage where I left her in Melbourne to proceed to Bombay on the *Chupra* as Second Mate to join the *Daressa* in Bombay. I was relieved in Melbourne by P J Pederson, who sadly died young on one of the B class ships in Brisbane some years later.

*Uganda* of course everybody knows and I was a cadet on the *Kampala* in Mombasa when she arrived on her maiden voyage.

All so long ago now and so many happy memories.

I sent a menu of the Dordogne RNA to Sue Spence earlier this year and I think she forwarded it to you. *Uganda* still sails on in rural France.

Thanks again for a wonderful publication and keep up the good work. Bot salaams, Peter Glass". Thanks for your note, Peter.

And a little email from Dave Mitchell - "You may remember putting Gavin Robinson whose Grandfather was

an E/O in BI pre-WWII in touch with me for info about various ships. Well, we have been corresponding since the end of June and today brings it to an end, other than matters arising when Gavin assimilates all the info. It's been an interesting time with Gavin sending several photos, in all a satisfied and more knowledgeable BI customer". Thanks for helping out, David.

Meanwhile, Tony Brooke placed the following little heartfelt *cri de coeur* on the [main BI web site](#). "Good to see the web site going from strength to strength, with more than a dozen reference pages popping up on Google now and a Wiki entry too. But there is something of the old BI spirit still missing, and it's not just the sad fact that none of us look, act or think the same as forty years ago. It's more simply addressed than that. There is still no hyperlink to BI. Officers favourite bars! Good Grief! For better or worse we all know they were once central to every BI ships officers lifestyle. Those centres of reminiscence and legend-propagation aboard ship and the much wilder gathering points for fellow officers in every seaport were like fine branches of our own exclusive society. Most are long gone, it's true, the Cellar Bar in Singapore and the Hong Kong Bar in Penang, while others have probably just been expediently erased from our collective memory to avoid misunderstanding, due to change of management and circumstances. But the fact remains that BI would not have been, nor ever will be, the same fine institution however hard we try to recall it, without mention and due credit to those places and colourful folk, that gave us all full scope for memories of a wilder, more adventurous time than now". Tony, in our time here, mention has been made of the Star Bar and New Florida in Mombasa, the Pig & Whistle in Hong Kong even the Hollywood Bowl Massage Parlour in Port Swettenham, whilst in July this year, there was quite a correspondence about The Navigator's Den in Capetown in the biship messages site! But for a truly comprehensive list, your Editor can do no more than recommend that you visit this remarkable web site

[http://www.rhiw.com/y\\_mor/seamen\\_bars/bars.htm](http://www.rhiw.com/y_mor/seamen_bars/bars.htm), a truly amazing list, of which regrettably your editor can remember only 17! Oh dear!



## FROM THE AUCTION ROOMS...

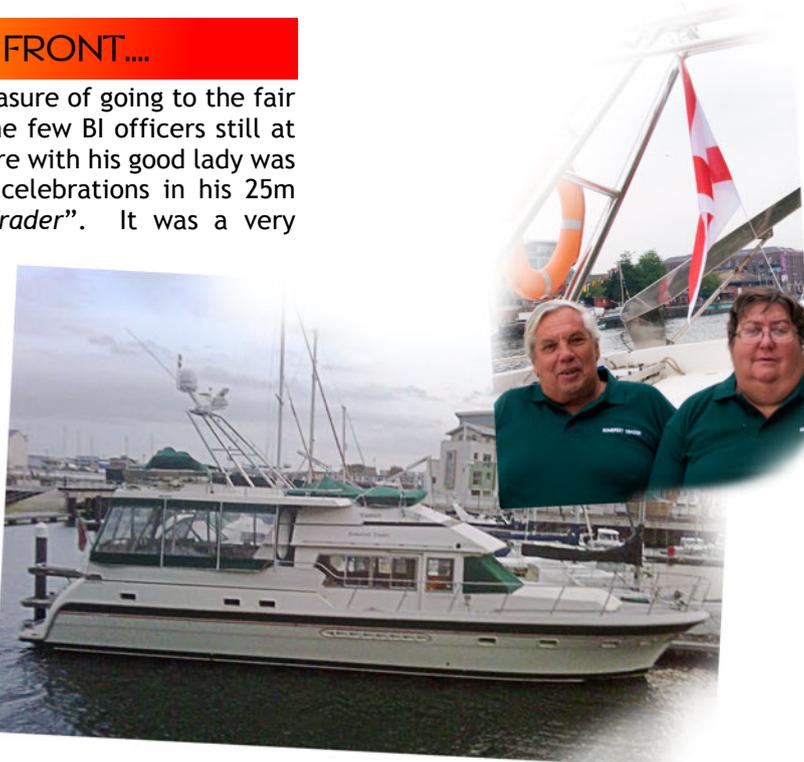
Recently sold on Ebay was this fine photo of the old *Nevasa* (1913-1948) undergoing a new paint job. It sold for \$7.



