



Issue no: 3

November 2008

News of British India, its ships and staff, the history and 'histoires', of ships and sealing wax, nautical natters and a miscellany of maritime musings

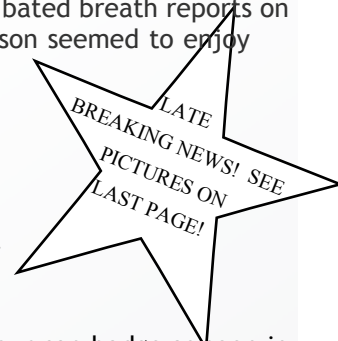
available free of charge by application to
[calling BI@biship.com](mailto:calling_BI@biship.com)

FROM THE EDITOR

Well. Dear Reader, here's a note that I wasn't expecting to write for some time yet. When we were planning this 'occasional' newsletter, we thought that four or five issues a year, certainly no more than six, would see us through. Now we have our third in three months already! Of course, most of us are still remembering our various reunions; London, Glasgow and Fremantle and there's a lot to talk about (including just how did Tony Gray throw those improbable four 6's in Liar Dice?). The pictures of the Runnymede event are pasted of the BI online group for staff (go to <http://www.biship.com/runnymede/runnymedereview.htm>). We await with bated breath reports on the other two events from James Slater & Danny Ravn. Certainly Tony Gates & John Davison seemed to enjoy themselves in Fremantle, if their postings to the Biship staff site are anything to go by:

Back from Freo and a most enjoyable reunion, great turnout and fittingly rounded off with an excellent curry lunch on the Sunday. Well done Danny, Jeannie and the WA Team from: Tony and Anne Gates

I HEARTILY ENDORSE THESE THANKS TO DANNY AND JEANNIE /WA TEAM FOR A WONDERFUL AND WELL ORGANISED FREO REUNION, AM LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR NEXT REUNION. JOHN DAVISON



Tony goes on to say that he is prepared to organise some more BI caps, featuring of course our cap badge as seen in the photograph. Your editor just cannot resist the temptation and has ordered one (and is going to hide away from his grandson when he plays at being Captain Jack Sparrow - no prizes for guessing your editor's role!) The caps will cost about Aus\$35 plus postage. Your editor will let you convert this into your own currencies, given the current financial crisis - suffice it to say that he'll have to forgo a bottle of his favourite wine. Contact Tony at t.and.a.gates@xtra.co.nz.

That redoubtable band of BI staffers in Essex & Suffolk (UK) obviously can't get enough socialising. We see they are organising a get-together on 28th November to prepare themselves for the Christmas party season, no doubt. Details are on the [BI online](#) group for staff (*You need to be registered to access this site*). Your editor will sneak in the backdoor to make sure they behave themselves! Contact [John Prescott](#) for details.



A goodly and varied content in this issue - thanks to all contributors, especially to

Roger Northcote, who offered to forgo on the Esc35 he said I owed him (*see "...calling BI" issue 2*) if I included his wonderful picture of gannets. Money well spent, say I.

Finally, dear Reader, should your editor succumb to the delights of Crouch Vale Gold in deepest Essex and not surface in time, please accept the very first compliments of the forthcoming season...but he will try to get another issue out!!



Later in this issue....

FROM THE NEWSDESK....

FROM THE READERS....

FROM THE P&I Clubs....

FROM THE INTERNET....

FROM THE FREO REUNION....

FROM THE NEWSDESK....



An Israeli billionaire who served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War has given £20 million to build a new wing at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.

The gift from Sammy Ofer, an 86-year-old shipping magnate, is thought to be the biggest single donation by an individual to any cultural institution in the UK. It will help finance a new £35 million extension at the Greenwich site, on the Thames in southeast London, which will include a large exhibition hall and an archive centre.

Mr Ofer bought his first ship in 1950 and now owns, with his brother Juli, one of the world's biggest private shipping companies as well as other diversified interests. Forbes magazine puts his family's wealth at \$3.9 billion, making him the 226th richest man in the world. Mr Ofer's business empire includes Zim, one of the largest container shipping companies in the world, and Zodiac Maritime Agencies, a London-based ship management company. He also owns a 16.5 per cent stake - valued at \$1 billion - in Royal Caribbean, the world's second largest cruise line. The Ofer brothers are of interest to BI readers mainly because they bought our company's last two ships, the Zaira and Zaida in 1986, continuing in service with them until 2004.

