



Under the Clock

Issue 61 - April 2009

T/S Vindicatrix Association Inaugural Meeting - May 1996



Rear (L - R): Ken Hitchcock (1949), Ray Morton (1940), Vic Rother (1950), Rick Shaw (1953), Dave Hammond (1958).

Middle (L - R): Brian Hunt (1951), Fred Joughin (1957), Harry Young (1950), Bob Wood (1947), Reg Gifford (1950).

Front (L - R): Dave Misselbrook (1949), Bill Breach (1946), Ernie Houston (1946), Charles Bellchambers (1946), Doug Duxbury (1946).

From the Secretary

On February 11th some nine of us went to the Mt Cootha Botanical Gardens for a walking tour. We all met in the car park, had our morning tea at the Cafe and were later met by the Tour Guide of the Garden to give us a personalised guided tour. He told us some interesting stories of some of the plants and trees especially the palm trees. We also visited the Japanese Garden which has been recently renovated and re-opened. After the tour we all drove up to the Mt Cootha lookout and guess who was there waiting for us - Bill and Shirley Davis. It was a lovely surprise to see them and good of them to drive to Mt Cootha to meet up with us. They were holidaying in Brisbane with their caravan during the monsoon season in far north Queensland. We had our lunch at the Lookout Café with stunning views of the city and out to sea. There was an announcement that Doug Duxbury who was with us that he would be receiving his OBE the following week. Birthday cards were flowing out from a couple of members to Doug and think Doug was surprised, thrilled and overawed. It was pleasant day the weather was fine and the company great.

Anzac Day

At the last meeting in February, our President advised members that he himself with Gordon and Kim had attended the Anzac Day March meeting at the RSL Headquarters and were advised that we will be marching in our own right under British Merchant Navy Group 67. Roger asked for a show of hands from members who intend to march and a good response from members was shown. Arthur Renforth has also presented the new banner.

A Wreath laying will be at the Anzac Shrine before the march. We will discuss the time for meeting at the Shrine at our next meeting in April. As usual, after the march, we will adjourn to the Pub to swing the lamp.

Down Under Reunion

Since the distribution of our Down-under Reunion 2009 information package and launch of our reunion web page we have had over 30 Vindi Boys registered and perhaps more by the time you get to read this newsletter.

This is just a reminder:- If you have already booked your accommodation, we would appreciate if you would please send in your registration form and monies. It will give us an indication of numbers to cater for and especially for the Coach Tour – e.g. should we go ahead and book another coach? If we have to, it would be great.

As our President, Roger Wilson said at our last meeting in February, “Things are moving smoothly and in place”.

Well Done – Thank You

The Committee and Members of Vindi Qld would like to thank Bill Davis for his dedicated work in producing our newsletters over the past ten years. An amazing result of over 60 issues!

The Newsletter has provided communication and news amongst us, not only in Queensland, but around the world.

To Bill, congratulations and well done!



The Ship with No Name story as featured last issue written by John Baskott opened a small can of worms with my misspelling of John's name and searches through Kew archives. With the kind assistance of Robin Hurst the main player who actually emailed me and John from within Kew with information. It was subsequently discovered that the ship was the “SS Temple Yard” with a slight difference in dates, well after 61 years quite acceptable without reference. Our many thanks go to Robin Hurst, Secretary, Sussex Branch.

***Email Quote:** After I went upstairs from the Internet Room at Kew and after having got that info away to you, I then continued my search on the two Official No's of ships which his records showed. There wasn't one for the British Fern but a hefty file for the Orantes, as you might expect, I used the page containing John trip details as a marker, when I carted the files through to the self-service copiers, and I think that that's where it still is, so I couldn't send it to him, but I will ask for it again on a subsequent visit.*

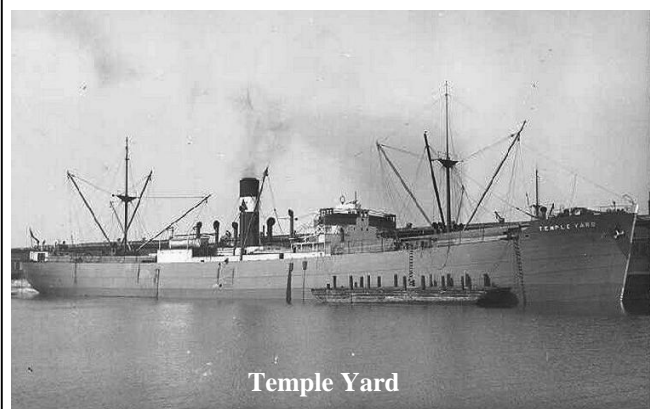
When I got home, I looked out some more Official No's. of his ships (they should have all been on his records, but Cardiff must have been a bit lax at that time and I think that I now have it). This is the site I was talking about in my e-mail from Kew, which is a very handy resource for old ship photos and getting Official No's of ships, also of WW2 Convoy details www.photoship.co.uk

On my next trip to Kew, I will see if I can get the Crew Agreement and Log for the Temple Yard as it might add some flesh to the bones of John's memory. The full page prints of his entries in both the Crew Agreement and Ship's Log are now on their way to John. (It would be noted that the editor also received emailed copies and document photos of John's last ship the Orcades)

We had a Branch Meeting in my local pub during in the week, and one of our Members who lives a few minutes walk away from me, said that he had been into our local paper shop to get some cigarettes, prior to coming to the Meeting and another customer in the shop had spotted his TSVVA jumper, and told him 'I was at the Vindi as well' This man lives only about 5 minutes walk away from me. They are still plenty of us out there, waiting to be found

Regards

Robin



Temple Yard

Many such stories go on behind the scenes in writing this newsletter, but never have I come across someone who was so keen and put so much time and effort into assisting.

~ Many thanks again Robin ~

And another surprising matter of interest in my mail bag.....

