



Issue no: 6

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

available free of charge by application to callingBI@biship.com

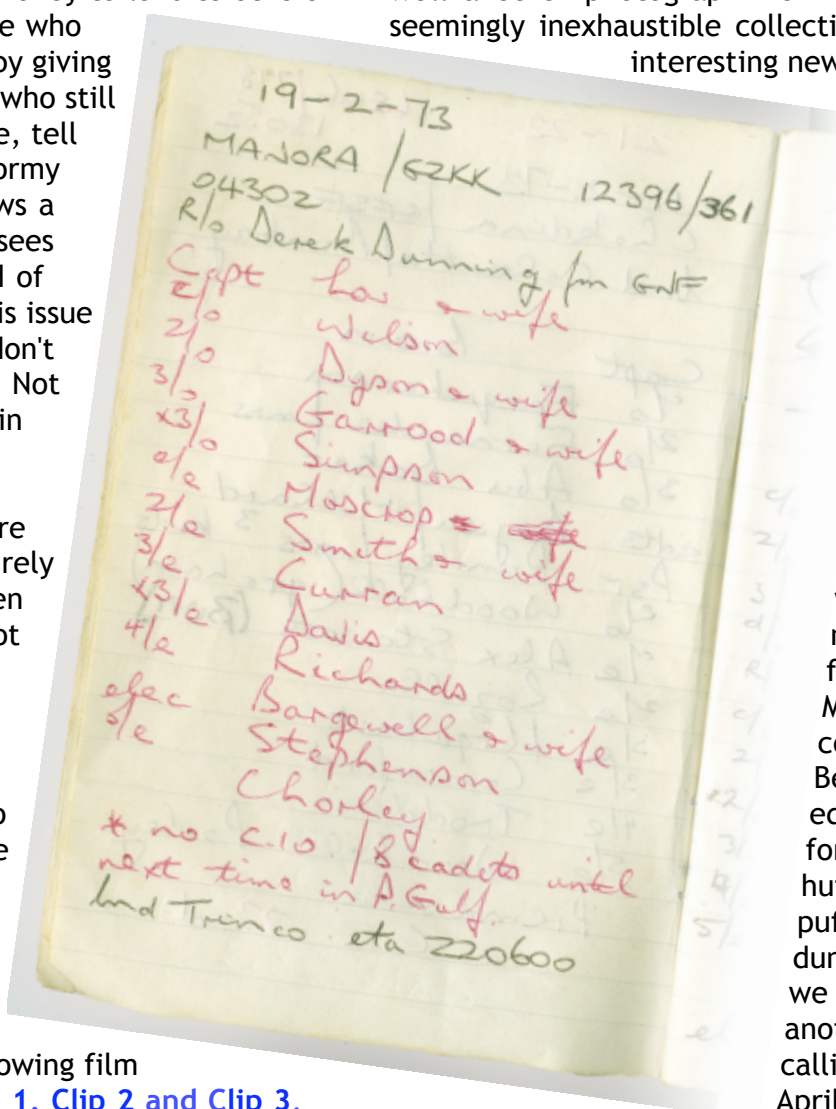
FROM THE EDITOR

Those who require my money to lend to others but not to me and those who claim to represent me by giving my tax money to those who still won't lend it back to me, tell me that we live in stormy times. Your editor knows a winning team when he sees one and joins this band of tempest tempters in this issue of "... calling BI". Just don't let the children read it. Not for nothing is "storm" in Italian "*tempesta*".

Those of you with a more mechanical bent will surely enjoy this [film clip](#). Even your editor, who was not admitted to the Boiler Suit Fraternity, could smell the hot oil. However, having been dismissed by St Peter to another place (see issue 5), he does wish to point out to his friend in Vancouver that not all his days were spent sunning himself on the bridge wing, as the following film clips demonstrate! [Clip 1](#), [Clip 2](#) and [Clip 3](#). And while we're on the subject, if any of you are having your arm twisted to go on another cruise for your next holiday, I suggest you show them this [film clip](#). That should do it!

We also include a thoughtful piece from a good friend, Sam Innards. Sam is a leading commentator on that arcane art, marine insurance, especially through his QuarterPoint articles in Lloyd's List and his freely available e-mail magazine, Bow Waves. We feature as

well another photograph from Tony Lister's seemingly inexhaustible collection and some interesting newspaper cuttings.



Another good friend, Mr Bernard Fallon, has published a remarkable [book](#) of his [photographs](#) taken in Liverpool in the late 60's and by kind permission of his publishers, we will be posting more of these in future issues. Many thanks to all contributors.

