



News of the BISN 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...

Well, we came, we saw, we remembered. The gathering of the BI clans in Glasgow and Southampton are reported on in this issue. As readers will doubtless be aware, the Southampton reunion marked the end of an era, with the retirement to the back benches of UK organiser, Sue Spence. Her staff of office now passes to Mike Feltham, who is organising the next one in 2014 in Liverpool. Preliminary details are later in these pages.

Elsewhere we have our usual mix of varied fare for you, hoping to whet your appetites for things BI, the sea and matters maritime. We are indebted to marine novelist *extraordinaire*, Julian Stockwin, for the little brainteaser quiz below. Your editor freely admits that he did not do very well, but at least he now knows all the answers. All the questions stem from Julian's book, *Maritime Miscellany*, details of which can be had [here](#).

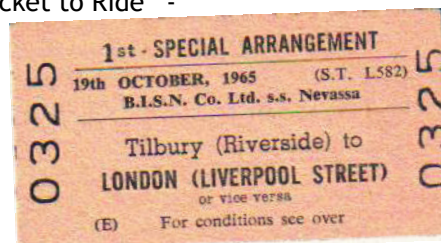
Most of us have had some experience with unusual cargoes, ports where facilities did not match up to requirements and the like. But your editor is willing to

bet that you've not encountered quite the problems experienced in these two little YouTube clips:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKn1FuB53KU&NR=1> and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_0-vKJWol0&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_0-vKJWol0&feature=relmfu). Wonderful stuff!

This November sees the 42nd anniversary of the Bhola cyclone that hit East Pakistan, causing around half a million deaths. We bring you three eyewitness accounts that appeared recently on the Biship website. The authors bring an idea of the terrifying events of those few days in 1970.

Finally, thanks to David Mitchell for his version of "I've Got a Ticket to Ride" -



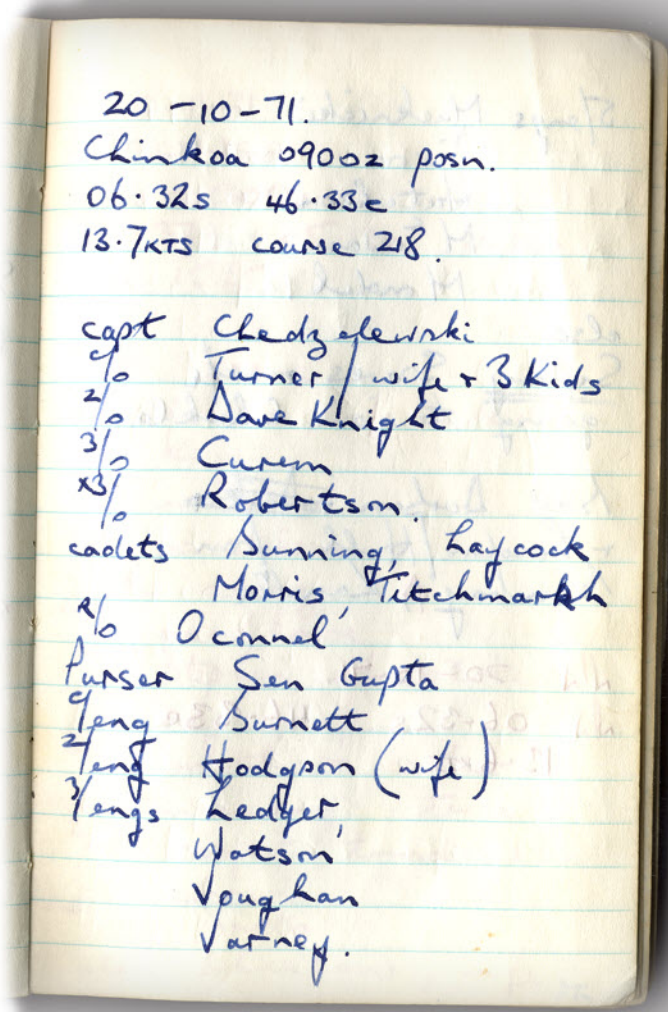
## FROM THE DAYS OF SAIL...

We offer you a little quiz from seagoing of old. No prizes, except knowing that you can always show off in front of your friends. Send in your answers to "...calling BI". We'll give out the results and answers in the next issue of "...calling BI".