Email Quote: Hello Bill my name is Gemma Bright and I'm emailing to let you know that there is someone I know in that class catering photo you published in the latest newsletter (Feb 2009) - it's my Dad!! He's in the front row, third from the left, he is just to the right of Albert (if I'm looking correctly!). Ray Bright is his name, sadly he passed away July 2005. I got the shock of my life when I saw the picture my Mum actually told me about it, I was at her place on Saturday night when she said to me, 'I think there's a picture of Dad in the latest Vindi newsletter, when I saw it I immediately recognised the photo as my Dad has the same one and I have poured over it many times over the years. I just can't believe it!

I immediately rang Albert Cross because I was so excited, he was a bit surprised too! It was actually my Dad's birthday last week (on Wed 25th Feb) and my best friend had her baby on his birthday so it's been quite a significant week and to see something like this, well it's just amazing really! I look forward to meeting up with Albert soon at one of the meetings.

I just can't believe out all the Vindi squad photos, his one was published..... as you can see, I still can't get over it!! Keep up the great work Bill, I always find the newsletters enjoyable to read, I'm only 26 years but so fascinated by my Dad's past, he talked about the Vindi a great deal over the years.

Bye for now, Gemma Bright

Correction: Albert Cross is in the 2nd on left, 2nd row not front row

R404213 - Albert Cross

R404186 - Ray Bright

Re: Loch Boats from the front cover of February newsletter. Doug Amor (WA Vindi)



Dear Bill, As I looked at the picture on the front page of your latest newsletter, I immediately checked my discharge book and there it was the Loch Garth the last on the list and through it brought back a flood of memories. I thought you might like a follow up to your story.

It was September to December 1953 usual trip Panama, USA and Vancouver, but unusual for me, exciting, happy, sad, very sad – terrifying, scary and glad to get home though for the wrong reasons. We were off to the States and Canada for my first, Oh! for some Levi jeans at US\$4 a pair and then it was US\$4 to the pound so good buying.

I was signed on as AB and soon after was asked to be storekeeper, but with extra pay and thought to myself would look good in my discharge book.

Usual stops Jamaica – 4 stops in Texas then round the corner to Panama (my first). My first laugh was when all the peggies saved the bread for the mules. (Ha, the mules being the locomotive engines that pulled ships through the locks).

Our first stop in US was Frisco and we didn't know what hit us, about a dozen suits with dark glasses waiting on the dock, then the spooks came on board and took over the mess room. The first question was "are you a communist" my answer (not having much to do with politics) at the age of 21, I'd not even voted, I said "What's that?" It took about 15 to 20 minutes for each crew member to go through this inquisition; and took nearly all day. At the end of the trial we all knew we could now go ashore, but first we had to raise the derricks and uncover the hatches – Ha ha! I managed to get two pairs of Levis so was very happy.

My job was, surprisingly easy, measure out soojie, cut lambscloth and handout buckets and off they went. I would get out paint cans and clean brushes ready as well as splicing ropes and wires, a bit of sewing canvas, repairing flags, it was a real doddle.

Up to Canada and it just started to get cold but in those days it did not stop us finding the local bars. About a week later we went down to Frisco again and topped up (no bread this time). We heard in the Panama port that a hurricane was coming up the coast to Miami, so it was life lines all round the ship, the skipper was going to outrun it Ha Ha!

WE were about a day out that we heard it was coming straight for us so nobody was allowed on deck, that made my job irrelevant and most of us were cabin bound, with six hour checks to make sure we were still on board. At this time the skipper came to see me (I had my own cabin) and he had some very dire news by telegram, my 7 year old sister was in hospital very sick with leukemia, so that did not improve my mind. For this reason the other boys gathered to bolster my feelings.

Two days later we survived the storm and we all went to check the ship, the funnel was completely stripped of paint down to the steel and two lifeboats nearly destroyed and it was all things that couldn't be fixed by the crew, till we arrived in port, which was to be Antwerp.

Three days later the ship was pretty much back to normal and better weather. A knock on my door was a visit from the skipper and Chief Officer, we sat as the telegram was read. My sister had died after a short illness in hospital, nothing could be done. To explain is impossible how I felt. It was three days before I came out of my cabin. Someone had fed me but it was all a fog, even now. The crew found it very hard to talk to me but as usual we all survive after a death.

We were about a week away from the UK coast when again the skipper sent for me and told me that the shipping company had agreed to drop me off at Falmouth, where there would be a pilot boat to take me off, a taxi to the station and a voucher for the train to London. I could only blubber and thank him with what I had left to give.

Later I found out that the ship had been chartered by Royal Mail and about two months later I received a letter from them to offer me a job as Lampy/Storekeeper on the MV Darro and because they had been so good I felt obliged to

return the service. I stayed five trips there and she went everywhere, so ends the story. I never got the opportunity to really show my gratitude to that skipper and co. for all they did for me in my time of grief. I was 22 and my sister was 7 so I was more like a father than a brother and often got mistaken for that. We had great fun times on my shore leave and I will always cherish those times.

Doug Amor

The Sinking of the *Turakina*



FROM the early morning of 20 August the raider 'steered along the route Cook Strait—Sydney', and late in the afternoon a steamer was sighted on the starboard bow as it came out of a rain squall. This ship was the New Zealand Shipping Company's steamer *Turakina*, 9691 tons, commanded by Captain J. B. Laird, on passage from Sydney to Wellington. She was carrying some 4000 tons of lead, wheat, and dried fruit loaded at Australian ports and was to have filled her insulated space at Wellington with frozen meat for England.

The raider signalled the *Turakina* to stop instantly and not use her wireless. Captain Laird at once ordered maximum full speed, turned his ship stern on to the enemy, and instructed the radio office to broadcast the 'raider signal'. The *Orion* then opened fire at a range of about 5250 yards with the object of destroying the *Turakina's* radio office and aerials. Nevertheless, the *Turakina* was able to make her signal several times, and it was received by stations in Australia and New Zealand in spite of the raider's efforts to jam it. She gave her position as approximately 260 miles west by north from Cape Egmont and some 400 miles from Wellington.