Officials at the National Maritime Museum were keen to stress Mr Ofer's links with Britain and the City of London - around 90 of the vessels he controls fly the Red Ensign. Lord Sterling, Chairman of the National Maritime Museum said, "I would like to extend our deepest thanks to Sammy Ofer for his extraordinary generosity. Sammy is a man who has been key to the global maritime industry for many years and who, through his close relations with the London shipping community and the City of London, has formed an admiration and respect for the long maritime history of this country. The new wing, at the museum's World Heritage-listed site at Greenwich, will include an 800 square metre exhibition hall, an archive centre, new learning spaces, plus a restaurant, cafe and shop. It will be opened by the time of the 2012 Olympics, when Greenwich will host nine sports.

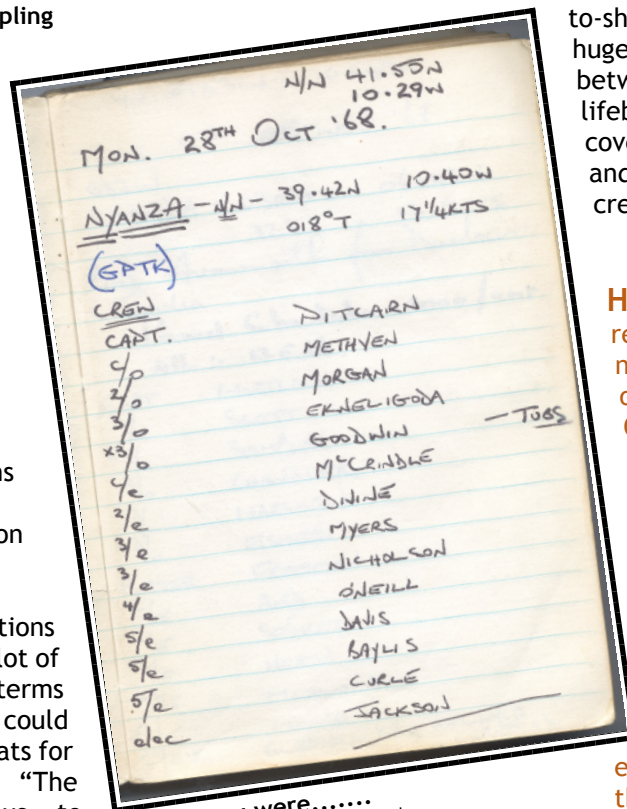
The extension would enable the museum "to make a quantum leap in illustrating how Britain's relationship with the sea has fundamentally shaped histories, cultures, economies, and identities across the globe". With plans progressing on the redevelopment of the museum, to include a modern research and reading room and improved storage for the paper-based collections, the building work will begin earlier than initially planned. The move of the archive and library collections currently stored in the South West Wing of the museum to temporary offsite storage will therefore begin earlier.

Because of the revised schedule, the Caird Library will close to all users on **20 December 2008**. The Library will reopen in late spring/early summer 2009.

LIFEBOAT crews fear crippling new charges for using their radios

The RNLI could see the price of using its VHF emergency frequencies rise to £250,000 under plans to charge the full commercial rate. The charity, which saves hundreds of lives every year, currently pays an annual £48,000 at a discounted rate of 50 per cent. It relies on donations and fears the move will have a disastrous impact on fundraising.

Peter Bradley, RNLI operations staff officer, said: "It's a lot of money when you think in terms of lifeboat days and we could buy several inshore lifeboats for the same amount. "The Government rely on us to provide this search-and-rescue service, at a cost of £124million a year, but they want to charge us for the pleasure of doing it. We should not have to pay at all." Ofcom has set out plans to bring "market forces" into maritime and civil aviation communications in a policy it calls Administered Incentive Pricing. While lifeboats will not be charged to use VHF ship-



Where you were.....
Crew list, courtesy of David Hammond

to-ship, the charges would have a huge impact on communications between boats and shore-based lifeboat stations. It would also cover pagers used by the RNLI and other organisations to alert crews to urgent launches.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! A revised and updated book for navigators has been published on its 100th birthday, on 15th October -- the tenth edition of the UK's Admiralty Manual of Navigation Vol 1.