1. Which famous mariners adopted this motto: "Sic Parva Magna"?
2. What day do mariners, to this day, go to great lengths to avoid sailing on?
3. Where was Magellan killed?
4. Who was "Old Grogram" - and what is his claim to fame?
5. What was called "The Shippe Swallerer"?
6. Who was the English navigator whose life story inspired the character of John Blackthorne in James Clavell's "Shogun"?
7. In January 1804 the Royal Navy took possession of a rock and declared it a warship. Can you name it, and its location.
8. Which pirate city was swallowed by the sea in 1692?
9. Who won The Great Tea Race of 1866?
10. Which year became known as "The Year of Victories"?
11. Frederick Marryat has been called the father of modern nautical fiction. What other important contribution did he make, for the merchant marine?



## THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK....



Once again we thank David Hammond for yet another page from his Little Black Book. He recently confessed to your Editor that he was amazed that he had received so many crew lists from other RO's. After years of listening to all those little bleeps and buzzes in his headphones, Your Editor is surprised that he can remember anything at all of those days!

## FROM THE REUNION SHOP....

A limited quantity of some BI items remain for sale. All were produced for various reunions, starting with a small number of the finely etched BI Britannia and Lion crystal whisky tumblers. Produced for the Glasgow reunion, these evoke the BI etched glassware in use in company ships right to the end of its service, and BISN's 100th anniversary medal struck in 1956.

With Christmas a few weeks hence, you might want to get some handsome Chindwara cards, illustrated by marine artist Robert Lloyd. They are A5 size and blank inside, ready for your own greetings.

Produced for the recent Southampton reunion are two types of badge: one a miniature houseflag in high quality enamel; the other a woven cloth badge suitable for sewing on to shirts, blazers and caps, for example. The enamel badges come with stickpin, making them equally suitable for ladies and gentlemen - discreet lapel or hat jewellery, or tie-pin or scarf pin.



The Britannia and Lion cloth badges are woven in multiple colours. An iron-on version is also available.

All prices, and discounts for multiple orders, are shown on the Bship site at [www.biship.com/memorabilia.htm](http://www.biship.com/memorabilia.htm) Orders and further information from [jprescott@biship.com](mailto:jprescott@biship.com)



## FROM THE COMPETITIONS DEPT....



We assume that the reason we haven't yet received any correct answers for this "Where are we now?" competition is that our readers in the southern hemisphere are busily anticipating the arrival of summer, getting the barbie sorted and laying in the beers, whilst northern subscribers have been preparing for the big UK Southampton reunion or buying in a supply of snow shovels or whatever. It really is easy! Featured in the photograph are Mike Ledger and Harold Holmes, so they at least should get it. Send your answers in to [...calling B-I](#). Do also have a look in those old shoe boxes under the spare bed for any other pictures that we can feature in this section, or indeed, just any shots that may be of interest to our readership at large. All contributions welcomed!



## FROM THE INTERNET (1)....

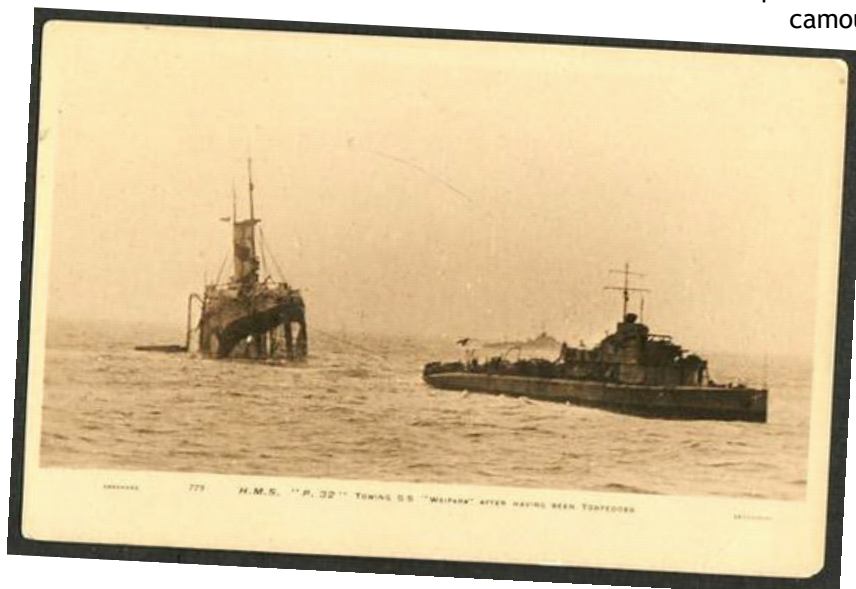
We bring you two Internet links which may be of interest. One is almost believable, the other sadly is only too believable. The computer boys at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California take you on a voyage to Mars, giving you a grandstand seat. However it is the desperate story of Aung Soe which really touches the heart. A victim of maritime circumstances the like of which few of us would have encountered in our days at sea, Aung Soe just wants to go home.

