

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's that time of year again, folks, when we have ward off excited little children, when the memsahib pleads for you to go a little easier on the bar than last year, when the unwanted new pairs of socks turn up, when you get cards from people you can't remember or have forgotten to include on your own list and when your Editor is scrambling around to finish off all the little jobs he's been given throughout the year.

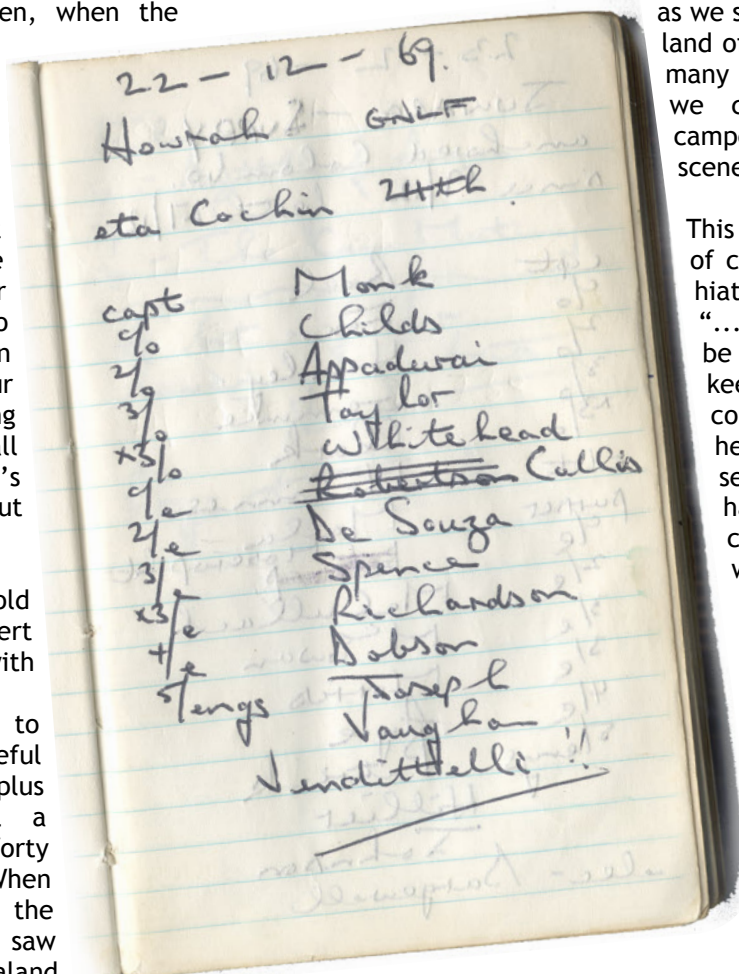
The Editorial household is in a state of high alert at the moment, with impending grandchildren about to bless(?) the peaceful tenor of life, plus preparing to fulfil a promise made some forty odd years ago. When your Editor left the *Bankura* in 1965 and saw the coast of New Zealand

slowly slipping neath the horizon, he said he would be back. He didn't think it would take him quite this long, but the New Year will see the bags packed, the car garaged and no doubt the tickets mislaid as we set off for a four week tour of the land of Aotearoa. We hope to meet as many of our NZ readers as possible as we chunter around in the hired campervan, rediscovering some of the scenes of our youth.

This southerly sojourn will also mean of course that there will be a slight hiatus in the publishing schedule of "...calling BI", as your Editor will not be back until mid-February. But do keep your stories and photographs coming in. Just perhaps the hired help will think to file it all away sensibly if she's not too busy hanging up mistletoe or pulling a cracker or whatever she gets up to when the boss is away.

Meanwhile many thanks to all those who have contributed to this seasonal offering. You are stars!

May you all share a little goodness and happiness at this time and all off us involved with "...calling BI" wish all of you a wonderful 2011. Now to open the cooking sherry!



FROM THE SCRAPBOOK....

We thank Richard Henderson for this picture from the recent river cruise during the BI Reunion in Newcastle. It does look like Val Allard is having a hard job persuading Don Wood that it *is* his round, doesn't it?



FROM THE COMPETITION DEPT....

