

MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

Newsletter of the Merchant Navy Association and the
Merchant Navy Chapter of Forestville RSL sub-Branch NSW

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TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA



Allen J Seabrook – (1925 - 2024) Seafaring History - Merchant Navy, World War 2



Allen was born in London on the 12th of October 1925. After the war, he served on cargo ships running the Australian coastal route from Perth to Townsville. He settled in Brisbane, Queensland, working for the Irrigation and Water Supply Board. Allen passed away after a brief illness on the 19th of January 2024.

1941-1942

My seafaring career commenced in December 1941 when I signed up as an apprentice seaman with the *Athel Line* - a subsidiary of *United Molasses Ltd*. *Athel Line* operated a fleet of tankers, specially constructed for the carriage of molasses. Molasses being such a dead weight cargo, only alternate tanks were used, thus alleviating undue strain on the hull structure.

Prior to signing up with *Athel Line*, I had attended the *Sir John Cass Nautical School* in Jewry Street, London, for nine months. The school was part of the Technical Institute and where budding mates and masters attended for tuition prior to sitting for a certificate of competence.

During my attendance at the school, there were no special classes for cadets (as we were referred to) and so attended lectures designed for those aspiring to obtain a 2nd Mates Certificate.

This really proved useful both academically and theoretically. However, towards the end of my term at the school, the repetition of lectures was creating a lack of interest - especially with one of the lecturers. He had what I came to regard as an aggravating habit of concluding every statement with, '*You see?*' so often that I soon found myself scoring the number of times he said it per lecture rather than concentrating on the lecture itself!

In January of 1942 I was sent to Liverpool to join my first ship, the *Athel Princess*. Although built in 1929 and adorned in drab wartime grey, the tanker was well furbished and the accommodation for apprentices quite comfortable. There were three other apprentices, although two were still on leave, and I was soon advised I was the junior and shown to the appropriate cabin. I was yet to meet my cabin mate. I did note, however, that the sole difference between the senior and junior's cabin was an additional porthole.

The first mate obviously took me to be a greenhorn as the first job I was given was to clear snow off the bridge deck and polish the brass work. At the time it was still snowing heavily, and the ship was not expected to sail for several days. Greenhorn or not - I thought it wise to comply with my orders at that time. After a week or so in port, we finally joined a North Atlantic convoy, destined for Halifax, then another convoy to New York and yet another to Cuba to receive a full cargo of molasses. Here we loaded at Matanzas and Havana.

On subsequent voyages, other Cuban ports were visited, including Guantanamo Bay - a large US Naval base and convoy forming port on the island of Cuba. The homeward voyage followed a similar pattern to the outbound except for a stopover at Fort Lauderdale, a port 20 miles north of Miami. At Fort Lauderdale, some of the cargo of molasses was discharged to lighten the vessel to the WNA (Winter North Atlantic) mark on the plimsoll line.

During 1942 I made three similar trips on the *Athel Princess* to Cuba and during my apprenticeship, completed eleven West Indies voyages.

My recollections of my first year at sea are somewhat vague. I'm aware of frequent submarine attacks which took place throughout the year without significant success to the enemy. We also experienced severe and quite alarming Atlantic storms - on such occasions I would have even more admiration and gratitude for the personnel serving on the Naval escorts.

During one particularly severe storm, the port side bridge wing, lifeboat and davit were extensively damaged. The apprentices' accommodation was immediately below the boat deck and also suffered damage.

I recall the problems with the nighttime station-keeping on North Atlantic convoys. We experienced a few close shaves from being side swiped, but not as hazardous as encountering the odd ship running through the convoy - usually an American or Greek ship. I wondered at how a ship given a course to steer could end up almost 90° off course - but happen it did!

It was not surprising at daylight to see that at least one ship in the convoy had suffered damage overnight from a run-away ship.

Two events of my first year at sea remain fixed in my mind. During one outward-bound trip, and being on day work rather than watch keeping, I was given the task of cleaning out a domestic freshwater tank on the poop-deck. On this particular day, it was also decided to have gunnery practice.