<http://www.youtube.com/embed/XRCIzZHpfY?Rel=0>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ed\\_6nXLJfk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ed_6nXLJfk)

## FROM THE INTERNET (2)....

Our sharp-eyed team of internet watchers recently spotted this old photograph of the *Waipara* in camouflage colours being towed after being struck by a torpedo. Your Editor has no doubt that someone in our readership will come up with the full story on this. We look forward to hearing from you.



## FROM NEPTUNE'S KINGDOM....



Having published some photographs of Brian Warburton in all his glory in our last issue, we can now show more of his snaps from his time on the *Quiloa* taken around 1962-ish. Preparations are obviously in progress for his crossing the line ceremony. The ladies are Isabelle Rothney, the wife of Doug, in the flowers, while Brian has sadly forgotten the name of the Lady in Red, except to say that she was the wife of the Electrician. Brian features his prison garb. The barber is Dave Andrews, ably assisted by Cyril Quale and Peter Norman. High times!

If any of our readers can identify the remaining victims, we look forward to hearing about them.

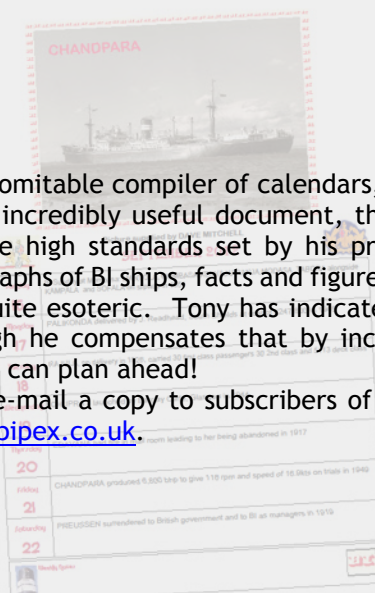
Dave Andrews & Cyril Quale Quiloa



## FROM THE CALENDERS....

As we speak, that indomitable compiler of calendars, Tony Bernthal, is busy putting together an incredibly useful document, the BI Calendar for next year. If it follows the high standards set by his previous editions, it will contain many photographs of BI ships, facts and figures about BI and its fleet, some of which are quite esoteric. Tony has indicated that this may be his last offering, although he compensates that by including calendars up to 2015. Now you really can plan ahead!

Tony is prepared to e-mail a copy to subscribers of "... calling BI". Contact Tony via [tonybe@dsl.pipex.co.uk](mailto:tonybe@dsl.pipex.co.uk).



## FROM THE AUCTION



On seeing the BI egg cup featured in our July 2012 issue, reader Chris Shelbourn was prompted to record that on his first non-BI ship after the P & O takeover (his words), the *Nigaristan*, the chief steward made him feel at home by giving him a BI pickle spoon.

This now has pride of place in the Shelbourn heirloom cabinet. Chris also points out that playing cards from the *Nigaristan* have been available on eBay for £3.89. Anyone for Bridge?

Also appearing on eBay recently was this picture of a fine body of men. Despite the poor quality of the picture, we can see the officers of the *Chakdara* scrubbed up well for their Christmas photo in 1960. Can you identify anyone? The picture is a snip at £6.