Are we getting overly difficult for you or are you being badgered into too much Christmas shopping by your other half to attempt these "where are we now?" pictures? On the supposition that Ted Treacher's picture of Kobe Harbour stumped you all (may be it was the bits of dust that had settled on the print after all those years), we



give you a much easier one this time. Pay little attention to the sons of gentlemen (no prizes for guessing who they are - your Editor does not want to end up in court!) who have clearly sojourned far too long in the Star Bar and we think that your Editor's in-box will be bulging with the correct answer to this "where are we now?" Answers, please to the usual [address](#).



FROM THE DICTIONARY....

Your Editor is a keen devourer of the correspondence pages on the 'Mariners' website (<http://www.mariners-l.co.uk>) from which he gleaned the following gem of a conversation piece about a substance dear to many a deck chota sahib's life.

"I have probably misspelled the word but I am referring to a clearing solution I had a lot to do with when I first went to the sea in the early fifties as an apprentice. It comprised a handful of washing soda dissolved in cold water and was a low quality detergent compared to Shell's Teepol."

Soojee was short for soojee moojee and possibly a Hindustani word though I have never found it in a Hindustani-English glossary. (Nicholas Wilson)

Hobson Jobson has SOOJEE (from Hindi "suji") as "the fine flour made from the heart of the wheat" and a kind of porridge made from same. (Peter Beeston)

It seems there are various spellings including "Suji-Muji" under which I found it on Google. For its derivation, one can probably do no better than the great Eric Partridge: <http://tinyurl.com/2vvpw28> under "soogey" (into which, incidentally, your Editor couldn't link!). Apparently it

even appears in Conrad! Incidentally my copy of "Hindustani without a Master" which has a section on Lascar's Hindustani, has "Saji" (the unaccented "a" sound usually being short) as meaning a squeegee, but the phrase they give for "Wash the paintwork with fresh water and soap" doesn't include anything sounding like Suji-Muji. It doesn't appear in Hobson-Jobson, the dictionary of Anglo-Indian terms, as far as I could find, except for the flour term Peter found". (Piers Smith-Cresswell)



Further to the last offering, the Conrad reference comes from the Spectator magazine of 26th January 1934, where he is quoted as saying "There are no sailors today, only Suji-Muji men...mere washers of paint. Deckhands on modern ships wash and chip paint, morning noon and night"! There is another entry in a Dictionary of Slang upon which your Editor alighted, where it describes the

phrase "to soogey the bulkhead" as meaning "to go on a drinking bout", which apparently is a Royal Navy term - well, it has to be, us MN types had a rougher phraseology, I'm told!

So now you know or, perhaps, you don't! Whatever, but when your Editor had an irascible Chief Officer bearing down upon him, he made very sure that he was sugi-ing away with great abandon!



FROM THE HIGH SEAS

You're an adventurous lot, I must say. Whilst your Editor meanders his way through life in his usual desultory way, he is continuously assailed by BI colleagues who climb the Atlas Mountains or fly fast airplanes and the like.

One such is an old shipmate, Mike Wheeler, who did up a sleek looking yacht, bludgeoned a couple of mates and others to sail with him in the Cape Town to Rio race a few years back. Mike takes up the story...

In September 1999, I bought the 'Golden Fleece', a Sparkman & Stephens 41 boat built in 1974 and which represented South Africa in the Admirals Cup in Cowes in 1975 (for the full history see Classic Boat Magazine edition 257, November 2009).

I decided to enter the 2000 Cape Town to Rio Race starting on January 8th and needed some crew, so I contacted and press ganged Tom Allard and Slim (Roger) Doman to join me along with my son and a couple of friends. Everyone rendezvous-ed in Cape Town to provision and prepare the boat for the race. I was skipper, Slim was Navigator and Tom was Radio Officer. Watches were arranged for 2 hrs on and 4 hours off.

The day before the race, the heavens opened over the marina at the Royal Cape Yacht Club in Cape Town and all the crew hurried below for shelter. Within minutes the rain was entering the main cabin through the deck and the hatches (which were closed!). Tom and Slim looked up at the leaking deck, then at each other and then at me. I just said: "Don't worry about it, guys, it's only 3,540 miles to Rio and it will be warm anyway. We have an EPIRB"! The words 'jump ship now' must have flashed through Tom and Slim's minds, but like true BI shipmates they stayed with me and 'Golden Fleece'. That evening at the pre-race party in Cape Town Castle, Slim, in true BI style, somehow managed to extract a case of Fire Engine Red wine from a waiter and by the time that was consumed all thoughts of jumping ship had vanished and visions of bikini-clad girls on Copacabana Beach in Rio had replaced those of a leaky boat.