The *Turakina* at once replied to the enemy's fire with her single 4.7-inch gun, and, in the gathering dusk, there began the first action ever fought in the Tasman Sea. It was an unequal contest, but Captain Laird had vowed that he would fight his ship to the last if ever he was attacked. At the close range of two and a half miles, the raider's fire quickly wrought havoc on board the *Turakina*. The first salvos brought down the fore topmast and the lookout, partly wrecked the bridge, destroyed the range-finder, and put most of the telephones out of action. The galley and the engineers' quarters were hit by shells which set the vessel badly on fire amidships. In little more than a quarter of an hour she was reduced to a battered, blazing wreck and was settling aft; more than half her crew had been killed and others were wounded. At least one of her shells had burst on board the raider and wounded a number of Germans. To hasten her destruction, the raider discharged a torpedo at a range of about a mile, but 'due to the swell it broke surface and hit the steamer on the stern. No visible damage results. The vessel burns like a blazing torch,' wrote Captain Weyher.

Meanwhile, Captain Laird had given the order to abandon ship. The two port lifeboats had been wrecked, but one of the starboard boats got away from the ship with three officers and eleven hands, seven of whom were wounded. A number of wounded were put into the remaining boat, but when it was lowered a sea swept it away from the ship's side and it was some time before it could be worked back again. When the lifeboat came alongside, the badly wounded chief radio officer was put into it and the others were told by Captain Laird to 'jump for it'. At that moment a second torpedo struck the *Turakina*, which sank two minutes later. The only survivors of the explosion were the third officer, the seventh engineer, an apprentice, two able seamen, a fireman, and a steward. They were picked up by the raider, as were the fourteen men in the other boat. An able seaman, who had been badly hurt when the *Turakina's* foremast was shot down, died on board the *Orion* and was buried next day. Captain Laird and thirty-three of his officers and men had died in the *Turakina*, and twenty survivors were prisoners in German hands.

In refusing to stop when challenged and in ordering wireless messages to be transmitted, Captain Laird had carried out an



obligation that was accepted by thousands of British and Allied shipmasters. The *Turakina* and her ship's company paid a great price, but the raider was compelled to leave the Tasman Sea and did not sink another ship for two months.

The only warship in New Zealand waters at that time was HMNZS *Achilles*, which was lying at Wellington. She received the distress signal at 6.56 p.m. and sailed two and a half hours later, at 25 knots, for the Tasman Sea. The one flying-boat available took off from Auckland early next morning and was sighted by the *Achilles* at eight o'clock. When the cruiser arrived at the position given by the *Turakina* she found no sign of wreckage or boats. For the next few days the *Achilles* and the aircraft carried on their search, but without success. An equally fruitless patrol was made in the south-west Tasman Sea by HMAS *Perth* and Australian aircraft. The raider had, in fact, succeeded in escaping to the southward.

After picking up the survivors from the *Turakina*, the *Orion* steamed away at easy speed to the south-west in generally poor visibility. At midday on 25 August she had reached a position about 200 miles south of Hobart. She then headed north-west and zig-zagged across the Australian Bight to the westward. 'The hopes of the captain for success in these waters were not however realised,' recorded the raider's log. 'Again and again the shipping-lanes from Capetown to South Australian ports and from Aden and Colombo via Cape Leeuwin to South Australia were crossed without sighting a ship. The weather was, as expected, generally very bad. The vessel rolled as much as 34 degrees....'

Assuming that shipping was hugging the coast, Captain Weyher approached to within twenty miles of the south-west coast of Australia. During the night of 2-3 September, with the object of disturbing shipping traffic, dummy mines were laid 'in view of the beacon on Eclipse Island, outside Albany harbour.' The raider then headed out to sea at full speed. At eight o'clock next morning a 'Hudson bomber appeared and circled the ship twice at an altitude of 600-800 metres'. The bomber made a wireless report as it flew away and from ten o'clock onwards 'at least six aircraft which had just taken off from Busselton were located by radar.' They failed to find the *Orion*, which was hidden by heavy rain squalls. Thereafter, the raider kept well offshore outside the range of air reconnaissance.

For the next five days she cruised along the shipping routes south-west of Cape Leeuwin but sighted nothing. The weather was persistently foul with strong westerly gales. According to the orders of the German Naval Command, the *Orion* was to have met the raider *Pinguin* (Ship No. 33) in that area, but the latter was having good hunting in the Indian Ocean and did not come south of Australia till the middle of October. The *Orion* was therefore ordered to return to the Pacific to replenish stores from a supply ship from Japan and to overhaul her machinery in the Marshall Islands.

Accordingly, on 9 September, the *Orion* sailed to the south-east for eight stormy days until she reached a position about 400 miles south-east of Hobart. She then steamed up the Tasman Sea to an area midway between Sydney and the North Cape of New Zealand, which she patrolled for five days from 21 September. No ships were sighted. In five days' cruising in the Kermadec Islands area she again drew

a blank. On 1 October she headed north, steamed close by the Fiji Group four days later, and, passing between Nauru Island and Ocean Island, arrived on 10 October at the atoll of Ailinglupalap, in the Marshall Islands. There she met the supply ship *Regensburg*, 8068 tons, from which she took some 3000 tons of fuel-oil as well as stores and provisions. Another supply ship, the *Weser*, 9179 tons, had been captured on 25 September by the Canadian armed merchant cruiser *Prince Robert*, a few hours after sailing from Manzanillo, Mexico, for the Marshall Islands.