There was also this putative BI cap badge up for grabs on the same auction site. According to the description, "The cap badge is a nicely made copy, but may differ in detail to an original". You're not kidding, Mr Seller! Astoundingly, there were two bids for the thing, although your Editor rather thinks that the winning bid of £1.24 was more for the book of matches than for the cap badge. He also made similar comment to the seller!

## FROM THE HARBOUR FRONT....

Your editor recently had the pleasure of going to the fair city of Bristol to meet one of the few BI officers still at sea. Andrew Fisher, pictured here with his good lady was there for the Harbour Festival celebrations in his 25m motor yacht, the "Somerset Trader". It was a very pleasurable afternoon, during which your Editor also had the pleasure of meeting John Sharpe, who figures quite often on the Biship message board. Andrew, who lives in Portishead, currently works for Northern Marine Ship Management as Master in their managed tanker fleet. He lists his BI ships as: Chantala 1964-1966; Nevasa 1966; Chakrata 1966-1967; Kampala 1967; Chakdara 1967; Chindwara 1968; Chanda 1968-1969; Karanja 1969; Chakdara 1969; Uganda 1970.



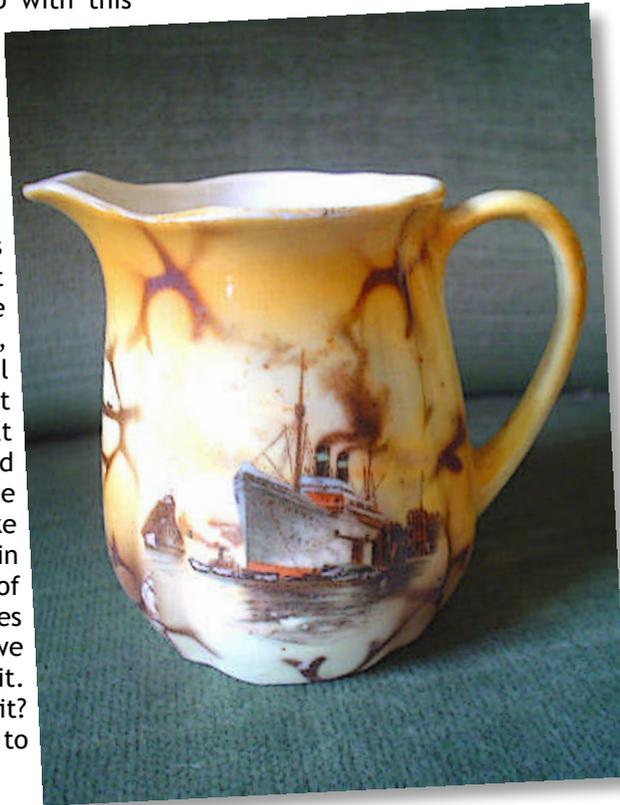
## FROM THE DRY DOCK....

We thank Gordon Thornton for this picture of potential wrongdoing during what appears to be the detritus of a dry-docking. Gordon thinks that the smiling victim-to-be is David James, who is obviously unaware of the shadowy figure in the background about to inflict untold damage to his cranium. Your editor assumes that the attack was averted, but can anybody throw light on this dark deed? And who is that on the left? And what is he doing? And the Sekunnie obviously knows more than is good for him!



