

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...

It is lucky that your editor is not of superstitious bent, otherwise he would not have designed issue 13 to go out at this most auspicious time of year. Ever foolhardy, he presses on! And so, dear readers, good greetings to you all! All the usual Christmas activities are well on the way here in the offices of "... calling BI". Paper chains have been glued together, mistletoe optimistically hung, cards festooned, trees bedecked and an excellent bottle of Tunisian red shared amongst the staff. May you all pay as little regard to your bank balances as your editor will and your editor's good lady will not.

We thank those of you who have sent in various photographs and articles for inclusion in future issues of "... calling BI". They will be used, as will anything that you send us. We would like to take this opportunity of welcoming the following who have subscribed to "...calling BI" over the last few months: **Ian Wilson, Don Wood, John Campbell, Michael Wood, David Rutter**, all from UK, **Peter Glass** from France and **John Timbrell** from Australia - gentlemen, you are very welcome!

In this final issue of 2009, we have our usual varied collection. Many thanks to Tom Kelso for the item culled from the 1924 pages of "*The Woodarra Review*". Quaintly worded, it is purportedly written by Man Friday. The piece also offers an insight to the commercial pressures of the time. Thanks also to John Prescott for describing the alternative uses of the container phenomena. If you didn't know that John

lives in a beautiful thatched cottage, you could be forgiven for thinking that he hankers after one of his TEU's. Tony Lister makes two appearances in this issue; his fine photograph of a smoking Stromboli taken from the stern of the *Uganda* on this page is something of a visual pun, being a ship's wake and a waking volcano. Tony also features in the "where are we now" competition, so he is not allowed to enter it! But you can send your answers on an e-mail to "[... calling BI](mailto:...callingBI)". We also highlight a couple of social gatherings.

Those readers with long memories may recall the charming little folk tale about the two elves and a pixie that we carried in issue 10. We called for any sightings of one of the elves, the Brown elf known as Pete. Surprise, surprise! The other elf, the King elf (also known as Mike) has called to say..."one day one of my rare visits to UK is going to coincide with one of your impromptu meetings in Essex, the last one was two days after I went back to Cyprus with the Russian Princess who got promoted to Queen, as we now have 2 little Princesses. I know, I know..... Just a quick note to tell you the Brown Elf checked in! He's lurking on a beef farm 100 clicks SW of Melbourne and is well retired". Who says it doesn't pay to believe in fairy stories? And just to please the King Elf, your editor can announce that the next "impromptu"

meeting of the Essex clan is to be held in May next year.

Whilst we're on the subject of 'get-togethers', just in case any reader is not aware, the next UK-based BSN reunion, (the 11<sup>th</sup>!), will be held in Newcastle on 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> October 2010. Details can be had from the superb and indefatigable Sue Spence, email [bi@johnmspence.plus.com](mailto:bi@johnmspence.plus.com); tel: +44 (0) 114 230 4815; snail mail to 52 Crimicar Drive,

Fulwood, Sheffield S10 4EG. Your editor is already booked in (and, unbelievably) paid. He will stalk the corridors of power and bring you news.

As someone who spent twelve Christmases on various ships, your editor has no desire to keep you from whatever social gathering you may be having. He is shortly off to David Hammond's annual bash, if only to apologise for not putting another one of his crew lists in this issue. Many thanks to all of you, and may you have all the peace and blessings you wish at this time of year.



## FROM THE SOCIAL PAGES...

Those convivial exponents of gourmandising and good living, the BI staffers of Essex and Suffolk have been at it again.

Repairing to their favourite hostelry, The Thatchers Arms in Mount Bures, in November, they monopolised again the attentions of the long-suffering bar staff, no doubt to the detriment of other patrons. Guests of honour were Jan and Peter Neubauer (pictured right), who were not indeed staff members, but who met as school

passengers on the *Nevasa* in 1968 and later married. They both told your Editor, separately and quite confidentially, that it was the best holiday they had ever had, before or since!