The *Orion* and *Regensburg* left the atoll on 12 October. Two days later the raider captured the Norwegian motor-vessel *Ringwood*, 7203 tons, on passage from Shanghai to Ocean Island. The crew of thirty-six was taken prisoner and the ship, after being looted of stores and equipment, was sunk by an explosive charge. On the following night a steamer of 6000 to 7000 tons with 'large though unrecognizable neutral markings on the bows' was sighted steering south-east. The raider's maximum speed of 12.5 knots at that time was not sufficient to overtake the stranger, which disappeared in the darkness. On 18 October the *Orion* and her supply ship arrived at Lamotrek in the Caroline Islands, where they met the raider *Komet* and the supply ship *Kulmerland*, 7363 tons.

On the front cover is a photo of the Vindicatrix Queensland inaugural meeting in May 1996 at the Seaman's Mission, Hamilton. There is also a historic DVD available in our library of this meeting if anyone is interested made by Rick Shaw. A lively meeting with most having plenty to say, with no ladies present.

An Israeli doctor says "Medicine in my country is so advanced that we can take a kidney out of one man, put it in another and have him looking for work in six weeks."

A German doctor says "That is nothing; we can take a lung out of one person, put it in another and have him looking for work in four weeks."

The Russian doctor says "In my country, medicine is so advanced that we can take half a heart out of one person, put it in another and have them both looking for work in two weeks."

An Australian doctor, not to be outdone, says "You guys are way behind, we recently took a man with no brains out of Queensland, put him in Canberra and soon about half the country will be looking for work."

Why is a ships' Bridge called a Bridge. In the days of sail when the ships were small the steering wheel was situated on the poop deck at the stern of the vessel almost immediately above the rudder.

As the ships got bigger with the advent of steam, the watchkeepers and helmsmen found it difficult to see the front of the vessel. Consequently, the steering position was moved further forward and mounted on a raised platform to improve the visibility forward. As the structure resembled a bridge so the name stuck. In the early days the Bridge was open to the elements but nowadays is fully enclosed and well protected from the sea and weather.

Memories of a Tramp Ship in the 1940's

Continued 2.



The port of Houston is man made by making a channel or canal 50 miles long from the coast at Galveston. We were there 8 days a bit longer than normal due to engine repairs, so we had a chance to have a good look around the place and found the city to be very big and modern, but we

also saw America from the other side as we had to pass through some real shanty town areas when going from the docks to the city. With the cargo of wheat all stowed it was batten down the hatches again, drop the derricks and stow all the running gear and prepare for sea.

Everybody looked forward to going to the States in those days as you got quite good value for money, especially in the clothes line. We had been out from England nearly 4 months at this stage and working gear was getting pretty tattered, so when we left, new blue dungarees (jeans these days) were very prominent. Big lined American ties were very fashionable at that time and I still have some hanging in my wardrobe. Cheap American working gloves were also noticeable among the deck crew especially among the younger members. You never saw the older hands use them though as they could be dangerous. Rings also were never worn for the same reason. Sprags on wire ropes could hook into the material and pull your hand into a winch. If those same sprags just hooked into flesh, you could always rip a bit of skin off and get clear, and I have plenty of scars on my hands doing just that.

At this stage we had been told we were taking the wheat to India but the port hadn't been decided yet. We were going round the Cape of Good Hope, it being cheaper than having to pay Suez Canal fees, so we knew that it was going to be a long trip. Once clear of America we headed off down the Gulf and Caribbean Sea with a course set for Port Of Spain in Trinidad. There we took on bunkers and water. It was there we lost the second member of the original crew. He was an ordinary seaman who was actually in the same cabin as me. He had been complaining of stomach pains for several days, so with no doctor on board and not expecting to stop anywhere for the next six weeks, it was decided to put him ashore. He would eventually find his way home as D.B.S. (Disabled British Seaman) on any ship that would take him. This never happened to me and I always got home on the ship I went out on.

No one got ashore in Port of Spain as we were anchored off the port and the fuel came out in lighters. During the long trip to India the days were filled in with regular watch keeping duties. plus soogeeing and repainting the paint work. Chipping rust and holystoning the teak decks round the bridge housing was another regular job. The off duty hours were spent in washing, cleaning, and ironing, but mainly sleeping. My only amusements being reading and playing darts. Some members played cards for cigarettes which were quite cheap being duty free, but I was never a

gambler. Looking back it was a very boring life when at sea, and nowadays when I feel I have so much to do, and so little time, I think of all the hours wasted in those days.

As I recall the trip was very uneventful with good weather most of the way. The only land we saw was when we followed round the Cape of Good Hope. The Cape Rollers were very impressive waves and I had a great respect for them after I saw one roll on board from the Starboard Quarter and go right across number 3 hatch between the bridge and galley housing. A few minutes before I had been out there pumping some water for a cup of tea, so I was very wary after that. Once we got north of Madagascar we got orders to go to Bombay where we eventually arrived 7 weeks after leaving Houston. Most Indian ports were built by British engineers so in many ways they were like British docks, with large dock areas which you had to lock into, also they had cranes for working cargo.

At every opportunity we went ashore mainly to the pictures, as they had some lovely air conditioned picture houses in India which could put the English ones to shame. They were usually situated next to hovels or old tin shacks and nowhere was it more evident that India was a country of very rich and very poor. Although there was a certain amount of pestering by beggars in India, I never felt it was a dangerous country like Egypt, and I would wander about day or night in all kinds of areas. One thing that used to amuse me was the Coollie Wallahs. If you had happened to have bought something and were carrying it back to the ship, they would come up to you and say, "Me carry parcel, White man not Coollie". Another notable thing I remember about Bombay was the size of its cockroaches. Bombay Doodlebugs we used to call them as they were about two inches long. They used to come out at night by the hundreds and when walking down the quays back to the ship, they used to crunch under you feet as there were so many that you couldn't miss them. Inevitably some found their way on board the ship and for months after the odd one would keep appearing. I found a cup of boiling water was a good way to dispose of them and save that horrible crunch when you stood on them.

