



News of the BSN 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...

As we begin to approach that time of year when it is best for husbands to keep a low profile, our male readers can go and slink off into a dark corner and peruse this our latest offering of BI matters. There are plenty of links to various websites, enabling them to keep out of the way for a little longer. In the meantime, we hope that our female readers will find a little time to relax and enjoy this latest issue. We offer a varied content as usual, including a couple of thoughtful pieces on that modern scourge of piracy. We thank David Mitchell for alerting us to the plans by the Whitby RNLi to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the sinking of BI's *Rohilla*. Details are later in the newsletter.

This movie <http://www.midwayfilm.com> may be somewhat unsubtle and overblown, but that should not detract from the message it intends to deliver. There is a lesson for all of us.

We were looking over a BI booklet giving information for passengers on the *Kenya* and *Uganda* recently and noticed this rather alarming little sentence...

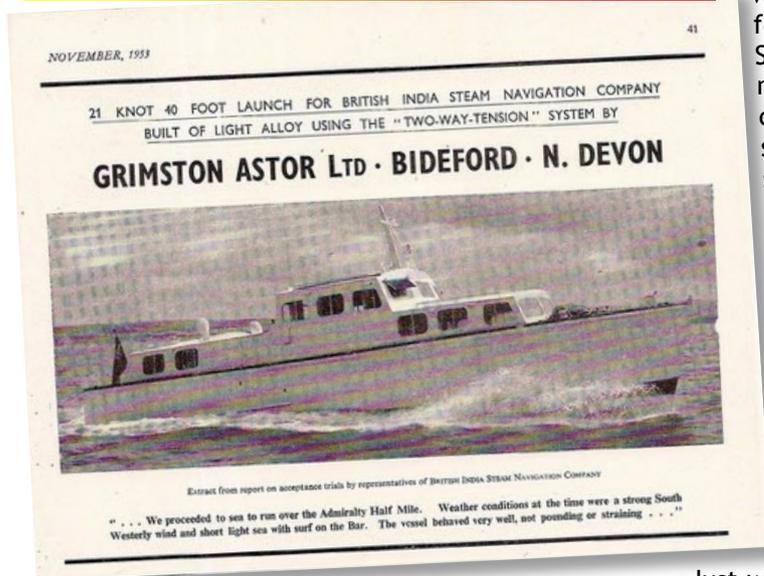
Children aged 12 years and over—Full fare.

**DOGS.** We are able to accept on payment of freight a limited number of dogs but to avoid disappointment you should make application as early as possible when the necessary requirements will be explained to you. They will be looked after by the Butcher, but they are not permitted in cabins, public rooms or on the Promenade Decks.

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We trust that the menus did not reflect this policy! All in all, there's something here for everyone. Enjoy!!

## FROM THE BOATYARD....



We thank all the various readers who contacted us with their thoughts on the fast launch for BI that featured in an advertisement for the Bideford Shipyard of Grimston Astor Ltd. Unfortunately, nobody has been able to pin this one down. One correspondent even opined that it was to enable shoreside superintendents to sneak up quickly on ships at anchor before the gangway seakunny could alert the duty deck officer! Surely not!

Our resident "man from the West Country", Roger Northcote, sent us some information on the various Bideford shipyards, including this cutting from the Bideford Times: "a new firm, Grimstone Astor Ltd had started building aluminium craft by the 'stressed skin system'; they took over part of Bank End Shipyard and after producing over 600 high speed launches of various types they moved to the river Hamble in 1956 with the new name of Universal Launches Ltd."

But this launch still remains a bit of a mystery. Just why would BI order such a sleek craft, where was it to be deployed and what happened to it?



## FROM THE AUCTION HOUSES...



It is probably a fair bet as when the steward plonked down a plate of food in front of you in the saloon, like most of us, you paid more attention to what was on the plate instead of the plate itself. You probably didn't realise that you were dining off high-class crockery. This china side plate, measuring just 8.25 inches, was recently auctioned on eBay and sold for a staggering £102! Not one for the dishwasher, methinks.

## FROM THE SOCIAL SCENE...

We were delighted to hear from Tony Gates in Auckland, New Zealand letting us know about the planned for this year's annual fish and chip lunch. It will be held at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron Club, meeting in the bar at 1215 on Tuesday, 10 December. A warm welcome awaits any ex-BI staff, as your editor can readily attest. If you would like to attend, Tony's mobile number is +642108446272 or you can email him on [t.and.a.gates@xtra.co.nz](mailto:t.and.a.gates@xtra.co.nz).