Because of your editor's forthcoming huffings and puffings up the dunes at Sossusvlei, we do not anticipate another issue of "... calling BI" until mid-April at least. That of time to send in your thoughts and musings and other contributions -- we're looking forward to them!

Later in this issue....

FROM THE Heart....

FROM THE Archives....

FROM THE Coastguard...

To send in your views, notes, photos, brickbats or spare gold bars, please click on any "...callingBI" logo

FROM THE Heart...

Economical with the Truth--Our Modern Legacy

At one stage in my life I had the job of travelling around the old Comecon countries, trying to sell the bankers and insurers of Eastern Europe on the merits of mutual insurance for their state owned transport and shipping companies. And very educative it was too. I had an interesting seat on the balcony of history and unbeknownst to me, I was watching the final phases of a tired, decrepit system of politics and social organisation. In small ways and large it became apparent that the system, although built on a high ideology, was underpinned by wide scale mendacity. In the old days, people lied and lied. They thought almost nothing about it. There were sayings which celebrated this widespread dishonesty: "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work". Of course this way of living did very few favours for people and was corrosive of decent human behaviour and standards. Because the corollary was that it was also difficult to believe anything which was said by people in high authority. This causes me to wonder what it is about the current crisis in the world's economy which might indicate the vices we have carried forward with the many years of growth and boom in the global economy. Have we fallen into the habit of doing things which already smell to high heaven, when exposed to the light of day?

I can think of a few. In order of quantitative precision the first which occurs is the habit which has emerged of publishing figures, sometimes called accounts, which do not disclose the position of things. Objectively bad results may or may not have been "hedged" --it is often difficult to tell. A long term slide in fortunes may be masked by extraordinary items. Wholesale misleading preceeds use of "off balance-sheet" trades. Certainly over the past 10 or 15 years the figures published by all insurance organisations seem to disclose less about what they do than they did before. In the meantime the claims of transparency are advanced on all sides. The second habit, which has a strong financial services flavour is the conflation of ethical operations with compliance. The aim of regulation and compliance is to make companies to be like Caesar's wife, not only beyond reproach but to be seen to be beyond reproach.



Where your editor probably bought his first genuine Rolex...

Thanks to Tony Lister for this shot from Aden

The trouble with this approach is that high standards are difficult to impose. Anyone who has had the nightmarish experience of doing business with or within a dodgy commercial organisation will know that the forces of the dark are much stronger than those of the light. It is always a bad idea to do business with the ethically crooked if you are living within a liberal, correct, honest organisation, because the other side will always outpace you in the instant race.



The third habit is the construction of what used to be called Potemkin villages--film set locations erected ahead of periodic visits of the Empress of Russia by her prime minister. In our more virtual times we might call these audit trails--visible evidences that we have done as we say we have done. Insofar as these trails are see-able because they are the outward sign of internal and largely hidden consistency, they must be viewed as unexceptional. But where they are erected to mislead or to confuse the examiners, they are deeply unsettling subroutines to those who carry them out. The rise of the cult of the bonus and admiration of authoritarian oligarchs has left quite a memorial to our times.

It is a great puzzle to me why civilised and probably liberal men and women, who have enjoyed a decent system of organisation and politics, should institutionalise commercial systems of organisation which raise high a disdain for the singleton, the contrarian, the doubters and the warners. An authoritarian organisation which has lost its way is one of the more melancholy sights of our times as its members march in lock step as they approach within sight of the ravine. It seems to me to boil down to this. It is crucially important in life that the organisations we work for are filled with good human qualities. The people in leading positions have to be admirable, humane and liberal, for if they are not, the darker side will colour the organisation. No amount of regulation or compliance can compensate for deficits on this side of the house. A well organised, highly efficient but somewhat monstrous firm is not often amongst the finer attainments of commerce. An environment which extols the skilful and admires the efficiency and knowledge of its people is also a trusting environment where honesty greases the wheels.

By Sam Ignarski





In P&O we were always conscious of the close links between our two companies dating back to before the WW1., sadly marred by the abysmal acts of the 1970s/80s, when all remaining ships went into a hat and were divided up into one division or another, losing houseflags, funnels and colours generally.

Let's face it, P&O got the blame because a naff 1960s P&O logo appeared on all the funnels, but P&O (as I knew it) disappeared also at the same time.

B.I. has managed to remain a force to remember but almost nothing of the 'old' P&O remains. Townsend Thoresen ferries and P&O Ferrymasters lorries are hardly what we knew in 1960. Don't even mention Carnivore Cruises and P&O ships that aren't even able to fly the houseflag.