Cockroaches were always a problem on the older ships but before I left the sea you didn't see many due to modern dusting powders and regular fumigation of the complete ship. Before we left Bombay and set sail again, the one other thing that impressed me was the number of people who had no proper place to sleep. In the main streets of Bombay most of the streets had covered walkways outside the shops, like we have in New Zealand. Late a night though it was impossible to walk down the footpaths as that was where thousands of people slept. Walking on the road wasn't much problem though as there wasn't many cars around in those days, being mainly horse drawn Garris or hand pulled Rickshaws.

After a pleasant and interesting stay in Bombay it was once again back to sea, as orders had come to proceed to Sydney (Australia) and load flour for Colombo (Ceylon). When heading down the Indian Coast we ran into a cyclone and took a real buffeting for about three days. Being a light ship and so well out of the water, we weren't getting any green seas on board, but its a hard job keeping a good lookout when being lashed by hurricane force winds and the spray they throw around. A good lookout was very important in those days as very few ships had the luxury of Radar.

I was never on a ship that was involved in a collision, but some years after the King Robert when I was on the "Maidan" we had a very close call. Strangely enough we weren't in bad weather at the time, but it was on a beautiful day with not a cloud in the sky, and hardly a ripple on the water.

It was on a voyage from India to the States and we had passed Gibraltar and were about a 1000 miles out in the Atlantic, heading for Charleston in South Carolina. It was a Saturday afternoon at the time and everybody who was not on duty was turned in having a lovely Siesta. Apart from the Engine room staff down below the only other ones astir were on the bridge. There was the Second Mate, myself as Quartermaster on the wheel, and fortunately a Lascar bridge boy who was cleaning the brassware. The Second Mate was doing something in the chart room and it was his job to be keeping a lookout as well as doing the Navigation. We never had lookouts on during the day, unless it was foggy or poor visibility.

Although the Second Mate hadn't been out of the chart room for some time I wasn't worried as I had nearly a 180 degree view looking forward and if any other ships had appeared on the horizon I would have immediately told him. I couldn't see anything abaft the beam though but I wasn't worried about that either as an overtaking ship has to alter course to pass anything that is in front of it. Suddenly the bridge boy put his head through the port hole on the side of the wheel house and said, "Look Sahib". I left the wheel for a moment and had a quick look, and what a surprise I got, there underneath me on the Starboard Quarter was a fully laden oil tanker, and to this day I still feel that I could have jumped down onto the Focs'le head as she was so close. I shouted for the Mate and I think I had the helm hard over before the order actually came, because I could see that the only thing to do was to turn to port and as quickly as possible. As we turned away I doubt whether you could have put a cigarette paper between our stern and the other ships' bow, we were so close. We had to do a full circle to get back on course, while the tanker went steaming on its merry way. It was a Panamanian ship and being faster than us had crept up on the Starboard Quarter without being seen. We couldn't see anybody on the bridge, or anywhere else for that matter, and we assumed that she was on Automatic Pilot which some ships were fitted with. To this day I doubt whether anybody on that ship knew how close they were to a collision. It's hard to believe that two ships could fail to see each other on a clear day, and after that it certainly taught me vigilance at all times. The Second Mate got a severe reprimand from the Old Man as he should have taken evasive action long before he did, when it became apparent that the other ship had no intention of altering its course. At sea though you had to be prepared for the unexpected, it was amazing the number of times you had to alter course to miss ships which suddenly appeared on the horizon after you had been steaming for days on end without seeing a thing.

During the trip into Sydney, the shifting boards had to be taken down but this was a much easier job than putting them up. Then the holds had to be cleaned thoroughly seeing as we were loading Flour. It was at this stage that I was introduced to Bilge Diving as a lot of them were full of wheat. Bilges are your drains of the ship which run fore and aft at the bottom of the ship down each side of the

vessel. If any water leaked in, it could be pumped out from each hold with pumps that were situated in the bilges. All the Limber Boards (lids on the bilges) had been covered with burlap or sacking but wheat will filter through the smallest hole or crack. With the dampness in the bilges the wheat begins to rot and ferment and when you disturb it the smell is awful. There's not much space in a bilge so you have to go in head first and shovel the wheat and muck into a bucket. Hence the term Bilge Diving. We were very glad when that job was done, and I still shudder when I think of it.

Twenty one days after leaving Bombay we passed through Sydney Heads and anchored, Sydney harbour is one of the most beautiful harbours in the world, and we had plenty of time to appreciate its beauty. It was three days before we got alongside, after passing under the famous bridge and tying up at Green Island. I think it was called that, but anyway it was just a nice walk into central Sydney and the Circular Quay area. It was good to be back in civilization and one of the first things to be done was to buy fresh milk and sample the delicious ice cream. Being my first time in Australia, I was ashore at every opportunity and got to know the lay out of the city quite well before we left, but I'm sure it's changed allot since then. Sydney had a million people in those days and it had a reputation of being a little Chicago. Now it's got about three million people. I wonder what they call it now.

Loading bagged flour was a slow job and Aussie wharfies not being the most energetic of workers, we were there three weeks before we had the cargo stowed and then we were heading out once more, heading for Colombo. The weather was kind to us when we crossed the Great Australian Bight and then we stopped at Fremantle for bunkers. We were there for a night and so it was ashore again to see what Western Australia was like. There wasn't much to see in Fremantle though, and at that stage we didn't have time to see Perth which I visited at a later date and found to be a very beautiful city.

Rod Orrah

To be continued.....