## FROM THE AUCTIONS (pt 2)...

Can any sharp eyed reader help with this one? This milk jug has been put up for sale on Ebay, described as an 'Edwardian BISN Co souvenir jug'. The seller went to say that the ship was built in the AG Vulkan yard in Stettin. Your editor wasted little time in pointing out the various anomalies in this, not the least that there appears to be only one thick white band on the funnel, that the ship has a grey hull (although the seller thinks that could be 'shadow') and that Stettin is not normally associated with BI ships. The mountain in the background looks suspiciously like Corcovado in Rio do Janeiro, again not normally listed on BI bills of lading. All that aside, it does appear to be a nice piece and we would like to know more about it. Do you have any thoughts about it? Please email your ideas to "[...calling BI](mailto:...calling BI)".



## FROM HEAD OFFICE...

Seafarers have often bemoaned the intransigency, the lack of understanding and plain bloody-mindedness of The Head Office. But, of course, they just didn't understand the trials and tribulations that the poor shipowner had to face. Fortunately, your editor can illuminate them...

### The Shipowners Lament

It is much to be regretted  
That your goods are slightly wetted  
But our lack of liability is plain.  
For our latest Bill of Lading -  
Which is proof against evading -  
Bears exception for sea water, rust and rain;  
Also sweat, contamination,  
Fire and all depreciation,  
That we've ever seen or heard of on a ship,  
And our due examination,  
Which we have made at destination,  
Shows your cargo much improved by the trip.  
Furthermore, the protest shows  
That the Master blew his nose,  
And the hatches were demolished by the gale.  
Oh, we'll all stick together  
To prove it's heavy weather,

For we've got the cargo owner by the tail.  
So reserving all defences,  
Alibis and false pretences.  
We suggest that your underwriter man  
Is the guy that's out of luck,  
(We always pass the buck)  
Yes! we always duck the issue if we can.  
'Tis a cause of of grief sincere  
And we almost weep to hear  
You are claiming for your cargo wet by rain.  
It really is a crime  
That you're wasting all your time  
For our Bill of Lading clauses make it plain  
That from ullage, rust or seepage,  
Water, sweat or just plain leakage,  
Act of God, restraint of princes, theft or war,  
Loss, damage or detention,  
Lock-out, strike or circumvention,  
Blockage, interdict or list twixt ship and shore,  
Quarantine or heavy weather,  
Fog and rain or both together,  
We're protected from all these and many more,  
And it's plain to see  
That our liability  
As regards your claim is absolutely nil.  
So try your underwriter,  
He's a friendly sort of blighter,  
And is pretty sure to grin and foot the Bill.

## FROM THE PAST...

One of the world's last surviving steam coasters, ss *Robin*, has returned to east London, UK where it began its life. The 300-tonne ship will undergo internal restoration to become a floating museum while at the Royal Docks in Newham borough. The traditional cargo steamer was built at Thames Ironworks in Blackwall, east London, and launched in 1890.

Nishani Kampfner, co-founder of the ss *Robin* Trust, said the mercantile vessel was "one of London's secret treasures". The *Robin*, which is listed on the National Historic Fleet

register, is one of the three maritime landmarks in the capital along with *Cutty Sark* and HMS *Belfast*. Ms Kampfner said: "She's one of the capital's most important maritime symbols - and an amazing sight. She's been under wraps for the past three years undergoing extensive restoration work and now this irreplaceable historic ship sits proudly on a new floating pontoon - like a precious sculpture."



The 120-year-old vessel was in service for 80 years during which time it visited 140 ports around the British Isles and Europe. The ship spent most of its working life in Spain, where it was named *Maria*.

The steam coaster was brought back to the UK from

Spain in the 1970s to be part of its historic fleet. It was initially brought to St Katherine Docks by the Tower of London, but restoration could not be completed because of a lack of funding. In 1991 the vessel was moved to West India Dock in east London and mothballed until 2002 when it became the property of the SS *Robin* Trust. The

mercantile vessel was towed to Lowestoft in Suffolk in 2008 for external repairs costing £1.9m.