Tony would have liked to show off the America's Cup for yachting, but unfortunately it still resides in the trophy cupboard in another land far away.

In the meantime, the infamous BI Eastern region group (BIER) will be congregating in their favourite pub, the Thatchers Arms in Mount Bures, Essex on Friday, 29 November at 1200. Your editor will skulk in the corners and will relay any juicy gossip that he overhears. If you want to sign on for this voyage, please contact [John Prescott](#).

## FROM THE BOOK OF SILLY THINGS TO DO AT SEA...

Your editor is probably not alone in having done silly things in his time at sea. But not even he can hold a candle to the crazy people featured in this YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUdzVnZBaoY>. The ship involved is a 3500 ton multipurpose vessel with a total length of 99m and 15m breadth, travelling at 9 knots with a wind speed of 14 knots. This hair raising exploit took place in the English Channel, that well-known body of water which experiences all sorts of nutters.





## FROM THE COMPETITION DEPARTMENT...

Well, we thought we could defeat you with our "Where Are We Now?" picture of last month, but of course we were wrong yet again. Clever-clogs Gordon Wood in New Zealand came up with the right answer, which is Aden. Our girl Tracey was most impressed and threatens to go out to present him with all sorts of goodies - time to take to the hills, Gordon!



## FROM THE FREE FALL LIFEBOAT...

Following the little note in our last issue about the world record for freefall lifeboats, we were pleased to receive the following from Tony Gray:

"I thought I would let you know that whilst serving on the UK/Norwegian Frigg gas field in the North Sea we had to undergo free fall life boat training up the Bergen fjord. Judging by the length of time the life boat in your YouTube clip took to hit the water, the one I went in was of a similar height up the bleedin' mountain side. We had to do it three times, to experience different positions in the life boat. The worst bit was walking back up the bleedin' mountain side afterwards. A truly nerve racking affair because you start off in the horizontal and slowly tilt until the life boat rolls off the 'davit' bumpity bumpity bumpity, silence, whoooooosh, heart in mouth, sprrr-lash and you get soaked as the water comes in from the TOP vents. The stupid thing was that our platform had conventional davit operated life boats!". It all reminds your editor of plunging rides at funfairs and the like. He didn't really enjoy them then.

## FROM THE HEART...

Your editor takes no delight at all in offering this [link](#) which catalogues the sad death of the Japanese container ship *MOL Comfort*. The dramatic pictures details the end of the 2008 built ship in June and July this year whilst underway from Singapore to Jeddah with a load of 7041 containers on board. All the crew escaped and the stern section sank ten days later. The bow section was taken under tow towards the Arabian Gulf, but it eventually burst into flames and sank.





## FROM THE DAYS OF TROOPING...

We would like to thank Su Sedgwick of these two photographs of the *Nevasa* during her trooping days. They show passengers disembarking at Gibraltar and a group enjoying the lazy transfer to a foreign posting. Su is trying to find a picture of her brother-in-law Tony Sedgwick who travelled on the ship



around 1958 to 59, when he was a sergeant in the Education Corps. If by chance any reader can recall Tony or even has a picture of him, please get in contact with us and we will pass the information on to Su.

## FROM THE MODEL-MAKERS...

Eagle-eyed Tony Gray spotted these exquisite models at his local auctioneers near Chippenham, UK. Unfortunately, he couldn't find out too much about the provenance and even more sadly, he had to drop out of the bidding when the stakes were getting too high. So if any reader can give us some background on them, we would welcome the opportunity of learning more. At the same sales, there were quite a lot of marine related objects, books etc., some of them contained in an old suitcase marked with the name of "Robert Francis Dolby" stenciled on it. We don't know whether Mr Dolby had any connections with BI or the models or not, but it is all very intriguing...



## FROM THE RADIO...

One of our growing list of authors from within the BI ranks, Geoff Woodland, was featured on a broadcast recently from Liverpool UK's Radio City, talking about his book "The Triangle Trade". You can listen to the broadcast via a link on Geoff's website, <http://www.geoffwoodland.com/#author-bio> and then on to Radio City.



## FROM THE PIRATES...

We now tread very gently into the world of piracy, that scourge of modern day shipping. First up, we have Mike King, who is sailing as Master on a support vessel in the Indian Ocean. He writes " Just read Digest No 5457 and Tony Brookes et al comments on anti Piracy measures with some interest as I am sitting on a Platform Supply Vessel on delivery passage from somewhere off SW Sri Lanka to Mtwara, about halfway between the Maldives and the Seychelles doing 11 kts- familiar stamping ground eh? We are in what they call the 'Active Zone'.