Also gathering at the bar your editor spotted David Davies (1956-62), John Rees (1953-71), Alan Myers (1951-93), John (1965-73) and Wendy (1969-72) Prescott, Barrie Sanderson (1953-72) and Mike Wheeler (1961-73). Your editor (1961-76) kept a low profile, all the better to bring you news of much gallivanting, telling of tall tales and to report that the Pork Belly roast was simply wonderful, especially when washed down with foaming pints of Adnams! The non-BI

ladies had heard it all before and were not impressed!

And now the social scene shifts to that well-known Cumbrian horse-trading town, Appleby-in-Westmoreland UK. Weather permitting, several of us will be meeting for lunch on Monday 4th January. Venue, from 12-noon onwards, is The Royal Oak.



Already signed up are Alisdair MacIntosh, Bob Dobie, Brian Parke, David Mitchell, Mike Feltham, James Slater and [Tony Hamnett](#) and others are expected to confirm. Contact Tony for information if required.

If you're in the area you will be made very welcome.

Appleby is just off the A66 about 12 miles from Penrith and The Royal Oak is on the edge of town going east on



B6542. And a right royal pub it is too, in your Editor's opinion, but he has to send his apologies and regrets, unfortunately.

## FROM THE FAMILY ALBUM...



**It's impossible to know just what you had to do when on cargo watch sometimes...!**

**Here we see Peter Venvell and Ken Long, ably assisted by John Pollock, engaged in a bit of arm-wrestling with some newly-loaded cargo on the 'Chakla' in March 1969**





## FROM THE Woodarra REVIEW...

WE dropped anchor on Christmas morning in the still waters of Kennedy Sound off the east coast of Queensland, at 20°33' S, well within the tropics.

It was the first Christmas many of us had spent from home and because it was austral-midsummer, the seasonal conditions and South Sea Island setting contrasting greatly from bygone days afforded a novel experience.

We lay about a mile to the westward of the south end of Shaw Island, one of twelve islands of the Sir James Smith group. This is six miles in length and two miles broad at its widest part. The western side is formed of a series of white sandy bays and rocky points; the eastern, of rugged cliffs with intervening sandy bays fronted by rocks covered at high water. It contains three peaks – Shaw Peak the highest at 1324 feet.

All hands were at stations when anchoring, and at the order "Let go!", the tones of the bugle sounded the Commodore's Salute swelled the air, strings of flags tripped gaily to the mastheads, thus outlining the ship aloft from stem to stern with a fluttering rainbow of bunting.

After breakfast the boats were lowered and provisioned. These were soon filled with officers and cadets, who enthusiastically pulled for the island. This appeared but a short distance from the ship's deck, but every rower being glad when at last the boats grounded on the sandy bottom.

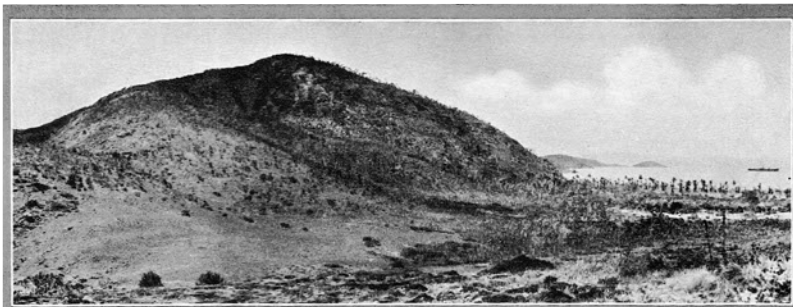
Immediately a swarm of cadets jumped into the water and, wading ashore, made for a grove of coconut palms. Here, though the nuts were not in abundance, there was nevertheless a sufficient supply of almost ripe fruit to quench our thirsts. Attentions were soon directed elsewhere, as climbing trees with temperatures at about 100 degrees in the shade proved a hot and perspiring pursuit. Never did the sea, as it lapped the snow-white strand, appear more inviting, and with but a moment's hesitation, clothes were discarded to plunge into the pellucid waters.