This marvelous tome, which has been the book of choice for navigators for years, has been brought up to date by author Lt Cdr Alan Peacock (RN), details the use of satellites and electronic equipment such as **ECDIS** in this edition. The book is published by The Nautical Institute,

a body of professional seamen of which your editor is honoured to be a Fellow (FNI).

For more details go to:-
<http://www.nautinst.org>



FROM THE READERS....

Enjoyed the pic of the Rugby team in Australia in the latest issue of calling BI. It reminds me of a Rugby game I played in Kobe, (the team made up of Officers from many ships) whilst serving on the OHKLA back in either 1959 or 1960. I was the R/O on the Okhla and served on her for 2 1/2 years so the actual dates are hard to remember. Capt. Duncan McCallum (Cumshaw)/ or Capt. Jack Singer was Master. I played in the 3/4s, Ike Fraser (cadet) played 2nd row, and I believe Sam Doman (4th Eng from Cornwall) also played. It was arranged by Clancy who had a bar just outside the Motomachi, a popular watering hole for all the officers, before starting the journey down the Motomachi!! The score was a bit lopsided, I think we won 35-3. We were offered beer before even leaving the field! A tough job but someone had to do it. Best Regards, Terry Gardner

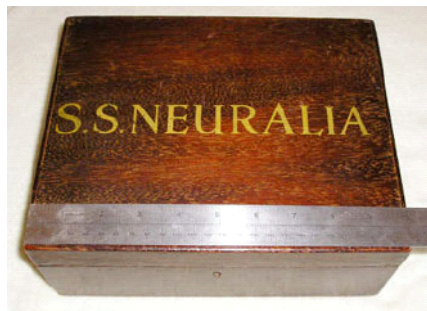


The following items are from the Biship [Logbook](#)
From Ron Kemp, UK

Have just signed on for new voyage with BI, last trip was on Sir Percevale 1968, prior to that Canara, Chindwara, Chantala. Looking for any old ginger beers who did time on any of them 1967/68. Regret inform any old shipmates of passing of B.J. Robinson (Pancho) ex Kenya 1967/68 5.EO. Heart attack while in favourite location sitting at the bar, will be missed.

Nick Dobie, UK

My wife was recently given a wooden box 10 x 8 x 4 inches with ss Neuralia in gold on the top. Is this a nice keepsake, or did everyone have them? I'm really pleased. Your views please, on age and value. I wish to keep it. The name is in gold paint, but done before it was polished, no other inscriptions that I can see. Sadly no key. It



apparently belonged to my father in law's relations, who worked for the India Tea Company at Southampton, and lived there too. I'm still waiting more info.

[It looks like teak or mahogany. Could it have been a box from the bridge - possibly a binoculars box? Feedback will be most welcome - Editor]

John Walker, New Zealand

I stumbled upon this site by pure chance. I was a junior engineer on Nevasa from 1957 to 1961...captain or commander was Reggie Bond...I have read references to him on other websites and in particular the parrot which I well remember...I think the 2nd engineer at the time was Eddie Gray. I was known by the name of David at the time and I had my 21st birthday on board, I still have a photo of myself holding the wooden 21st key. If ere is anyone who reads this and remembers that period I would be interested to hear from you.

FROM THE P&I Clubs....

LONDON (P&I) Club Chairman John M Lyras has once again emphasised the need to pay attention to the welfare of ships' crews. Writing in the latest London Club News, Mr Lyras notes, "Given the central role played by crew in keeping the seas safe and clean, thereby helping to control the club's costs, we must pay continuing attention to the conditions they face during their service".

Mr Lyras notes that there have been some encouraging developments recently in the treatment by government officials of crews calling at ports in the United States. He says, "The Club has from time to time received reports of heavy-handed boardings by representatives of US government agencies, which have distracted the crew to such an extent that it prevents them from going about their normal duties. Given that those duties include some that are safety-critical, the wellbeing of the ships and the environment and people in and around them has potentially been compromised.

"Those conscious of specific cases have hesitated to bring them to the attention of senior officials for fear of the shipowners concerned being penalised in some manner. "I have now seen a directive sent by the Commandant, Admiral Thad Allen, to all Coast Guard districts, setting out his expectations and displaying a clear intention that conduct of the sort the club has heard reported will not be tolerated. The directive refers to the professionalism of ships' crews generally and an understanding of the desire of shipping to work in partnership with the Coast Guard with a view to enhancing safety.