It wasn't too often that the antiquated 1917 vintage 4" gun, mounted at the stern was fired. Whether by design or accident, I was not advised of the pending gunnery drill - I suspect it may have been by design, since I was supposed to be part of the gun crew.

The outcome was that the gun was fired while I was in the midst of cleaning the inside of the tank. The noise of the gun detonation within the tank was, to say the least, alarming and deafening. Fortunately, only one shell was fired. Clamoring out of the tank, which was quite close to the gun platform, I noticed the gun was tilted at an unusual angle and the gun crew looking more startled

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than I was! The gun breach had blown open and the mounting damaged. The blast also carried away the timber blackout screen around the gallery and engine room doors. Fortunately, no one suffered any lasting damage, although the gunnery drill was quickly aborted.

The second event took place while entering the Mersey under pilotage. I happened to be on the bridge on telegraph duty, when the captain, who was a fitness fanatic, decided to show his prowess to the pilot.

Like all ships, we had the usual array of wooden fire buckets housed in a deck bracket, each side of the wheelhouse. To be precise, six buckets were secured each side of the wheelhouse. The underside of each bucket had a recess.

Captain Martin boasted to the pilot that he could lift and hold a fire bucket full of water at shoulder height and arm straight. This was not an exercise I had previously known him to perform - he normally showed his skills on an awning spar.

He proceeded to demonstrate his strength - but when he lifted the bucket, he saw two or three packets of American cigarettes. It was subsequently found that all twelve buckets had cigarettes secreted in them!

Captain Martin was not amused, and he never did get around to demonstrating his skills. Naturally, the apprentices were deemed guilty of the offence, but to be candid, I never discovered who had planted the cigarettes.

At least the pilot had a good sense of humour. Unfortunately, the captain, who was considered an exemplary gentleman, did not take kindly to the attempt to cheat Customs - especially as he regarded the cigarettes were planted in his domain!

1943-1944

During January 1943 the *Athel Princess*, after discharging her cargo of molasses at Liverpool, went into dry dock for general maintenance and repairs. During the refit I was given my first spell of leave. On rejoining the ship in February, I noted it had been enhanced with 'refueling at sea' equipment. It was a simple device by which an oil pipeline was trailed out from the stern with floats attached to be picked up by the vessel to be refueled - or so it appeared.

After loading one tank with fuel oil and having received convoy instructions, we preceded to the mouth of the Mersey to form up on February the 13th. As it happened, the convoy preceded no further that day - whether this was due to superstition or fear of enemy action remained a mystery.

At that time, it was common knowledge that the convoy would proceed onto a

different route to cross the North Atlantic in an attempt to elude or minimize risk of submarine attacks. Rather than steaming north-westwards toward Iceland, then down to Nova Scotia, the convoy was routed south to the Moroccan coast before heading due west to the West Indies.

The first week passed without incident - the weather, a decided improvement to that experienced on the northern route. It appeared that this was the route preferred - especially when destined for the West Indies.

On the seventh day out from Liverpool, we had the opportunity to try out our new refuelling apparatus. After a few teething problems we ultimately refuelled four of the escorts that day. This, it appeared, was to be the last of any future refuelling as just before dawn the following morning the *Athel Princess* was hit with two accurately placed torpedoes. One, right amidships (the largest of eleven tank compartments) and the second in the engine room.

I was off watch at that time, sleeping in the top bunk, however the force of the explosion landed me onto the deck, tangled up with the steam radiator which had become detached from the bulkhead. My cabin mate was on watch, so I had the cabin to myself. In the dark, I managed to locate my emergency dillybag and headed for the boat deck above the apprentices' accommodation.

The ship remained on a reasonably steady keel and soon it was noticed there was no sign of the convoy. I subsequently heard that we were a few miles astern of the convoy at the time of the attack.

The fuel feed pump had broken down - this was not an unusual breakdown during the fourteen months I'd spent on the ship, though generally quickly rectified. The twin diesels gave next to no trouble but without a fuel supply are useless.