We are about 1.5m freeboard and I am very happy with the 1.5m high steel mesh grills, topped with razor wire, attached to the bulwarks all round. Also the ballistic linings to the 2m high (high visibility) windows at the rear of the bridge, and the kevlar film inside the windows to stop glass splinters. We have steel cases of ceramic balls round the bridge deck rails to absorb incoming high velocity rounds, steel internal doors on each deck with 3 bolts and have a citadel with food and water for 3 days, so we can go into lock-down. We also have 3 security guards with body armour and a version of the American M16 infantry weapon and 700 rounds of 5.5mm, lead by a former Royal Marine Commando. If attacked they are required to first shout warnings, then to display their weapons by holding them up over their heads and finally if boarding appears inevitable, to fire only single shots, thus the weapons have no automatic capability.

It's still stacked in the favour of the pirates though because they operate from 25kt skiffs in pairs and have RPG, 7.62 general purpose machine guns, various other automatic weapons, as well as the more traditional machetes etc for a bit of entertainment when they get on board ganja'd to the eye balls.

Tony mentions sophisticated electronic devices etc, but as I am a bit closer to it all than he is, I would settle for a 0.5 cal Browning on each bridge wing, broadcast VHF warnings every 15 mins declaring an exclusion zone of 0.75 miles round the ship and hammer anything coming inside it. Much less stressful than letting them get within 100m".

Tales of piracy off the Horn of Africa have gripped the world's imagination, leading to Hollywood adaptations such as *Captain Phillips*, based on the true story of the 2009 hijacking of the US-flagged mv *Maersk Alabama* by Somali pirates.

But a recent report authored by the World Bank , the UN and Interpol has shed new light on the chain of money transfers, from ransom to pocket.

Having interviewed pirates, their financial backers, middlemen and government officials, the study offers a comprehensive look inside the fairly sophisticated financial world of piracy and estimates that pirates operating off the Horn of Africa extracted up to \$413m in ransom payments from shipping companies between 2005 and last year.

Pirates see as much as \$75 000 each for their roles in hijacking, with bonuses of up to \$10 000 for those who show initiative by being first to board the ships, or bringing their own weapons.

"They knew exactly what they wanted," said Gary Skjoldmose-Porter, the security manager for the Danish Clipper Group , which owned a vessel that was hijacked off Somalia in 2008. He likens the negotiations over securing the 13-strong crew's release to haggling in a bazaar.

"We negotiated for 71 days and ended up paying a ransom of \$1.7m ," he says. The pirates, negotiating in English, specified the denominations of the currency and even how they were to be wrapped. Porter organised for the bundles of cash to be dropped from the air on to the vessel.

"They were smart, organised and ruthless," he says. Much of the pirates' ill-gotten gains travel through or end up in Somalia, according to the report, titled "*Pirate Trails: Tracking the illicit financial flows from pirate activities off the Horn of Africa*". Local people helping the pirates also stand to gain from the operations - cooks, lawyers, banknote checkers and pimps are all in high demand. About 59 key financiers and investors have become wealthier as ransoms have grown tenfold over the seven years, from \$500 000 per hijacked vessel in 2005, to \$5m at the peak of the activity in 2011. Of the 170 vessels hijacked from 2005 to last year, most were released after a ransom was paid, though a small number remain in pirate hands. "It is immensely profitable," says Stuart Makanda Yikona of the World Bank . "Ransoms are invariably paid in untraceable cash bundles and these are smuggled out of the country." Some pirates use their pay-offs to diversify their business interests into human trafficking, drugs and the arms trade. Some money has been used to take over transport networks, hotels and restaurants. Pirate operatives drawn largely from the local fishing industry and armed with rocket-propelled grenades, AK-47s and tracking devices, do the dangerous work of boarding ships and threatening the crew members on board.

The operatives usually receive a day-rate and expenses, which usually amount to between \$35 000 and \$75 000 per job. That is not to say they always emerge from the operations with a lucrative bounty. Deductions are made for their food and for the herbal stimulant, khat. They can also receive fines for bad behaviour - such as \$5000 for mistreating crew members, which would also warrant dismissal from the operation. Although the number of hijackings has dropped significantly since 2011, when bigger ships began bolstering their security, the report says the pirates have become better organised, while the police, army and customs in countries such as Somalia have lacked resources to monitor the borders, seize their funds and close them down completely. "Somalia is a fragile state, and it finds the task of curtailing these pirates and their sources of funds a great challenge," says Yikona.