The ship will be on public display during the 2012 Olympics and could be opened to the public later in the year.

There are many proposed restoration projects seeking donations and work. It gladdens your Editor's heart to see one such come to fruition.



## FROM THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK...

Following our last Little Black Book crew list from David Hammond, we received

the following from Mike Brand. "Very interested to see my name in the latest Little Black Book, Brand 5th Eng on *Bulimba* 12/07/70. Yes, this page brings back memories of that voyage from Durban to Colombo, Mr Kotalawela, 4th Eng asked for local leave to visit his family as this was where he lived, etc etc.

This was refused by the company so, as far as I can remember, he walked off the vessel.

I was made temporary 4th. Eng from Colombo and this turned out to be my last trip as 5th. Eng.

I have attached three pictures of *Bulimba* taken during that voyage, not sure which port, perhaps you can help?"

Your Editor thinks that it is, in fact, Colombo, but perhaps his readers know better.



## FROM THE BAR...

It's not often that your editor descends into the Passing-On-Of-Jokes business, but every so often there is one which tickles his fancy. So, with many thanks to Australian lawyer Paul Dixon (via Sam Ignarski's estimable 'Bow Wave' e-zine), herewith: A lonely man moves into a tiny village, walks into the pub and promptly orders three beers. The bartender raises his eyebrows, but serves the man three beers, which he drinks quietly at a table, alone. An hour later, the man has finished the three beers and orders three more. This happens yet again.

The next evening the man again orders and drinks three beers at a time, several times. Soon the entire town is whispering about the Man Who Orders Three Beers. Finally, a week later, the bartender broaches the subject on behalf of the town. "I don't mean to pry, but folks around here are wondering why you always order three beers". "Yes, it must seem odd", the man replies. "You see, I have two brothers, and one went to America and the other to Australia. We promised each other that we

would always order an extra two beers whenever we drank as a way of keeping up the family bond." The bartender and the whole town was pleased with this answer and soon the Man Who Orders Three Beers became a local celebrity and a source of pride to the village, even to the extent that out-of-towners would come to watch him drink.

Then, one day, the man comes in and orders only two beers. The bartender pours them with a heavy heart. This continues for the rest of the evening: he orders only two beers. The word flies around town. Prayers are offered for the soul of one of the brothers. The next day, the bartender says to the man, "Folks around here, me first of all, want to offer condolences to you for the death of your brother. You know - the two beers and all..." The man ponders this for a moment, then replies, "You'll be happy to hear that my two brothers are alive and well. It's just that I've decided to give up drinking for Lent." Oh dear!



## FROM THE COMPETITION DEPT....

We travelled all the way to sunny South Africa for this picture of Durban, submitted by Tony Lister whilst he was on the *Uganda*. A different continent entirely for this month's 'Where are we now?' Competition. The photographer composing his picture is Ian Fraser and we are NOT at the Grand Canyon. Slightly closer to the sea than that. And a lot further away.



Are those eucalyptus trees we see? Send your answers to '[...calling BI](#)' to win fabulous prizes. Or some such.

## FROM THE GANGWAY...

We are indebted to Peter Whitehead for this fine picture of an unusual disembarkation from *Nevasa*. Peter writes "I was on the deck side in the late '60's with BI and had a wonderful few years - all a distant memory now, unfortunately.

I was on the *Nevasa* as a deck cadet on the '67 or '68 cruise to West Africa. This was taken at anchor off Freetown, Sierra Leone and ferrying the university students ashore - it was a fantastic cruise. I learnt very little except how to help run the disco at night! There were a lot of liaisons on deck at night amongst the students - when on watch we could pick them out with the aldis lamp - how unfair!

Wonderful memories - I went on to Safmarine as I had married a Cape Town girl and then transferred to the SAR&H and drove those huge steam tugs for a few years. We now live in Sydney, Australia - have done for 27 years



and am not connected with the sea at all, but the horticultural garden centre industry!!"