Happy Hour!

At 1500hrs on January 8th 2000 a gun announced the start of the race and 84 boats set course for Rio. We soon lost sight of the other boats and the first few days were uneventful, with 'Golden Fleece' enjoying 20-25kts of

wind in the SE Trades and surfing down waves at up to 13 kts. However, this was not to last as now water was entering the boat not only through the decks above but also from somewhere below the waterline! Electric bilge pumps dealt with most of that but about once every day we had to form a chain gang with buckets to bale the bilges for about 20 minutes. Tom reported our position every day by SSB radio so that our families at home could follow our progress on the race website until day 5 when

when another problem arose. Sea water and electrics do not get on well together and this time the water won... we lost all our electrics; SSB radio, VHF, GPS/chart plotter, lights, bilge pump etc, and all attempts to fix the problem failed. We did still have a torch and a hand held GPS and VHF and Slim got out the sextant and so we continued to sail and bale our way to Rio.

On January 25th we fell into the South Atlantic High and were becalmed. This was frustrating and so I, my son Jason and two friends went

swimming in 5,000 metres. This time was used to mend sails and other broken gear. After a couple of days we found the wind again and twice got knocked down by squalls in the middle of the night with the spinnaker up. The spinnaker became full of water and held us over for what seemed like an eternity until we could release it.

Happy Hour started off as being at 1800hrs but before long it crept forward to 1730 and then to 1700hrs (I think Slim had forgotten to change the clocks... deliberately!) and then after 15 days the mother of all disasters for anyone in BI struck us... we ran out of booze! Leaks, loss of electrics, becalmed, knock downs we could cope with all that but... no booze! Who did the provisioning?

Happy Hour was now Unhappy Hour! Food was also getting low. We lost a lot of weight but had loads of water.

With no radio contact to the outside world, we could not tell our loved ones in England that we were OK and that we still were on target to meet them in Rio when they flew out. We did get one message home via another yacht on the horizon that we contacted with our hand held

VHF. They kindly relayed a message home and told my wife Vicki to bring her credit card for shopping in Rio as she was going to have a long wait!



(left to right): Tom Allard, Mike Wheeler, three non BI friends, son Jason Wheeler, Slim Doman



FROM THE HIGH SEAS (contd)



About three days out of Rio, we closed on a French yacht out from Le Havre and they kindly threw us a few cans of beer - not enough of course but it did wonders for Anglo-French relationships!



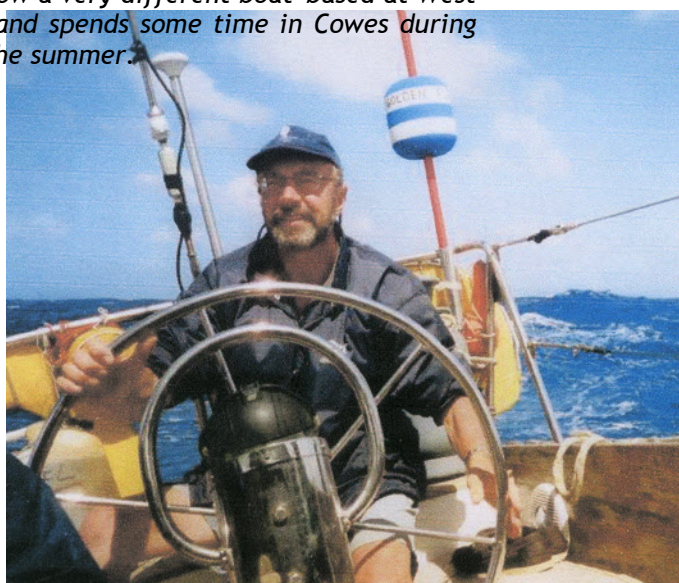
We're not quite sure which particular navigational instrument Tom Allard is holding!