Around and about a great variety of shells, corals, sea urchins and other marine objects were strewn, and having made a collection of the best of these, the journey was resumed. After walking a mile or so, however, and coming to the end of the beach,

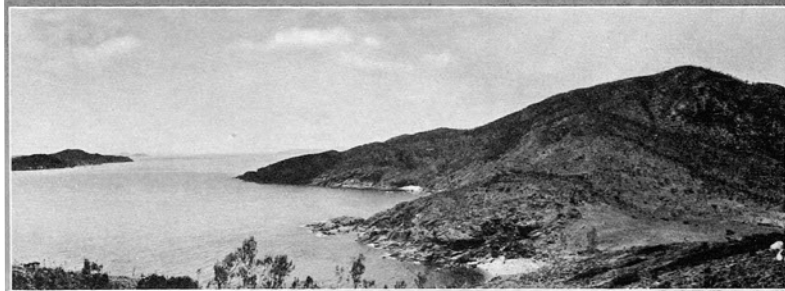
where the adjoining bare rock, in addition to being hot, was not a congenial path for bare feet, we made our way back to the rendezvous. Finding on arrival there that the short excursions had left us hot and perspiring, another plunge was undertaken, during which a game of water polo was played, a coconut doing service as ball, until lunch was announced. By this time all hands were as ravenous as wolves and sitting in the most shady place that could be found, the good work began.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, we again decided to explore the island, but this time with protective foot covering. Of the three peaks in the vicinity, the centre and lowest one was chosen, its ascent being no mean undertaking as it was still 624ft high. Toiling upwards for some time through coarse, short scrub, almost persuaded us to turn back, but continuing to the summit, a beautiful panoramic view unfolded itself, thus rewarding our efforts.

Islands of emerald and jade dotted the blue bowl of the sea and in the background the outline of the coastal range could just be traced. Directly below, and between Mount Arthur, the peak to the southward, lay a narrow plain. This was fringed on its left by a beach strewn with white coral; pine trees and eucalyptus were dotted here and there and on its right the coconut grove



Kennedy Sound side of Shaw Island with "WOODARRA" at anchor therein.



Pacific Ocean side of Shaw Island.

continued almost to the beach's edge. Off this, the ship's boats lay at anchor, and in the waters around them we could see our shipmates splashing, while further out to seaward the "Woodarra" rode, in gala rig, like "a painted ship upon a painted ocean."

Making for the side of the island opposite to that on which a landing had been made, the coast line was found to be rocky, and steep, being exposed to the buffeting of the waves of the vast Pacific. Climbing carefully over the rocks, we came to a small opening, and crawling through, found ourselves in a roomy cave whose sandy floor was strewn with coral and shells, and strangest of all, some old boxes, one of which had originally contained bottles of lime juice.. The cause of this case's entry into the cave became a matter for much conjecture. Of course, the natural and probably correct explanation was that the sea had cast it there, but imaginations already fired by the seclusion of our lonely island surroundings, were prepared to surmise almost anything, even reviving visions of Benn Gunn of "Treasure Island" fame. It is possible that some would not have been surprised had he appeared out of the gloom of the cave, but disappointed in this we made our way back to the boats and arriving just as the decision to return to the ship was made.

Christmas Day on Shaw island was pronounced a pleasurable and instructive experience, such as does not fall within the lot of many to enjoy.



## FROM THE CONTAINER PARK...

WITH millions of shipping containers now in existence around the world, it is unsurprising there are lively leasing and resale markets for the ubiquitous box. While recession and the downturn in shipping have played havoc with the container leasing end of the business the stacks of empty boxes lying in just about every container depot worldwide, now represent a bright future for re-use and a new lease of life; a business with enormous potential, it seems.

It took only about 10 years from the birth of the container in 1956 to someone thinking boxes could make ideal high density housing. The Habitat exhibit at Montreal's Expo 67 demonstrated how an apparently random pile of blocks could easily be transformed into a funky housing scheme. Actually, they weren't containers but could easily have been; nor was the structure steel but the whole thing was modular. The descendants of Habitat are the houses and buildings now being designed by architects in North America and Europe using cargo containers as the standard, modular building block. There is even a new name for it: 'cargotecture'.

In Amsterdam and the UK, shipping container units have been used for student housing and apartments since 2005. In Uxbridge, UK, Travelodge last year became probably the first hotelier worldwide to build Lego-style, a hotel from containers. The firm aims to build 670 hotels in the UK, Ireland and Spain before 2020.