Many thanks for this, Peter. Your Editor also remembers this highly indelicate use of the aldis light - a case of *lux interruptus* perhaps?



## FROM THE FAMILY TREE....

If you dig around any family tree long enough, it would seem that you can always lay claim to some long-lost ancestor who was in BI. This a Mrs Avril Anderson did recently whilst she was on a P&O cruise. She told *Arcadia's* Executive Purser James Cusick that she was from a seafaring background, as her grandfather George Wheatley Swaries had been a Chief Engineer with BISH Co. George had been born in Calcutta in 1887. As a young man George joined BI because he did not want to continue in the long established family business in Calcutta. This business was Peter Swaries & Company - Funeral Undertakers, Sculptors, Stonemason & Engravers since 1851.

George's great-grandfather was one of three brothers who left Portugal as merchant adventurers (Avril reckons that this meant pirates!). George travelled to Glasgow to take his Engineers ticket and was told to go to the Hamilton house (Hamilton being her grandmother's maiden name), as there was always someone away at sea! Hence there were always spare beds in that household. It was here George met Avril's grandmother, Jessie Letham Hamilton, who was only 15 years old at this time.

Eight years later in 1917 when George came back for his Chief's ticket he married Jessie and following the birth of their son months later, she followed George out to India.

They set up home eventually in Rangoon where Avril's mother Marjorie was born in 1920.

With this sort of family history, your editor would not be surprised to hear that her current surname derives from a certain P&O chairman!



## FROM THE PAST...

Is it a ship? Is it a plane? Maybe it's the maritime industry's answer to the iconic Airstream caravan; remember the one with the streamlined aluminium body? The ship - for she is surely that - is actually one of the latest car carriers to come out of Far East yards. Tricked out in a livery reflecting the colours of the Russian tricolour, the *City of St Petersburg* was completed last year in Japan by Kyokuyo Shipyard. She carries 2,000 cars and is designed for intermediate service by a Nissan Motor Car Co subsidiary, transporting vehicles in the North Sea and Baltic trades. Now the ship has been awarded 2010 Ship of the Year by the Japan Society of Naval Architects

(JSNA) at a ceremony at Kaiun [shipping] Club, together with the Japan Institute of Marine Engineering and the Japan Institute of Navigation. Though the ship is definitely 21st Century, the design has sure echoes of the past. There are clear similarities in examples from the aerospace industry - the huge Airbus Super Transporter, for instance. The similarity is understandable as the purpose of the vessel's

dollars a year. But money aside, more surprising is the maritime heritage apparent in the St Petersburg design, for even as long ago as the 1930s there was a vessel to which the latest had a very strong resemblance. In the Washington (US) state ferry Kalakala of 1935 (*left below*) there were the sweeping lines and curves associated with the art deco movement of which she was a part. Despite the similarities of this ship with designs of the past and other transport modes, the Japanese designers and shipbuilders have earned their accolade. For this must be one of the biggest structures with a steel panel of such dimensions, formed of compound bending in two planes (although, actually, it is apparent that the bulbous section is fabricated from separate plates). The steel, according to the Japan Ship Exporters'



Association (JSEA), was subject to press-bending, giving a relatively distortion-free shape. In making the award, JSNA said that although streamlined hulls had previously been designed in conceptual ships, "its first realisation [in this ship] has been highly appreciated." In addition to the forebody, the offset funnel is streamlined and the upper

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design is to reduce air resistance. And the design pedigree goes back much further. In 1932, due to the vision of one Wally Byam, the Airstream caravan (*centre, above*) came into being and is one obvious forebear, with its sleek lines in polished aluminium. Another was the Coronation class of locomotives (designed by Stanier in 1937) with their streamlined outer body (*right above*). Back then, it was aesthetics as much as money which impelled design. These days, one senses, economy speaks. Designing a ship with just a tiny percentage improvement in fuel efficiency can mean savings of tens of thousands of

superstructure has curved-in sections at the sides. More, the designer has managed to create a pillar-free internal space, unusual in any deepsea car carrier but giving clear advantages for cargo handling.