A Doctor in Ireland wanted to get off work and go fishing, so he approached his assistant. "Paddy, I am going fishing tomorrow and don't want to close the clinic. I want you to take care of the clinic and take care of all me patients". "Yes, sir!" answers Paddy

The doctor goes fishing and returns the following day and asks, "So, Paddy, how was your day?" Paddy told him that he took care of three patients. "The first one had a headache so I gave him TYLENOL." "Bravo Mate, and the second one?" asks the doctor. "The second one had stomach burning and I gave him MAALOX, sir" says Paddy. "Bravo, bravo! You're good at this and what about the third one?" asks the doctor. "Sir, I was sitting here and suddenly the door opens and a woman appears. Like a flame, she undresses herself, taking off everything including her bra and her panties and lies down on the table, spreading her legs and shouts, HELP ME! For five years I have not seen any man!" "Tunderin' lard Jesus Paddy, what did you do?" asks the doctor. "I put drops in her eyes." he says.....

Safe and Sound in Peace Time

Well you did say you wanted a yarn..... All true, I may have the steering course wrong but allow for the grey matter's discolouration.

Easy enough to write about wartime experiences, most of us saw some activity, but with the war well and truly over with cushy ships. What could go wrong? Well you could have me for a helmsman or a Mate who gets his course wrong. Never really found out which, as far as I know, neither of us has ever told the story until now. Guess that Mate has departed by now. So safe to blame him.

Loaded with aviation and general gasoline on a Shell tanker bound for Helsinki via the Kiel and Baltic. Nothing really outstanding happened outside the usual midwinter North Atlantic and North Sea storms. The war was well and truly over, but Germany was still starving, we threw a lot of the ships bread to young kids on the Kiel Canal dockside. We duly passed through knowing we had to traverse a well lit, buoy marked, minefield that hadn't been cleared.

The channels zig zagged and meandered with course directions changing repeatedly. Can't remember the exact course given to me but it was repeated when reached. Some ten minutes later the Mate wanders over remarking. "Have you seen another buoy light?" "Nope." "We should've picked up one, maybe two, by now." He said, glancing at the compass. "Sheeet!!! what course are you on?" "65 degrees" was my response. "I said fifty five, not sixty five. we're in the middle of a bloody minefield. The Old man's due here in minutes get on the right course and pray. Fat lot of good that will do thought I. Heaven, Hell or Nowhere, it'll be express. Some few minutes passed and the Skipper, a pretty laid back bloke, checked my course which was, as always, dead on, and the Mate said, rather apprehensively. "Sir we seem to have missed sighting a buoy or two in the past twenty minutes." and then, with, to my ears, an audible sigh of relief. "Oh there's one now dead ahead.. Yes must have been two buoys we've missed." The Skipper said. "Make a report, the Navy can check it out." The Mate and I exchanged glances both furtive and conspiratorial. Never another word about it ever passed between us. I'm sure we both added a few years rapidly that night.

The excitement should have stopped, but the inevitable winter fogs in the Baltic later that day had us at Dead Slow. By this time I'm back on watch, the Skipper said. "Get the Chippy and Bosun out. Tell them to stand by, we may have drop the hook." Standing on the bow in a Baltic fog so dense you only knew the bridge was there by the ghostly lights, in January is not a pleasant place to be. Winches slowly free wheeling to stop them freezing solid, feet stamping to stop them doing the same thing. Breathing through cupped and gloved hands to warm the air you breath. Faintly, and growing louder, we could hear a bell. Ours was going regularly too, I know, because it was my frozen hands ringing it. "Nothing to worry about." said the mate, "There's a light ship ahead." But then ship sirens going too, not one either. We were at "Slow Ahead." but it still seemed we were speeding towards this ghostly diffused light and cacophony of sound. From the bridge came the directive to drop the pick with a simultaneous silencing of engines which of course doesn't actually put

the brakes on, a judicious reversal of the props ensured we weren't actually dragging the anchor and we came to a silent halt. The noise ahead only sounded worse as in the foggy, blanketing, eerie silence we could also now hear foreign voices bellowing, you didn't have to know the language to realise that some pretty rough profanities were being used.

We waited, still freezing. The Skipper was not being ultra cautious, after all we did have 12,000 tons of gasoline on board. A sudden course of action could always be in the offing. So we waited, whilst slowly the fog lifted, until we were able to make out, just one hundred yards ahead was the gas fuelled light ship tangled with a small freighter and a larger Baltic Timber Trader laden high with pine lumber, all waiting for our little drop of lighter fuel to start the biggest fire the Baltic had ever seen. We started engines, took a wide berth, and left them to it. At least our ship had been commanded by someone with sense, even if the same couldn't have been said about his Mate and Helmsman.

On to Helsinki, Russians still in control. Then it was hard to find English speakers. Their money was worthless and there wasn't anything to buy except hunting/dress knives, fur hats and girls. Most of the blokes already had knives. I bought one. Fur hats? I had a complete fur lined Murmansk outfit, left by a former crewman. We ended up at a dance hall where a large civic function was on. Well Chuck and I had found a very attractive, fluent in English, young lady who welcomed the opportunity to exercise her linguistic skills.

With Chuck's arm and mine across the back of her chair, vying for pride of place, she told us what was happening. Seems it was the Finnish annual sports heroes' honors award night, with trophies and medals being awarded for all the major sports presented between the dancing and eating.

Just then a giant goes on stage, and I do mean giant. Gorgeous then tells us. "He is receiving his trophies for being the Heavy Weight Wrestling Champion of Finland and Europe." He left the stage, walks up to the row in front of us, leans across the separating row, smiling, he kisses OUR bird full on the lips. She turned, grinning fit to burst saying. "And he's my husband."

Well they do say Merchant Seamen can be brave, but we aren't stupid. Or are we? I can't say what happened to Chuck's arm, but I know mine was nowhere near that girl.

One trip I will never forget..... Tom Edgar, Vindi 44

A 90-year-old man said to his doctor, "I've never felt better. I have an 18-year old bride who is pregnant with my child. What do you think about that?" The doctor considered his question for a minute and then said, "I have an elderly friend who is a hunter and never misses a season. One day when he was going out in a bit of a hurry, he accidentally picked up his umbrella instead of his gun. When he got to the Creek, he saw a rabbit sitting beside the stream. He raised his umbrella and went, 'bang, bang' and the rabbit fell dead. What do you think of that?" The 90-year-old said, "I'd say somebody else killed that rabbit." The doctor replied, "My point exactly."