Orders to abandon ship were given and the two port side lifeboats lowered. The starboard side boats were damaged in the attack. Fortunately, the sea was reasonably calm, and the two boats launched and loaded without too much difficulty, despite the injured and hampered with a lack of light - as yet the sun remained below the horizon.

It was known that one off-duty engineer was dead, and all remaining off-duty engineers suffered some injury as their accommodation was directly above the engine room. The most serious injury was sustained by one of the naval gunners, who though on watch, was sitting on a toilet in the stern and immediately above where the torpedo exploded in the engine room. He was fortunate his mate had the foresight to look for him. However, it proved an unfortunate time to answer the call of nature! Amazingly, none of the engine room crew on watch sustained injury.

We hadn't been in the boats long when one of the convoy escorts returned to assess the situation and advised we would be picked up shortly. Ultimately an American destroyer escort - the *USS Hilary P. Jones* returned and took onboard our entire crew. The *Athel Princess* remained afloat and it was decided that the master and chief engineer would return to the ship, presumably to determine whether it was possible to salvage and at least destroy or collect ship's papers and convoy manuals etc. They returned after a brief inspection having decided salvage was not on.

The destroyer returned to convoy duty while our crew was made as comfortable as conditions allowed. The junior engineers (sparks and apprentices) shared the PO quarters and were well looked after.

The *Athel Princess* was the only fatality that night, though on the following night further attacks were made on the convoy and three ships were sunk. The *Hillary P. Jones* was a hive of activity that evening, even attempting to ram a U-boat. During the next seven days, while continuing to escort the convoy towards the West Indies, other attacks were made, but no further losses were sustained. It appeared that the southern route was a success and certainly the time spent aboard the destroyer gave a good insight into escort duties.

Finally, the crew from the *Athel Princess* was put to shore in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Here the Puerto Rico Chapter of the American Red Cross took the crew under its wings. We were housed at various hotels around the city and issued some clothing (more suited to the Arctic than the tropics) but the thought was there! They also issued the officers with an invitation to the USA club's casino, where we were well received.

For some of the crew it was their first voyage back at sea after a previous sinking and in fact some members had recently experienced two recent losses and their decline in health was very apparent. The week or so spent in San Juan lifted our spirits however, only to be lowered when we boarded an American troop ship. This ship (pre-war) was doubtless a first-class passenger vessel. As a troopship, and even though it carried nothing like a full complement of troops on this voyage, life aboard was crammed, cold and impersonal. Most of the day seemed to be spent in food queues. Fortunately, the voyage to Baltimore was short.

We spent about another week in Baltimore - a city or port I'd not previously visited. Yet again the hotel was first class, and we were also issued with more suitable clothing and more importantly, a few dollars! The only lasting recollection I have of Baltimore is of one area of the city that boasted a seemingly endless number of theatres, featuring non-stop strip shows and bawdy burlesque, seemingly to cater for all tastes!

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Our next move was by rail to New York, where on arrival we were advised that one of the company's ships was being repaired after sustaining and surviving a torpedo attack. The *Empire Viscount*, as it was renamed, was expected to be ready for service in one week.

The crew was billeted in a very central hotel and as I'd made friends on a previous visit I was looking forward to a few days in the Big Apple. I was also well aware of how beneficial a visit to the New York USO clubs could be!

Generally, the clubs were visited by top celebrity artists and I recall on one such visit during the war years being introduced to Lena Horne. At the conclusion of her appearance she invited me and two other apprentices back to her apartment for drinks and supper - a most charming and generous lady. On 'Fools Day' our crew was directed to the *Empire Viscount* to 'sign on'. The ship was identical to the *Athel Princess*, so for me at least it was almost like being back home, even without a few personal possessions.

During the following days, the ship underwent shake-down trials and was restored. Some faults were found, especially in the engine room. Once it was considered sea-worthy, we berthed at an oil terminal to load a full cargo of crude oil. We then followed what had become the usual pattern - join up with a small convoy bound for Halifax, then form up into a major UK bound convoy. I for one felt more apprehensive than I had on previous voyages - especially now that I was sitting on a cargo of oil rather than molasses, even if it was only crude oil.

As was the norm, the convoy was attacked and some losses sustained, but it was now generally considered the escorts were better equipped to deal with U-boat attacks.