"This forthright recognition that improvements can be made and that partnership is the way forward is immensely reassuring and it deserves publicity and a positive response. It will also encourage dialogue between the Coast Guard and those feeling the effects of its actions. I hope that Admiral Allen is in a position to influence the conduct of other US agencies with authority to board ships. I have particularly in mind the Customs Authority."

<http://www.lssso.com>



FROM THE INTERNET....



GROG

"In my time Navy Rum was issued to all men. Only the senior rates (Petty officers and Chief Petty Officers, now called Fleet Chiefs were entitled to a "Tot" of neat rum. Junior rates got it half and half with water. in its final days of its issue grog was an eighth of a pint of rum, diluted 2:1 with water (3:1 until World War II), although that eighth of a pint was much reduced from that issued in earlier years - when originally issued 2 gills were supplied during the day – suitably watered down e.g. in 1824 "the quantity of spirits to be issued in lieu of beer or wines is diminished one half." - see : http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/Cond_of_Serv/Vict_1824.html
Sir Gilbert Blane (1749-1834) recommended the supply of lemon-juice for the prevention of scurvy in 1793, a measure (*no pun*

intended!-Ed.) that wasn't adopted in the Navy until 1795, see:

http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/Cond_of_Serv/Vict_1824.html

http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/Select_Docs/124_Medical_Reforms.html

Although Janet MacDonald in her book "Feeding Nelson's Navy" notes that a Doctor Trotman advised that lime or lemon juice should be added to the rum ration as an antiscorbutic, she doesn't appear to mention how much should be added or when this was introduced and makes no mention of sugar, which was probably in limited supply, being already a part of the daily victualling allowance.

talking of 'grog'; don't forget the Essex/Suffolk lunch on 28th November - see page 1

The word "Grog" actually came about sometime around 1770....and was implied to mean "groggy" or "intoxicated." "Grog" is supposedly an allusion to "Old Grog", a nickname of Edward Vernon (1684 - 1757), a British admiral who wore a "Grogram" cloak...[of which this particular word becomes of use in and around 1562 meaning "gros grain" or "Coarse grain or Texture"].....and who in August 1740 ordered his sailors rum to be diluted.

.... and from that august journal, "The Scientific American", July 1st, 1848

"We learn by recent intelligence from England, that the British Government has issued orders to all its consuls in different parts of the world to institute inquiries into



(Obviously the gentlemen pictured here would have NO sympathy with this view, being amongst the great and good of BI officers

the character and capabilities of British seamen as compared with those of other nations. The result, thus far, shows that the British seamen are below others in morals and, as seamen, are much less efficient than our own. This has been attributed to the spirit rations in the navy.

Your Editor is indebted to his friend, Chris Hewer of the "[Maritime Advocate Online](http://www.maritimeadvocate.com)" for the following trenchant observations:

PLANS for an extra public holiday each year to celebrate 'Britishness' have been abandoned by the British government. How British is THAT?

In your editor's day, we got Christmas Day and Boxing Day off, and that was it. And those of us with paper-rounds didn't even get Boxing Day off. Later, to annoy the Scots, they gave us New Year's Day off as well. Extra public holidays are as British as Halloween.

Nobody in Britain over the age of seven knows what Halloween is all about, and yet people still spend thousands of pounds buying tubs of sweets to rid their gravelled drives of the presence of children uttering the menacing words 'Trick or Treat' on October 31. Please be sensible. Next, we shall have pumpkins all over the place, and then we'll be sorry.

Trick or Treat is as British as children's sleepovers, or birthday parties at McDonalds. These things are not British at all. In your editor's day, we played cricket or knock-down ginger with our friends in the street. Then we went home, to our own houses, and slept at home, in our own beds. We got socks and pants for our birthday, plus a quarter-pound of Merry Maid caramels if we'd been especially good. It never did us any harm.

editor@avoarchive.com

Letters of the Week

I HAVE in front of me two instruction booklets - both are the same size and contain about fifty pages. One is a facsimile of a 1944 operating guide to the Avro Lancaster and the other came with a cordless phone that was purchased recently. (The Times, London)

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Alastair and Carmel Will

Elisabeth and Richard Sandeman-Gay



Bob King with Doug & Mary Brodie

Brodie, Alastair Will, John Riddle and Mike Pratt

Doug & Mary Brodie



(Photographs courtesy of Mike Pratt)



John and Glenda Riddle