## FROM THE READERS....

We received recently a sadly plaintive e-mail from Anne Robertson (formerly Pattenden) in Queensland, requesting any photographs of Pat Pattenden who passed away on 1st May this year. Anne said that Pat was a regular reader of the BI magazines and this newsletter and an active participant in various reunions. She continues "so if anybody has any photos of Pat, I'm sure that his three adult children would love to have a copy. They have very few photographs of him taken over the past 10 years. My e-mail address is [nambour05@yahoo.com.au](mailto:nambour05@yahoo.com.au). Many thanks, Anne". Another good reason for you to go to those albums and shoeboxes full of old pictures.

## FROM THE BACK OFFICE....

Obviously our girl wot duz had a good time at the Southampton reunion. Tracey says she has signed up Graham Candlish, Peter White, Ted Banks, Tony Lucas, John Woodward and Robin Paine - all from the UK - and Warwick Gordon-Smith from Australia as new subscribers to "...calling BI". Gentlemen, you are all welcome and amongst friends. We would also like to thank Mike Ledger for a CD crammed with photographs, which will be gracing these pages in future issues. We can never get enough of this stuff and there is always someone willing to comment and identify people and places.

We have had several requests recently for past articles and photographs in previous issues. After much hectoring, we managed to get Tracey sat down to produce a digest; this has now been posted on the main Biship website. Go to <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/Biship/files/callingBI/>, scroll down to reach "contents index for "... Calling BI" issues..." and select whichever file you require. The files are in Microsoft Office 2007 format, but should be easily opened by anyone. Please contact us if you have problems or suggestions. In the same folder are all the previous issues of the newsletter as well, so you will easily be able to find out whether you have been mentioned in our august columns.

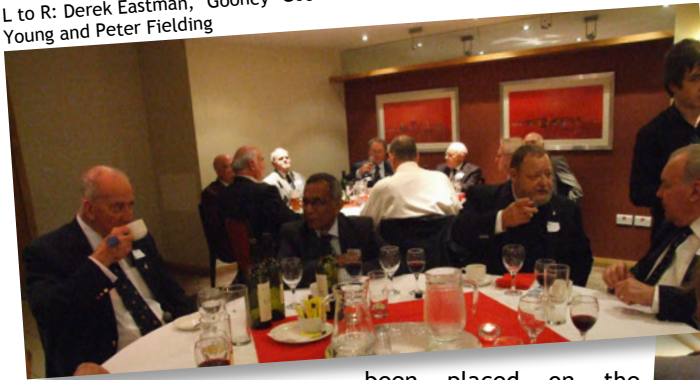
## FROM THE REUNIONS....

What a past few weeks it has been! Vast congregations of BI staffers have been moving around UK, meeting up with old friends, retelling old tales, making up new ones and probably staying up too late. First on show were



the Retired Engineer Officers Association assembling for their annual meeting in Glasgow on 20th September at their usual venue, now called the Mercure Glasgow City hotel. Numbers were a little down this year, but the 53 who attended included Bob Smith from Sydney and Jim McGrotty, both for the first time. A complete list of attendees has

L to R: Derek Eastman, 'Gooney' Goonatilaka, Colin Young and Peter Fielding



been placed on the Bliship website. Sadly we have had to say goodbye to some stalwarts - Brian Ditchburn, John Smith, Harry Lawless, Tommy Routledge and Bennie Ronald.

The Association will return to the same hotel on 19 September 2014, so make sure you obtain one of Tony Bernthal's calendars mentioned elsewhere in this issue, so that you can put the occasion on the list.

A few scant days later, our eyes turned towards the south coast of England and the Southampton Harbour View hotel. The last reunion to be organised by Sue and John Spence proved to be the



L to R: Jim Burnett, Alastair Wells and Bob Smith



L to R: Tony Lister, Arthur Dawson and Jon Quinn

biggest one ever, apart from be the one held in Glasgow in BI's Sesquicentennial anniversary year. Well over 200 people swamped the entrance foyer on the weekend of 12th October, eventually finding their way to the bar and dinner. After the meal, there was a presentation of salvaging the silver from the wreck of the BI's Golconda. This highlighted the difficulty of working at great depths with the precision needed to preserve artefacts. We hope to get notes of this presentation for a future article in "... Calling BI". Naturally we could not leave the proceedings without formal recognition of the hard work done by Sue and John over the last 22 years. A giant gold work BI cap badge, organised by Barney Leeson, was given to Sue and John, along with a massive bouquet of flowers. After the event Sue sent us the following little note:



*"John and I would like to thank you all for the beautifully framed BI badge, which holds pride of place at home. It came as a complete surprise and is a wonderful memento of so many happy and successful reunions. We have received a letter from Alan Tulloch and what he says encapsulates perfectly just what BI is about and how these reunions have brought - and continue to bring - ex-colleagues together. Alan writes: "When I left deep sea to become a Trinity House pilot in Southampton, I hardly ever saw another BI colleague until I attended my first reunion at Bristol. It is thanks to your efforts that I have become quite close to other Chindwara cadets who sailed with me in the 50s." Alan adds that following a recent meeting of six old cadets, they are hoping to repeat and widen attendance next year".*

*I am sad that because it was such a busy weekend I had insufficient time to get around to chatting to all those we've met and become friends with over the last 20 years. But hopefully there will be an opportunity to meet up in 2014.*

*Thank you all once again."*

*Sue & John"*



## FROM THE REUNIONS (contd)....

It is perhaps typical of Sue's quiet manner that, even when we are remembering her great efforts on our behalf, she should still be thinking of others.



Saturday dawned bright and breezy (Your Editor can attest that there is no truth at all in the rumour that Chris Sample and John King and others saw the sun rise). Your editor hied himself off to the Vessel Traffic Services Centre, courtesy of Mike Bechley, where we had the pleasure of watching the staff handle the requirements of

a busy container and passenger port.

Meanwhile, the others who could get away from the shopping therapy visited the *Shieldhall*, an ex-steamship that operated as one of the Clyde sludge boats and now lovingly restored and used for short trip cruises. The afternoon saw several busloads of nautical types board a tour boat run by the disconcertingly-named Blue Funnel Cruises to tour the environs of Southampton Port, viewing on route no less than five gigantic cruise ships including P&O's *Aurora*. Your Editor contends that the word 'ships' must be loosely applied to these colossi and offers the picture below as proof, although he is prepared to admit that even they are slightly more easy on the eye than the slab-walled car carriers which are also a feature of the Southampton shipping scene. In the evening, we settled down to listen to Simon Rees expounding on BI life as seen through the eyes of a schoolchild passenger on the educational cruise ships. Following this, a



programme of six or so old BI films were screened to remind us all what seagoing life was like through the eyes of a film camera. Most of these films were obtained via the kind services of the P & O heritage museum and included the well-renowned recruitment at sea, featuring a young Tom Kelso as the Cadet Instruction Officer on board *Chantala* and Peter Cutmore as a pugilistic cadet sparring away without all the modern protective devices required by today's sport. The weekend closed with the now traditional Sunday Curry lunch, which tries but never quite emulates those wonderful chicken curries of old. There are some more pictures placed on the Biship website.

Although Sue and John are laying down the mantle of organiser, it will not be the last of the UK-based BI reunions. Step forward Mike Feltham. Mike is organising the next reunion in Liverpool in 2014. He writes:

"Now that the wonderful Sue Spence is to retire from organising the UK BI Reunions, I would like to arrange a BI Reunion over the weekend of Friday 10<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> in Liverpool.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> July this year, James Slater and David Mitchell came to Liverpool for a look around and to pick out a suitable hotel with me. The hotel chosen was one with a nautical theme, the LINER Hotel, just 5 minutes walk from Lime Street Station. The hotel, which has a free car park for residents, can accommodate the Friday evening Get Together with a Buffet Supper, also a Dinner on Saturday evening and a Curry Lunch on Sunday.

As you will have a free day on Saturday, I am attaching a list of various places you might like to visit:

On the Waterfront - Merseyside Maritime Museum, Museum of Liverpool and Tate Liverpool Art Gallery. From the Maritime Museum, a trip to Liverpool Old Dock can be organized, the world's first commercial Wet Dock, completed in 1715.



## FROM THE REUNIONS (contd)....

DUKW vehicles/vessels run amphibious tours round Central Liverpool from Albert Dock.



A round trip on a Mersey Ferry, available from in front of the Three Graces (The Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building ).

To get to the Waterfront I would go by the Underground, Mersey Travel, from Lime Street to James Street Station, exit and turn right and then cross the Main Road and you are nearly there.

Nearer the Hotel you have the Walker Art Gallery, World Museum and St. George's Hall.