The *Empire Viscount* duly arrived unscathed in Liverpool and once the cargo was discharged, I was signed off and sent home on leave. This was the last I was to see of the *Viscount* and I don't recall whether she survived the war. I believe that only three of the original pre-war fleet of some thirty *Athel Line Ships* did survive.

After a long spell of leave, almost two months, I was appointed to the *Empire Flint* - a new oil tanker, assigned by the Ministry of War Transport to the *Athel Line*.

I was joined by two of my fellow apprentices from the *Athel Princess*. The senior apprentice, who had earlier enlisted in the R.N.R. received his call up whilst we were on leave. His replacement had, earlier in the year, survived some twenty odd days in a lifeboat in the Indian Ocean.

The *Empire Flint* was similar to most war-time built tankers and a decided down-grade from the *Athel* ships. The basic fittings and comfort not surprisingly below what we had become accustomed to. A single screw steam reciprocating engine, rather than twin diesel, meant there was a significant reduction in engineers - none of whom had served on the *Athel Princess*, but there was a similar increase in firemen. Also, the ship was not built for the carriage of bulk molasses. This meant it was oil cargo or nothing!

I was to serve on the *Empire Flint* until mid-November 1944, during which period a few noteworthy events occurred which I still recall.

The *Empire Flint* suffered quite severely from critical engine speed - or revolution vibration, as was detected on the first Atlantic crossing. The critical speed was noted to occur at ten knots - the designated speed of the convoy.

However, after steaming at the critical speed for a few minutes, the vibration throughout the ship became so severe it felt as though the ship would break its back. The noise emanating from the hull and whipping of the masts and jumper stay was quite alarming.

On arrival in Halifax, we were told by the crew from other ships in the convoy, that they observed and heard the ship whipping, but this could have been pure bar room talk. In order to minimise this problem, the convoy commodore allowed us to form our own column towards the centre of the convoy, enabling us to steam up and down within the convoy thus relieving the time spent at critical speed.

On return to the UK, a new propeller was fitted, but it made only a slight reduction in vibration. Following the two North Atlantic crossings, the *Empire Flint* was ordered to the West Coast of Africa - an area in which we were to remain until recalled to the UK in preparation for the D-Day landings.

The time spent on the West Coast (four and a half months in all) was enlightening. During this period, the *Flint* was engaged in shuttling oil to numerous ports from Freetown to Lagos and back. Usually, we spent sufficient time on the coast to step ashore at least once in the port visited. It was quite an experience. I concluded that the West Indies was really up market compared to the West Coast!

Generally, while operating around the coast, we joined up in small convoys. If not, we would have an escort as U-boat attacks remained very much a danger in this area. At one port, which I believe was Accra on the Gold Coast (as it was then named), the ship's berth was a small floating pontoon,

which appeared to be at least a mile off the coast and very exposed. An escort remained with us throughout the discharging operation, which was via a submerged pipeline to the mainland.

In May 1944, we received orders to return to Liverpool. At that time one of the more senior (age-wise) D.E.M.S. gunners was suffering mental decline. He sought medical attention and visited a naval doctor who thought it was OK for him to return home with us, but to be kept under observation.

We had only been at sea a few days when the gunner's mental condition worsened. The master decided he should be confined to a spare cabin amidships and kept under close observation. The task was mainly confined to the apprentices. On the third morning of his confinement I opened the cabin door to give him his breakfast, only to find him lying on the deck in a pool of blood.

On examination I found he had inflicted numerous stab wounds to himself with two souvenir African knives. At that time, he was still alive and a frantic call was made for the doctor aboard an escort ship. The doctor boarded the ship via a Breeches Buoy - my first experience with such equipment. Unfortunately, the gunner passed away within minutes of the doctor's arrival and subsequently I experienced my first burial at sea.

An enquiry as to how the gunner had gotten the knives into the cabin during his confinement was held aboard ship. The knives were known to belong to the gunner, and he was allowed visitors during confinement, but no one admitted to anything - naturally.