The big post-race party at the Rio Yacht Club was on February 4th and we were still twelve hours out! We could hear the music and see the lights as we closed the shore but decided to wait until dawn to enter, as arriving in Rio by boat is quite spectacular, particularly as we sailed in alongside a Brazilian submarine which was also entering port at 0530hrs on February 5th. Our wives and partners were not there to meet us as they did not know exactly when we would arrive and in any case they were sleeping off the after effects of a good party the night before! We telephoned them from the marina and soon they were with us sharing the champagne that I had kept hidden in the bilges for this moment. After 28 days and 3,540 miles we were in Rio.



Does anybody know where we are exactly?

'Golden Fleece' spent the next 5 years in the Elephant Boat-yard on the Hamble having a complete restoration. Slim and Tom went to the re-launch in May 2009 and were pleased to see that she no longer leaked and all the electrics were working. She is now a very different boat' based at West Mersea in Essex and spends some time in Cowes during Classic Week in the summer.



Mike Wheeler at the helm of *Golden Fleece* in the south Atlantic

FROM THE SWIMMING POOL ...

Our story in the last issue of "...calling BI" concerning Mike Pratt's unscheduled swim during a lifeboat drill sure did wake some memories out there. Even your Editor recalled a wet night in Singapore Outer Anchorage after a Dutch Swing College jazz concert ashore.

Doug Powell for instance recalls "Mike Pratt's swim during lifeboat practice on *Santhia* mirrors my own on the same vessel about a year later, except that it wasn't in Penang! January in Japan was a bit chilly and as 2nd Sparks I had to descend in the motor boat to test its W/ T. Finishing, I decided not to wait for us to be hoisted up, but to climb the jacob's ladder. For some reason the end of the ladder was about 4-5 feet above the boat's gun'l, but being fairly athletic (in those days) I got myself on to it and was about to climb when the bit that was caught-up on the deck came free. Luckily the boat had drifted off a foot or so and I went straight into Kobe Harbour up to my neck with my best blue on. Judging by their paroxysms of mirth, it was the high point of the day for everyone else".

Bob Readman didn't quite fall in but "the first time I (a Junior Assistant Purser) took a boat away (I think it was in Tanga) after gaining my Certificate of Efficiency I felt quite proud of myself - a faultless performance until, returning to the ship, I attached my boat to its falls and gave the order for the boat to be raised. Unfortunately I had attached my own boat's after fall to our bow and the forward fall of the next boat to the stern. It was only noticed when the motor started to lift us out of the water - the bow going up and the stern staying firmly in the water - much to the consternation and alarm of the Indian crewmen. Fortunately it was noticed pretty quickly and we were lowered back into the water before everyone aboard was tipped into the briny. I was thoroughly humiliated - not least by the fact that passengers lining the deck watching the lifeboat exercise were doubled up with laughter and applauding my incompetence. And of course, I received a well-deserved b****cking from the CO."

Simon Morgan reports that "my involuntary swim came on *Karanja* in '66/67. In the engine room store (I was a 5EO) there was an inflatable rubber dingy. There was also a small outboard motor, British Seagull I seem to remember. I checked the inflatable for leaks and announced that

everything was ready for a sea trial. I cannot be sure but I think it was in Mombasa that we launched the boat, fitted the outboard and after numerous pulls, the engine started. Now the exciting bit; I opened the throttle to its maximum hoping to impress everyone with high speed turns alongside *Karanja* but I didn't realise that you needed a rigid bottom board in the inflatable. The boat bent in half with the engine disappearing into the water, stopping instantly and with the passengers swimming around looking rather sheepish. I don't know whether you have ever tried to get into an inflatable which doesn't have a rigid bottom but it is very difficult. If you have done the Offshore Survival Course, you do this after being in freezing water for a while, then it is VERY, VERY difficult. Fortunately Mombasa water was warm but someone said we should look out for the sharks so you can imagine the scramble to get back into the boat".



But it had to come, didn't it? Derek Banks confessed "I had an incident concerning an involuntary swim when on *Kampala* - in the Seychelles. a little more embarrassing than Simon's. There I was at 1500 hours sat in Marie's Bar on the hill overlooking the bay, back in those days I could manage, or rather not manage, a few tipples. Anyway 1500 hours was ETD, so on hearing the *Kampala's* frantic whistles, I unsteadily made my way to the jetty and managed to persuade a launch to take me out to the ship. the gangway had to be re-lowered as they realised I was on my way back and not left in haste.