The two Cathedrals are well worth a visit, both the Anglican and the Metropolitan have Restaurants and Guides and they are only 0.5 miles apart.

Western Approaches Command Bunker, from where the Battle of the Atlantic was planned. This is on Rumford Street.

Transport will be provided for interested people who might like to visit a coal-fired steam tug "Daniel Adamson" built in 1903, hopefully by 2014, it might be working after a major refit.

For Retail Therapy - visit the shops in Liverpool One.

I would appreciate if people could register their interest, either by Email [ismay@mjfeltham.plus.com](mailto:ismay@mjfeltham.plus.com) or to my address:

4B Ismay Drive,  
WALLASEY  
CH44 0EU  
UK

The cost to be advised. I am sure you will enjoy the Reunion and visiting Liverpool.  
Mike Feltham"

Your editor will again be on hand to report on the various comings and goings, doubtless propping up the bar as usual and urges you all to get in touch with Mike.

Of course, the fun just doesn't stop there. Should you find yourself around the Essex and Suffolk region of the UK at the beginning of December, you might like to join in with the BIER (BI Eastern region) members in their pre-Christmas lunch and enjoy some good food, good wine and beer and some excellent company. They are meeting at the [Thatcher's Arms](#) pub on Friday, 7 December. For more details contact [John Prescott](#).

## FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM....

In the wake of the recent Hurricane Sandy hitting the United States, it is fitting to remember the devastation wrought by a similar weather system in the Bay of Bengal in 1970. This is the story of Cyclone Bhola, as seen from three people caught in the storm. First from Brian Biggs:

My first trip at sea as an engineer cadet was on the *Chakdara*, starting in Tilbury in August 1970, not including a two week cruise on the *Nevasa* at Easter 1968. We ended up in Khulna in East Pakistan (as then was) in early November 1970 to load tea. The tea was slow coming and I believe we only had 500 or 600 tons on board when we had notice of a serious cyclone developing in the Bay of Bengal.

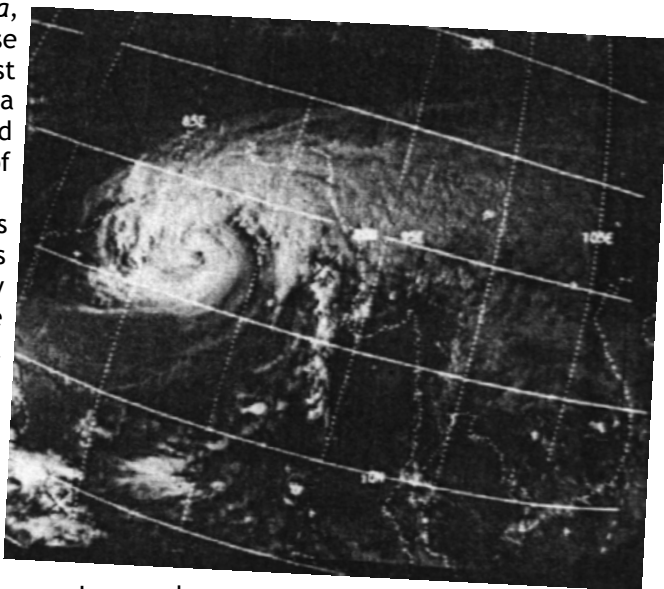
We took on as much ballast as possible including the cargo tanks (at hatch 4?), and proceeded down what ever part of the Ganges Delta it lies on the evening of 10th November. I remember vividly standing on deck in the still steamy night wondering what all the fuss was about. We were to proceed to the anchorage for Calcutta at Sandheads, but before we got there we received a report that said the cyclone had changed course and was heading there. So we turned around to the east-ish and went back out to sea. Unfortunately we were now directly in the path of the cyclone.

On the morning of 11th November myself and the other engineer cadet Harry turned to on daywork at 0700hrs, it was getting very lively. We went down the engine room and where tasked, along with the crew, with lashing down and stowing anything that would move. I remember chasing a 45 gallon drum around the plates until I got it cornered!

At 0830hrs we went up to the mess room for breakfast. I was sitting on the bench seat and Harry was sitting on a chair with his back to the entrance door. The steward was just bringing our breakfast order through the door when we lost steerage way. The ship took a very violent lurch to port and the steward, Harry on his chair, tablecloth and cutlery all disappeared out of the door into the companionway. That was the start of the mayhem!