The great thing about using containers in this way is that they are inherently transport-proofed and transport-friendly. They can be moved cheaply and quickly with minimal damage from a construction plant to, say, a



Coffee boxes: the way to go? Two 40 footers adapted as an espresso stop at Dwight, Illinois

building site across thousands of miles. Thus the Uxbridge hotel was largely built in China and transported module by module for erection in the British town. Even so, its construction produced a 25% saving compared with traditional materials and methods.

But it is certainly not just avant garde housing and hotel projects which can benefit from re-using the box. In London, Container City opened in 2001, with 100 work studios made of recycled containers. And in the US, there was until recently a celebrated roadside coffee shop at

the small town of Dwight, Illinois, made from two stacked 40ft boxes.

Container City has already been influential in giving impetus to Forth Ports to unveil plans for an eco-friendly community using recycled containers. The scheme at Leith Docks in Edinburgh is a mixed-use complex.

The fact that shipping containers are not just incredibly strong and transport-proof but also come fully marinated makes them ideal for emergency relief. Simple but robust housing, hospitals, and workshops can easily be created from the standard 8 x 8 x 20 foot module.



Futureshack - temporary home in a ship's container

But now these ideas have been taken one step further by British charity *Tools with a Mission* (TWAM).

TWAM collects, renovates and sends tools of many types to villages and towns in southern Africa. Bikes, sewing machines, hand tools and many other implements are sent, tons at a time. Shipments are made by leased container but recently the charity has begun buying end-of-life containers so that once the shipment arrives the box can be designated for accommodation of one type or another. The most recent was a 40ft box destined to be used as an office-cum-chapel at its destination.

Perhaps the Swedish authorities also have something to add. Earlier this year, police in Sweden's northern Varmland coped with drunken New Year's revellers by putting them in a customised shipping container until they sobered up, reports *The Local*, Sweden's English language news portal.

The container is equipped with ventilation, a simple drainage system (a hole in the floor) and furnished with fireproof mattresses and an inspection window. The box was also used last summer by the local recreation club in Branas in northern Varmland to hold inebriated rally-cross enthusiasts during the European championship week. "We are probably the first in Sweden to do this," said Peter Akerstrom of the Varmland police detachment. "People go there to have fun. It is probably not quite as fun to wake up in a detention container."

In the maritime sphere, the cargo container has taken 50 years to reach the point where it has virtually displaced traditional deep sea breakbulk trade. With boxes now almost as cheap to buy in China for one-trip use as leasing and operating in the established way, innovative re-use and re-purposing schemes look set to take off in a big way.





**FROM THE SALOON...**

Responding to your Editor's call for more photos for inclusion in "...calling BI", Chris Wright has sent in a saloon shot (before dinner beers perhaps) taken on the *Queda* in 1962.

Robert Old and HC Walker were the masters and Martin Southwood a 3rd Mate during that year.

The Chief Engineer was



Purser & Wife  
 3rd Mate; CEO's Wife; 2EO Tom Rae; 3EO John Langley; 3 cadets; EEO Clive ?  
 1 to r Chief Mate & Wife 3rd Mate Tony Marston; Chris Wright 5EO

Tom Hide and Chris recalls he was coming up to retirement for the umpteenth time. Other Engineers not on the photo were Linsay Robb (3EO), Bill Shields (4EO), Jim Baxter (5EO). Tom O'Toole was a senior EEO.



Chris can't remember the names of the other 2 fivers, is there anybody out there who can help us with these or indeed any of the other officers in the picture?

**FROM THE TOURIST OFFICE...**

These two fine examples of BI engineering talent (if not exactly of prime Hugo Boss modelling credentials), Tony Lister and Clive Sibbering are pictured here in their off-duty mode.

But just where are they, dear Reader? This month's "where are we now?" competition may



had no time off for gadding about like these two, for he never saw this in his time. A Clue, do we

hear you ask?  
 Alright then:  
 German is the main language on the stone carving.  
 Answers as usual

just be the hardest yet. When your editor was in this port, he obviously

to "...calling BI" for the chance to win fabulous prizes (it says here).