On return to Liverpool in mid-May, the ship was immediately beset with dockworkers, busily working through the entire length of the ship. I signed off articles one day and the following day, the 23rd May, was signed on special articles, referred to as the "Liberation of Europe" and received an extra one pound a week payment.

In a matter of days, the ship's fighting power was enhanced by the addition of a twelve-pounder mounted above the forecastle, two 40mm Bofors on the foredeck, plus additional twin 20mm Oerlikons on the bridge and poop decks. Temporary accommodation was provided for additional D.E.M.S. Gunners.

On departure from Merseyside, the *Flint* was carrying twenty-six gunners, including a young Army Lieutenant in charge of the contingent of gunners. The normal complement was seven gunners. The ship was also fitted out to serve as a fleet oiler. A more conventional system than had been fitted to the *Athel Princess* - an over-the-side system and intended for the transfer of oil whilst in harbour.

The *Empire Flint* had barely entered the harbour before a naval vessel signalled a request for fuel. Once an anchorage was located, we notified the vessel we were ready to transfer oil. We had no sooner commenced to pump fuel when a decrepit looking tanker, flying a White Ensign, began flashing a signal lamp at us. The outcome of the message was that the *Empire Flint* was merely an auxiliary fleet oiler and we had no right to refuel vessels in Weymouth - at least not without permission - and such is life.

We were to remain at anchor in Weymouth for several days and during such time avoided any further refuelling as requested. Shore leave was granted, but the township was swarming with troops and Merchant Seamen - at least around the waterfront - so little joy was found there. The pubs, when open, were completely crammed so that it was a battle to reach the bar and then there were insufficient glasses to go around. At best, it worked out one glass between four drinkers, which would hopefully be a pint, rather than a half-pint.

On obtaining a full glass of beer or cider - no real choice – it was ‘skol’ and ‘bottoms-up’. With luck, one could obtain four to five pints of beverage a session and all consumed ‘bottoms-up’ having the desired effect.

During July, orders were received to proceed to Cherbourg, where the harbour was a hive of activity and the ravages of war very apparent. For the first time during this particular campaign, the *Flint* was treated with a degree of urgency and appreciation. Most of the cargo of oil was transferred ashore by lighters - the remainder to refuelling vessels. The process of discharging into lighters was rather slow, so we spent several days there. The crew was not allowed ashore, but from the seeming devastation and chaos, no one was too concerned.

From Cherbourg, we returned to Swansea, where we again loaded a full cargo of fuel oil. The panic in operations now eased and the majority of the excess D.E.M.S. gunners were discharged from the *Flint*. During the period spent on operational articles, the *Flint* made two further trips to Cherbourg, otherwise

August and September were occupied in a confusion of serving little purpose. On October 2nd the crew was paid off the ‘special articles’, only to be signed on the ‘normal articles’ the following day. I didn’t feel that the *Flint* had achieved too much during the four plus months of operational duty. Obviously by October the ‘powers that be’ had evidently decided that the UK had become acutely short of oil supplies. On the day of resigning article, the *Flint*, along with several other oil tankers, was despatched, post haste, to the USA.

We loaded at one of the numerous refineries along the Delaware River and returned immediately to Merseyside - the entire voyage taking less than six weeks, which for that era was considered efficient.

I was to sign off the *Empire Flint* at the conclusion of this voyage and immediately transferred to the *Athel Duke* on the 15th of November. It was reminiscent of old times boarding this vessel, after a break of some 18 months.

1944-1945

It was common knowledge before sailing that it was to be another trip to Cuba for a load of molasses. As usual, the convoy formed off the Mersey to be joined by other ships from the East Coast and proceeded down the Irish Sea and then westward to Halifax. The crossing was comparatively uneventful with no losses, though the weather could have been kinder.

At Halifax, it was the usual procedure of anchoring in the bay and waiting until a convoy and escorts were formed in readiness for the trip down the East Coast and onto the West Indies. Again, this proved uneventful and molasses was loaded at Nuevitas and Havana, Cuba.

On forming up in a north bound convoy we proceeded to New York where we were to discharge some of the cargo to lighten the vessel for the mandatory winter North Atlantic crossing and take on provisions.