(CONTD OVER)





## FROM THE PIRATES (contd)...

The Somali government and Western intelligence services are now targeting the pirate kingpins where it hurts - their egos and their funds. Last month Somali pirate Mohammed Abdi Hassan, was arrested in Brussels, having been enticed to Europe with the promise of a part in a film.

Although the ego tactic worked in that case, most other analysts think the financial route is the one that will hit the pirates hardest. "You need to go after the pocket," says Yikona, who advocates an international police force to target the ransom money extorted by the pirates. "If you follow the money, it will lead you to the beneficiaries. We can identify them and they know that we are coming after (them). That raises the cost of hiding their money."

Source : The Independent & The Mercury

## FROM THE MIND OF A NAVAL ARCHITECT...



Umm, er, er....we *think* that this is a ship.....

Answers please, on a postcard

## FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS WORLD...

Inevitably, in the run-up to Christmas, we are getting bombarded with all sorts of commercial messages. The latest ad for Google's Nexus 7 new tablet sees a marine engineer [talking to his family](#) at home on the instrument. However, it didn't cut much ice with some watchers, as these comments from Youtube indicate: "Matthew Hudson: I work offshore and having this kind of contact is essential - hopefully one day I'll be able to get a decent enough internet connection to do this. Offshore internet is very expensive, therefore very slow!

Dee Ayling-Bate: *What a sweet advert but sadly seafarers cannot use these devices once at sea. One Christmas I would love to be able to speak to my husband like shown in this advert.*

Stephanie Spence: *Being in the merchant navy myself, I'd LOVE to find a ship where I could get such phone signal or wifi to use such a device".* Your editor was reading in a marine magazine recently that "My current employers have installed WiFi onboard all our fleet of tankers. Now I see iPhones, iPads, tablets etc etc onboard and the crew onboard are all engaged in real time chat during their rest hours".

As your editor remembers it, we used to engage in real time chat during our rest hours too. Only we did it face-to-face!





## FROM THE RNLI...

It was the 99th anniversary of the loss of Rohilla after grounding on Saltwick Nab east of Whitby Harbour entrance with the loss of 84 lives out of 229 onboard on 30th October this year. The heroic efforts of various lifeboat crews resulted in the award of three Gold, four Silver RNLI Medals and an Empire Gallantry Medal (later George Medal) to Major Burton, the Tynemouth boat mechanic.

In Whitby cemetery there is a mass grave with a magnificent memorial monument recording the names of those who lost their lives, erected at the expense of The BI.

A three day event around the centenary of her loss is now in hand by Whitby RNLI for 2014 and they are anxious to hear from anybody who can make a contribution no matter how small. In conjunction with this and to remember the centenary of WWI the National RNLI are mounting a touring exhibition to celebrate the courage of lifeboat crews, especially those involved with the Rohilla rescue which will commence at the Henry Blogg Museum, Norfolk next February.

Similarly, anybody with memories, artefacts or photographs of the disaster are asked to come forward. Whitby are particularly anxious to hear from any BI seagoing or shore side staff who can contribute.

Further details of the disaster can be found in great detail on the web, including a British Pathe newsreel clip. Also have a look at the late Fred Waddington's "[www.merchantnavyofficers.com](http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com)" Search: British India: Rohilla.

Direct contact can be made with Peter Thomson, Museum Director, Whitby RNLI Museum at "[whitby\\_museum@rnli.org.uk](mailto:whitby_museum@rnli.org.uk)" and with "[Rebecca.Fletcher@rnli.org.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Fletcher@rnli.org.uk)" at RNLI Henry Blogg Museum, tel: 01263 511294.

## FROM THE WORLD OF BIG...



If you keep your eye on the marine press these days, you would not have failed to have noticed that there are some pretty big ships around at the moment. Prime amongst these is Maersk's Triple E series, a truly magnificent ship. It is designed to be economic, fuel-efficient and with lower CO2 emissions. An 400m in length, it is the world's biggest ship and carries 18,000 containers.

The whole project was a very daunting one, not least for the builders, Daewoo in South Korea. They have a US\$3.8 billion contract for 20 of the ships. Click [here](#) to see one being built.

## FROM THE WORLD OF WEATHER...

Offered recently for sale on eBay was this French postcard (published around 1914) of being BI's *Manora* in stormy weather. It certainly doesn't look comfortable!