Bill, I have just finished reading the newsletter "Under the Clock" issue 60 February 2009 when an article entitled Memories of a Tramp Ship in the 1940's brought back memories, which I had completely forgotten about.

I joined the TS Vindicatrix on April 15th 1946 and completed my training on July 6th. After my leave I signed on as deck boy on a tramp ship the MV Meadowbank on July 22nd, this voyage lasted 7 months paying off in February 1947. After my discharge I asked the Captain if I could sign on the next trip as J.O.S. to which he agreed and we set sail in early March. Our first port of call was Galveston and it was here that the article written by Rod Orrah about a ship carrying a cargo of nitrate interested me. I was

nightwatchman at the time and so on the morning of the 16th April 1947 I was ashore in the port of Galveston when a French ship called the "Grandchamp" exploded at around 9.15am. This happened in the port of Texas City, another ship named "High Flyer" also caught on fire and exploded around 1.00am the following morning. The death toll from both explosions was around 700 dead, although quite a number of people were unaccounted for, some were completely vaporized. I enclose newspaper cuttings taken from I believe an Adelaide newspaper a few weeks later.



Eric Crickmore (Qld Vindi)

CAPTAINS EXPERIENCE

Ship from Galveston

"It felt as if another ship had smashed into our side, and I leaped out of my cabin to see what size the hole was," said Captain J Stewart, master of the Bank Line motor ship Meadowbank, in describing the explosion at the port of Texas City last month. The Meadowbank, which at the time was loading sulphur for New Zealand at the Port of Galveston, 10 miles from Texas City, berthed yesterday morning in Auckland.

"I looked along my ships side and while I was trying to think what had happened I saw a cloud of smoke rising from Texas City. The cloud rose rapidly in a great dome, and then mushroomed at a great height, resembling the pictures of the Bikini atom bomb explosion", continued Captain Stewart "Then the oil tanks began to explode. Each of them would have made a great noise, but by compassion with the first blast the sounded like Chinese fire crackers."

Captain Stewart said he had seen bombing and been bombed himself at sea, but he had never anything to equal the Texas City explosion. He feared the burning oil from the tanks might flood the harbour and he asked the Meadowbank's Chief Engineer to have the engines ready so that the ship could put to sea quickly if necessary.

The explosion occurred on the morning of April 16, and the Meadowbank left on schedule that afternoon A vessel of 7300 tons gross. She was built at Sunderland in 1945 and she is paying her first visit to New Zealand. After discharging sulphur and general cargo at Auckland and Wellington the motor ship will proceed to Nauru Island to load phosphate.

CAPE STORM HALTS BRITISH SHIP

A gale off the Cape of Good Hope in which the wind velocity approached 60 miles an hour, caused the new motorship Meadowbank to be hove to for two days on her voyage from Trinidad to Fremantle. The Meadowbank which arrived at Port Adelaide yesterday, carrying a cargo of about 46,000 drums of bitumen of which 11,000 are for Adelaide.

Officers of the Meadowbank said yesterday that during the storm it was feared that the bitumen cargo might break loose, but there had been no damage.

Built and launched last year for the Bank Line to Ministry of War transport specifications the ship is on her third voyage. She has visited Australia previously, but is on her first to Adelaide.

Six hundred of the 28,000 people living in the Shetland Islands are captains of the British Merchant Navy, Captain John Stewart tells me.

Capt Stewart who is now at Port Adelaide in the Meadowbank is one of three brothers who started as seamen and became shipmasters. One family produced seven captains and another six.

He has been through 2 two wars without losing a ship, but one of his brothers was etaken prisoner by a German captain after his ship had been torpedoed. The U-boat never got back to base and Capt Stewart's brother was lost.

Capt Stewart has brought 45,000 drums of bitumen from the Trinidad bitumen lakes. The lakes cover 140,000 acres and looks like an elephant's hide, he says. The surface is so tough you can drive over it.

Some Large Ship Facts: (some of this information from below cited web references)

- Crews on large tankers use bicycles to move about on the ship
- The holds of the Jahre Viking could swallow St. Paul's Cathedral four times over.
- Some large tankers are so long, they need to take the earth's coriolis force (earth's rotation) into account for navigation.
- Some large tankers weigh so much that they cannot go through the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal and cannot even dock in many of the world sea ports.
- If the Empire State building were to be placed on its side, the Jahre Viking would be longer by 253 feet.
- If the Eiffel Tower were to be placed on its side, it would fit inside the Jahre Viking.
- The Jahre Viking cannot travel through the English Channel since its turning capability is not good enough for the narrow channel.
- The Jahre Viking, when called the Seawise Giant, was sunk by Iraqi Jets using exocet missiles in 1986, but has since been restored.
- The Titanic, the Queen Mary, The USS Nimitz and the Jahre Viking could fit inside the proposed ship "Freedom"



The *T.T. Jahre Viking* is a Norwegian-operated supertanker built in Japan 1976-79, formerly known as the *Seawise Giant*. Its 1504 feet in length and 226 feet in width makes it the largest ship in the world. *T.T. Jahre Viking* has a deadweight of 564,763 metric tons and summer displacement of 647,955 metric tons when laden with nearly 4.1 million barrels of crude oil. When fully loaded, she is too big to fit through the English Channel. Sunk by Iraqi missiles in the first Gulf War, she was raised and converted to a floating storage facility.