We arrived in New York during the festive season and since a berth was not available, we dropped anchor in the Hudson River awaiting orders. In doing so was a disappointment for the crew who were anxious to go ashore for some Christmas spirit. Launch services were available to take crews ashore but were quite costly and none was prepared to spend their limited funds on such a service.

I was on duty on anchor watch until midnight and became aware early in the evening something mysterious was afoot with the crew's movement. Late in the evening I was offered a drink of rum which tasted unusually potent. On enquiry I was told that some of the crew had produced a brew of Bacardi rum, orange juice and fortified antifreeze - pure ethanol. The antifreeze was kept aboard for the emergency diesel generator and kept in two, five gallon drums secured in the bosun's locker.

The original brew was possibly not too dangerous, but as was subsequently learnt some of the imbibers had consumed neat antifreeze whilst the next brew was being prepared. I advised my relief that drinking was going on but didn't appear to be creating problems.

The following morning the ship was unusually quiet when the pilot arrived to take it to its berth. The majority of the deck crew could not be raised. The carpenter had locked himself in his cabin in the fo'cs'le (forecastle) and was subsequently found dead. One of the rather elderly A.B.'s was also discovered dead in his bunk, while the bosun was too drunk to perform his duties.

With the few seamen fit for duties, together with the deck officers, few apprentices and limited engine room staff, the anchor was raised, and we proceeded to berth. There was no seaman fit to take the helm, and in port this task was generally undertaken by a specialist helmsman. Since I was the senior apprentice I had to take the helm and not being accustomed to the task didn't steer the ship to either the pilot or the master's liking, but we didn't strike any obstacles and I had improved by the time we berthed!

Once secured alongside, an inquisition as to what had happened overnight was held. Several crew members were sent to hospital for treatment, together with what members admitted to drinking the brew. Those that weren't prepared to admit to consuming it spent a few worrying days hoping they'd suffer no ill-effects. One young strapping Irish A.B. was to die in hospital while the bosun was finally located up town and almost sightless.

The New York daily papers headlines were blazon with news of the *Athel Duke's* fatal cocktail. Hardly the notoriety the ship sought!

Following several days delay due to the evening of indiscretion and in obtaining crew replacements we headed north to Halifax to re-join a homeward bound convoy. We arrived back at Merseyside late January 1945 and I signed off the *Duke* for a much-needed spell of leave. By this time, I had accrued sufficient sea-time to sit for my 2nd Mates Certificate and ultimately re-enrolled at the *St. John Cass Nautical School* in London for further tuition.

I stayed at my parent's home in Bexley, Kent some ten miles south of London, from where I commuted daily once I'd commenced my tuition.

V-2 rockets were still being launched towards London until some time during March when the Russians captured the launching area in Northern Germany. These rockets were a most frightening weapon, the damage caused was extreme. However, the most alarming aspect was experiencing the blast before the arrival of the rocket was heard. I came to the conclusion that being at sea at that time was less frightening than living in the vicinity of London. One such misguided rocket landed within a few hundred yards of our house, but fortunately in a more open area with most of the damage sustained to a power pylon.

By late April I decided I was ready to sit for my 2nd Mates Certificate. The examination rooms were at the Board of Trade Building or Ministry of War Transport as it was renamed during the war years.

I submitted my application to take the examination commencing Monday 7th May. All candidates were told as peace with Germany was imminent, we must continue with the exams on the day peace was declared and could take the following day off.

As it transpired, peace was declared on the 8th so there we were sitting in the examination room with a huge racket going on outside. The rooms were in Whitehall and close to the Cenotaph war memorial. The crowd noise worsened as the day wore on making concentration most difficult.

After sitting through two days of written exams I was pleased to get home and to contemplate how I would spend the evening and following day. My father had enlisted in the R.A.F. early in 1940, and on V.E. Day was stationed in Cairo, leaving just my mother and self at home. After spending most of the evening at a local pub with friends I was rather the worse for wear the following day. During the morning I was coaxed into heading to the local horse-riding school to experience the joys and discomforts of horse riding, at which I was an utter novice. Following another night at the pub I didn't feel too bright head or tail the next morning! Fortunately, I had just a half day of written exams to complete that afternoon. The orals and signals exams were scheduled for the next day.