I remember an evening in 1961 at anchor in Suez Bay, awaiting a convoy, when a BI ship was at anchor near us. Following Company guidelines we invited them over for a 'quick one' before dinner. The BI officers had fezzes (is that the plural of fez ?) in black with 2 white bands! Those were the days! Ian, from....

<http://www.shipsnostalgia.com/>

...from The Bay of Plenty Times, December 1971



When the freighter Chakdina, minus \$28,000 worth of anchor and chain, finally entered the Port of Tauranga early yesterday afternoon the big seas that were running when she lost the gear early in the morning had moderated but were still rough, as this photograph taken from a Tauranga Aero Club aircraft shows.

A well-earned beer after battling seas

With a sigh of relief and a well-earned beer the master of the English freighter, Chakdina, relaxed at Mount Maunganui yesterday.

For about eight hours from dawn yesterday Captain P. E. F. Low and his crew battled raging winds and seas off the entrance to the Tauranga Harbour.

The ship anchored in the Roadstead around 2 a.m. and all was calm. "A few hours later it began to blow like hell," said Captain Low, "and we decided to weigh anchor and get out of it."

As the cable was drawn in it parted, returning two and a half shackles of cable (a shackle contains 15 fathoms) and the four-ton anchor to the seabed, he said. The gear was worth about \$28,000.

With winds reaching "force 10" or gale force, the Chakdina left for more open spaces, about 12 miles out to sea.

From that time until a pilot was brought aboard and she entered port, the vessel patrolled several miles from the harbour entrance.

Her plight was increased by water in the fuel, which caused the engines to run roughly but fortunately did not stop them.

Captain Low said he was not sure whether the pilot launch was going to come out or not — and he commended the fact that it arrived before 1 p.m., when the weather was still grim.

As soon as conditions calm down attempts will be made to salvage the anchor and cable. A buoy was attached to the cable.

The Chakdina is the second vessel in recent months to lose an anchor off the Tauranga Harbour entrance. The tanker Seaboard had a similar experience but later salvaged the gear.



By Bernard Fallon





Daily News (London, England),

Saturday, February 7, 1863; Issue 5226

Supposed loss of the Bussorah steamer

A shocking occurrence, it is feared, has befallen the Bussorah, Capt Gray, belonging to the British India Steam Navigation Co. She left the Clyde on the 16th of last month for Calcutta and Bombay, and there is too much reason to believe that during the recent heavy gales she was lost off Islay one of the islands on the extreme north-west coast of Scotland and not a soul on board has been spared to tell her fate of two. The Bussorah was quite a new vessel. She was built at Port Glasgow last year, under special survey, was 620 tons register, fitted with four watertight bulkheads and class A1 for 12 years. Her crew, including engineer and firemen, numbered about 30, and she was loaded with the general cargo. A communication in yesterday's Scotsman gives the following for information from the light keeper at the north end of the island of Islay, regarding some portions of the wreck which have been washed ashore there: --

It is strewn along a distance of 10 miles west from this station. I beg to state the following as all the particulars I have been able to learn as yet. Four miles distance There has been a large lifeboat come, named broken away; has the appearance of having belonged to a large steambot. For the half miles further west. There has been a large boat come ashore bearing the name. "BUSSORAH, Glasgow". Both boats have been first-class articles, wholly built of teak wood and varnished: they are terribly smashed. There has been a considerable quantity of what appears as if it had belonged to the deck rooms of a steamer come ashore. Only four amongst the many I have seen have any letters marked on them. One bears the word "Captain" in gilt letters covered with glass; a third on brass plate the words "Water Closet"; fourth piece marked "Third Engineer". From the direction of the wind have led to suppose that a wreck must have occurred somewhere between Islay and Oronsay Point. The light keeper has further transmitted the following papers, which were picked up by a shepherd, about 4 miles to the westward of the lighthouse station, enclosed in a small box. Besides the papers there were two combs, a few pencils and some writing paper, which have not been sent. The papers are: -- 1: Board of Trade certificate of good character and discharge in favour of James Haxton, Born in Scotland, of the ship Canadian, of Greenock, landed in Calcutta 1st October 1860. 2: similar certificate in favour of the same "born in Renfrewshire, 1841" of the ship John Gray, of Glasgow, dated May 29, 1861. An envelope addressed "Mr James Haxton, Coast Guard station, Gourrock" dated 1862, and signed by his father and mother J and A Haxton. There are several other certificates jottings which identify Haxton with Gourrock, and his parents above-mentioned have been communicated with, but the above information is given in the hope that it may be the means of identifying the vessel.