A supertanker is a tanker ship built to transport very large quantities of liquids, especially crude oil. Ships above 250,000 metric tons are generally considered supertankers. They are the largest ships in the world, larger even than aircraft carriers. When they were first introduced their size and draught prevented them from docking at many existing docks, requiring supertankers to discharge their cargo into smaller tankers offshore. Some ports have developed special deep-water off-loading facilities connected to the land by pipelines

Due to their size and mass, supertankers have very poor maneuverability; the stopping distance of a supertanker is typically measured in miles. When operating close to the shoreline they are vulnerable to running aground, whether due to mechanical failure, human error or bad weather. When this happens oil spills are a significant risk. A laden supertanker can carry millions of gallons of oil, which can pollute many miles of coastline. In "single-hulled" tankers the hull is also the wall of the oil tanks, and any breach will result in an oil spill. Newer tankers are "double-hulled", with an air space between the hull and the storage tanks, to reduce the risk of a spill in the event the hull is breached.

Following the *Exxon Valdez* incident, the United States has mandated that all supertankers entering United States waters be double hulled by 2015. The European Union has similar legislation requiring all tankers entering their waters to be double hulled by 2010.



Sea Going Ship Sizes

The Tiny Titanic

We have often heard that the Titanic was the largest sea going ship. That was definitely true - in 1912. However, since that time other ships have been built that are larger and even dwarf the Titanic. The Queen Mary 1, for example, was about 136 feet longer and weighed almost twice as much. Modern US aircraft carriers also weigh about twice as much as the Titanic did. The Queen Mary 2 and several cruise ships weigh even more, and are more than three times the weight of the Titanic. Large tanker ships of today are even bigger. The largest ship afloat today is a tanker, and it is called the "Jahre Viking". It is almost twice as long as the Titanic was and would probably weigh more than 12 times the Titanic when both were filled. A still larger vessel, called "Freedom" is being planned. This vessel would make all of the other ships, including the Jahre Viking, look tiny by comparison.

Some specifications below - from an amount of web research on ship sizes:

(please note that all specifications here should be considered approximate - and were taken simply from the best data I could find on each subject)

Passenger and Military Type Ships

Date	Passenger/Military Name	Owner	Weight (tons)	Decks	People Approx.	Length Feet	Width Feet	Speed Knots
1934	Queen Mary	Cunard	81,237	12	3,131	1,019		28.5
1939	Bismark	German War Ship	50,000			880	120	29.5
1962	Carrier Enterprise	US Navy	89,600		5,830	1,101	133	30
1973	Carrier Nimitz	US Navy	97,000		5,680	1,092	134	30
1991	Monarch of the Seas	Royal Caribbean	73,941	11	2,350	880	106	19
2000	Explorer of the Seas	Royal Caribbean	138,000	15	3,114	1,020	157.5	23.7
2001	Adventure of the Seas	Royal Caribbean	138,000	15	3,114	1,020	157.5	23.7
2002	Brilliance of the Seas	Royal Caribbean	90,090	13	2,501	962	105.6	25
2004	Queen Mary 2	Cunard	150,000	23	3,873	1,132	147.5	30
2006*	Ultra-Voyager	Royal Caribbean	160,000		4000+			

* planned

Tanker Ship Classifications

Tankers - class	-----Description -----	Cargo (DWT)	Weight (tons)
		minimum	maximum
HANDYMAX	Small enough to be handy?	10,000	55,000
PANAMAX	Max size for Panama Canal	60,000	75,000
AFRAMAX	AM. Freight rate assoc. Size	75,000	120,000
SUEZMAX	Max size for Suez Canal	120,000	200,000
CAPE SIZE	Travels around the Capes	80,000	no max
VLCC	Very large crude carrier	200,000	319,000
ULCC	Ultra large crude carrier	320,000	no max

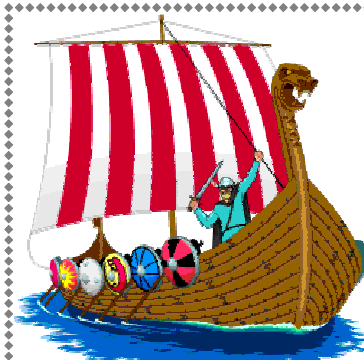
Specific Tanker plus Very Large Ships

(simply from the best data I could find on each subject)

Date	Tankers	Owner	Total Weight (tons)	Ship & other Weight (tons)	Cargo (DWT) Waight (tons)	Type	Length Feet	Width Feet	Speed Knots
1976	Jahre Viking*	Jordan Jahre	647,955	83,192	564,763	ULCC	1,504	226	13
--	Freedom	planned	3,000,000				4,320	725	10

Note: the proposed "Freedom" ship is not a tanker, but is more of a floating city. A full story in the next issue, but a whistle watter: see over of the planned route.....

Voyage of the Freedom Ship



Bill Gould was recalling memories of his first ship as an oarsman on a Viking galley. He recalls well one of his fellow seamen "crossing the bar" and being dragged aft and un-ceremonially tossed overboard and the all the oarsmen brutally whipped. Being

his first trip to sea, was not prepared for what was happening when ordered to urinate in the air he was more mystified. Asking his nearest mate under his breath what was going on? Was told "that after every burial at sea they always had a whip around and a good piss-up."

Bill Gould our oldest Vindi lad in Australia being a 1939 lad and hearty (soon to be) 87 years young. Bill also holds the record of being always the first to register for down-under reunions.

Special

We went to breakfast at a restaurant where the 'seniors' special' was two eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast for \$4. "Sounds good," my wife said. "But I don't want the eggs." "Then, I'll have to charge you £4.50 because you're ordering a la carte," the waitress warned her. "You mean I'd have to pay for not taking the eggs?" my wife asked incredulously. "YES!!" stated the waitress. 'I'll take the special then.' my wife said. "How do you want your eggs?" the waitress asked. "Raw and in the shell," my wife replied.

She took the two eggs home. DON'T MESS WITH SENIORS!!! WE'VE been around the block more than once YOU KNOW.



ALL MONIES, for whatever reason to be paid to the Treasurer
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