Once I was issued with my 2nd Mates Certificate, I informed the shipping company that I was ready to return to sea. Ultimately, I was instructed to proceed to Belfast to join a tanker assigned to the Athel Line, the *Scottish Musician*. The vessel was at Belfast for a much needed overhaul - it was rather ancient having been launched in 1927 and certainly not up to the standard of the Athel tankers but had at least survived the war and the accommodation was quite comfortable. I signed on the articles as a 3rd Mate on the 1st of June and spent a few days in Belfast completing the overhaul before sailing to Greenock to load fuel destined for Germany. Towards mid-June we headed for Germany via the Hebrides, Portland Firth and North Sea to Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven to discharge our much-awaited cargo of fuel oil.

Over the following three months there were to be several such trips, the only difference was to load fuel at Grangemouth on the east coast of Scotland cutting down on the turnaround time.

The devastation at these German ports from the years of allied bombing was horrific - very few buildings standing in the dock's area while the waterway was cluttered with wreckage. Buildings still standing were severely damaged and occupied with the homeless.

As the waterway was progressively cleared of wreckage, we were able to progress upstream the Weser River to Bremerhaven, a large city port to where we had previously discharged fuel. Here the damage was even more extensive

There was little to go ashore for at these ports. However, at Bremerhaven, a German officer's club had survived the carnage virtually undamaged. The club had been commandeered by the Americans, and was offering free beer, served

by Germans. I was amazed to see some of the G I's becoming drunk on beer that was as weak as dishwater and tasted little better! As the evening wore on some became highly intoxicated and argumentative, with a few drawing their sidearms and firing shots into the air. At this juncture I thought it would be discretionary to vacate the club.

The majority of Germans that I met when ashore would offer a variety of goods for cigarettes. Currency had little or no value but for cigarettes - watches, cameras, jewellery, lighters, binoculars etc were readily available. Generally, the offerings were not new but in A 1 condition. Over time I acquired a camera, binocular, wristwatch plus a few other trinkets. To this day I have kept the binocular although now in rather poor condition.

Through August, apart from the German ports, we discharged fuel in Holland and Denmark. As luck would have it the *Scottish Musician* was discharging fuel in Copenhagen on V.J. Day, the 15th of August. The celebrations here would not have compared to V.E. Day in London, but still a joyous occasion. I was off duty that evening and perchance was invited to the officer's club where I partied on, drinking schnapps, devouring food, and endeavouring to charm some of the ladies present. I didn't appear to have too much success in this regard but still had a most enjoyable evening.

While walking back to the ship it began raining heavily and so I took shelter in a shop doorway entry where I was to nod off and misplace my uniform cap. The following morning an engineer from the ship happened to call into the shop where I'd left it and was asked by an assistant whether it belonged to anyone from our ship. Unfortunately, I hadn't mentioned the loss to anyone at that time, so never recovered the cap as we sailed that afternoon. I wasn't overly concerned with the loss, as I'd bought the cap in New York after being torpedoed so it was an American and not a genuine British uniform cap.

We continued to supply fuel through September, and I signed off the *Musician* at Greenock 29th of September for a spell of leave.

I was to spend the next eight years serving on a variety of cargo ships until finally moving to Australia and settling down where I worked for the Water Board in Brisbane, Queensland

[Master: 4 years:]

M.4a.

SHIPPING FEDERATION FORM

In witness whereof, the said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals, the day and year above written.

Signed, sealed, and delivered, in the presence of

Witness to Signature of the Master :

Place of the Seal

Name _____

Occupation H. L. Torrey
Address Marine Superintendent

Witness to Signature of the Apprentice:

Place of the Seal

Name _____

Occupation Tele-graph Lineman Southern Ry
Address 16 Murchison Ave Bessemer

Witness to Signature of Surety:

Place of the Seal

Name _____

Occupation Telegraph Lineman (Southern Railway)
Address 16 Madison Ave. B. 105

Note.—This Indenture must be executed in duplicate, and the person to whom the Apprentice is bound must, within seven days of the execution of the Indenture, take or transmit either to the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, Tower Hill, London, E.C.3, or to the Superintendent of a Mercantile Marine Office, both Indentures to be recorded. One Indenture duly endorsed will be returned to the Master of the Apprentice.