The following snapshots give you some idea of what followed:

The CEO Sandy Aird thought it unsafe for the engineer cadets to be in the engine room, so we stayed in the accommodation - he took it in turns with the 2EO to stay at the engine controls, as the engine raced away as the prop came out of the water with every wave. The overspeed governor kept jamming so one of the engineers or crew had to stand by with a hammer to hit and free it





## FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM (CONTD)...



At about 0230 hrs on the morning of 12th November the noise stopped, we were in the eye! Because the wind was not knocking the tops off the waves, meaning they seemed even higher. I had the top bunk in the cadets cabin and had wedged myself in the corner for safety. We had an inclinometer just at my eyeline and I had been watching it intently throughout the storm. It had regularly showing a movement of 45 degrees each way, but then it went to 47.5 degrees (I think to port) and stayed there for what was probably a second or two, but seemed like an eternity. I was convinced the ship was going to roll over, but back she came.

The passage through the back end of the storm did not seem so bad, I don't know if it was dissipating getting near land or just less fierce on the backside.

We lost/damaged the radio aerials so we could not transmit very far. One of the lifeboats on the starboard side was stove in; I believe all the life rafts on the top deck were carried away. The side of the ship exposed to the wind and waves around the derricks, accommodation edges etc were stripped of paint practically to the bare metal in places. Our next of kin were sent telegrams from Head Office stating that the vessel was unaccounted for, due to the fact that we could not transmit our status. The next day in the late afternoon we sighted, I believe, the *Sirdhana* coming up from the south behind the storm. She relayed our status to HO.

We then went south to Colombo and Trincomalee to load tea and fix ourselves up!

Next we hear from Lyndon Johnson:

This evocative account brings back so many memories for me as well. I was Second Officer on the *Chakdara* at the time and recall this well, but had never told the story as well as Brian does.

We were the only one of several ships in Khulna to put to sea and we barely scraped over the bar. I recall the wind being so strong that it was preventing the radar aerial from turning. At one stage, early on in the proceedings, the canvas hatch tarpaulins on number three hatch were threatening to be blown away and we had to lash them down. As Brian says, it was incredible to watch the paint on the windward side of the derrick posts be scoured off, as it was to watch the windows on the bridge ballooning inwards. I never realise before that glass was so elastic. Incredibly, as I recall, there was only one serious injury, when one of the stewards fell and broke his arm.

Originally there was a real sense of adrenaline coercing through the brain, almost excitement, which quickly came to an end as we received the various SOS messages from the Indian ship. It was heartbreaking and frustrating, the

last one reading "thank you for your good wishes, goodbye".

We had little idea as to our position, we tried DF bearings with little effect, and it was impossible to estimate our wind drift.

My biggest abiding memory was the light and water surface whilst we were in the eye of the storm. There was a brownish sheen over everything, almost as though somebody to put a sepia wash over the whole scene and the water looked as though somebody poured oil over it. It looked almost greasy.

I believe that one of those ships left in Khulna was a Bank Line ship, which was blown onto its side. I never experienced anything like this during all the rest of my days at sea. Again, like Brian, I could never forget this and I thank him for filling in some of the details.

And lastly from Indian Naval Officer Manohar Awati:

I was on my way to rescue an SOS from an Indian vessel which later sank in the Head of the Bay. She had sailed out of the Hooghly the evening before evidently unaware of Bhola's track, thought that it was going towards Chittagong. As your cadet tells us, it actually swung round towards Sandheads.

The vessel sank with all hands, I think on 13 Nov. My own ship, all of 1200 tons, was well founded but took one hell of a punishment, lost power at the height of the storm with both her 200Kw generators knocked out. My E.O. then switched on the lone, battle stations 400Kw on which the ship survived for the next two days until we returned to Vizag. If that had packed up there is no gainsaying what might have happened to my ship and her company. I was the Captain (P) of a five ship Patrol Vessel Squadron. Powerful ASW ships those which were to render sterling service in the brief war in December 1971 which spawned Bangladesh. Me too, when I remember those three days, it gives me goose pimples and a cold sweat.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970\\_Bhola\\_cyclone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_Bhola_cyclone)