By this time a crowd had gathered to watch the fun including Tom Barnett who was C/O. Problem arose when the launch pulled alongside the gangway. The launch dipped as the gangway rose, I stepped off into the pani. Now sober as anything, I leapt out of the water on to the gangway and ran up as Tom raced down steam coming out of his ears, he passed me on the way without realising, thinking I was still in the water. He did catch up with me later and read me the riot act but in his usual nice manner. The letter from Aldgate was a bit more formal!!"

It all makes you wonder, doesn't it?



FROM THE HAPPY HOLS....

Some people have all the luck. Whilst those poor people in UK were suffering yet another Ice Age, some of our number took to the good and sunny life on offer from the *Oriana*. A regular at the East Anglian mini-reunions, Peter Motion emailed your Editor from on board (what a difference from your Editor's own

time at sea, when you had to save up a month's pay to send a telegram and then rouse the Sparks to send it!) to gloat over his good fortune. Peter (2nd from the left in our photograph) says "I am presently on board *Oriana* with my wife between Samoa and New Zealand to visit our family in Brisbane. On

the first leg between Southampton and San Francisco, I discovered there were two retired BI Captains and their wives on board. The *Oriana's* captain, Julian Burgess invited us all on the bridge for departure from Acapulco and we are in the attached photo. We allowed the *Oriana* captain in the picture as he had once visited Dwarka when he was a P&O cadet!



Captain Cliff Robinson was a Chantala cadet in 1950 then served on *Empire Trooper*, *Eastern Service*, *Dunera*, tankers and gas ships before retiring in 1991.



Captain John Fullbrook was also a cadet on Chantala in 1950 then served on *Purnea* and *Rajula* before coming ashore to assist with the LSL new building programme.

Thence Camelot, RA Dock office before being appointed Captain of Chantala 1964. He retired in 1985 after service with P&O ferries.

I joined BI in 1958 and served in various departments in One Aldgate before becoming involved with Educational Cruising as an Assistant

Manager

and Cruising Operations Manager. I was subsequently appointed to P&O Fleet management after splitting the group companies into Divisions in 1971. I retired in 1992 as P&O Cruises Fleet Director and Senior V-P Fleet service, *Princess Cruises*".

Thanks for the note, Peter, and enjoy the Aussie sunshine! See you at the Thatcher's Arms soon, we hope.

FROM THE HISTORY BOOKS...

Unbelievably, one of those special anniversaries comes around next year. Your Editor realises that, to many of our readers, the term "educational cruise ships" means little or even may be has the odd pejorative thrown at it. Be that as it may, there is little doubt that the experience meant a lot to the school children who sailed on the ships (there is even a website (www.dunera.co.uk) dedicated to those memories. And it is undeniable that operationally, it provide employment for many BI staff who might otherwise had to leave the company and of course, the programme presented the company cash ledgers with much-needed income over the years, thus prolonging the life of BISN Co beyond that which may have been the case.

On 12th April 1961, the *Dunera* sailed slowly out into the mists of the River Clyde and the new era began. Much has

been written in these and other pages far more erudite, so your Editor will eschew the temptation of plagiarism, you'll be glad to hear! But what you may also be glad to hear is that a group of former employees and some those involved in the early years of the schoolship programme will be holding a reception on board the HQS *Wellington* in London on the very 50th Anniversary of the first cruise departure next year. The *Wellington*, the home of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, was used by the company to brief the educational world and other potential passenger bodies about the programme and the opportunities it afforded for young people.

For more information about the event, contact John Rees at

john.rees@chappelandwakescolne.net



FROM THE GALLEY

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak! We are indebted to the galley staff of the *Chantala* (Capt H F Collinson, Chief Engineer R B Henderson) for this saturnalia of seasonal scoff from 1953 as set out below. It is beyond your Editor, who has but to consume more than just a couple of sarnies to require an afternoon lie-down, how anybody kept a wakeful watch after this lot! A word of advice, though - it would be un-wise to show this and make comparisons to the beloved and dearest as your own festive repast is being prepared. In your Editor's own bitter experience, it tends to dilute some of the peace and goodwill that we wish all our readers!