S., B. & Co. Ltd. 28/10/38.

SCHEDULE—APPRENTICE'S VOYAGE RECORD

Name of Vessel and Official Number.	Date of Commencement of Voyage.	Date of Termination of Voyage.	Length of Voyage.	
			Months.	Days.
<i>the Primrose</i>	19.7.42.	27.3.42.	2	11
1007.				
— do —	8.4.42.	26.6.42.	2	19
— do —	8.7.42.	7.10.42.	3	0
— do —	14.10.42.	3.1.43.	2	31
— do —	27.1.43.	23.2.43.	—	28
	<i>Ship purchased.</i>			
<i>the Visconti.</i>				
10118.	1.4.43.	30.4.43.	1	0
<i>the Flint.</i>				
10581.	5.7.42.	25.7.42.	2	21
— do —	30.7.42.	23.11.42.	1	24
— do —	30.11.42.	17.5.43.	5	19
— do —	23.5.43.	2.10.43.	4	10
	<i>Operational.</i>			
— do —	3.10.43.	15.11.43.	1	13
<i>the Duke.</i>				
10181.	16.11.42.	1.2.43.	2	16
	<i>Appointed's total Sea time.</i>		31	21

ATHEL LINE LTD.

M. Formel 11/01/46.

THE WITHIN WRITTEN APPRENTICE WAS RELEASED FROM INDENTURES ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF MAY 1945 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING AS CERTIFICATED THIRD OFFICER IN THE COMPANY'S SERVICE.

ATHLETIC LINE L-
K. J. Korman, Director
6/1/48

The above information has been
noted in the Register of apprentices
for General.

Athel Line Ltd.

CODES:
LOMBARD
BENTLEY'S
TELEPHONE:
MAYFAIR 9131

REGISTERED OFFICE:
BROOK HOUSE,
PARK LANE,
LONDON, W.1.

FOREIGN CABLES:
ATHEL BUSH, LONDON.
INLAND TELEGRAMS:
ATHEL BUSH, AUDLEY, LONDON.

Registered.

Tuesday,
20th January, 1948.

Mr. A. J. Seabrook,
59, Murchison Avenue,
Bexley,
Kent.

Dear Sir,

We enclose, for retention by you,
Indenture duly endorsed and completed.

Yours faithfully,
ATHEL LINE LIMITED.

R. F. Notman
(R. F. Notman)
Marine Superintendent.



RFN/OW

THE SIR JOHN CASS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
JEWRY STREET, ALDGATE, E.C.3.

MEMBER'S TICKET

(Not Transferable) 1940-1941.

SESSION 1939-1940.

No. M. ~~1456~~ 456

Name *Mr. A. J. Seabrook*
Address *59 Murchison Ave Bexley Kent*
Date of Issue *23 APR 1941* FEE PAID 1/-

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr David Field FAICD, Chairman
 Mr Sean Barrett, RNZN (Rtd), Deputy Chairman
 Capt Ted van Bronswijk
 Mr Stephen Westfield
 Ms Catherine Linley
 Mr Dan Crumlin
 Mr Stan Moriarty, Company Secretary

VETERANS ADVISOR

Mr. Don Kennedy, President
 Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch

PROTOCOL & DEFENCE FORCES ADVISOR

Mr Peter Sinclair AM, CSC, RAN (Rtd)



The Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund Ltd (MNWMF)

ABN 29 000 052 059
www.mnwmf.com.au

CONTACTS

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 PO Box 3058
 ROSEMEADOW NSW 2560
 Telephone: 0418 488 163
 Email: secretary@mnwmf.com.au

CHAIRMAN

6/8 Lauderdale Avenue
 FAIRLIGHT NSW 2094
 Telephone: 0414 900 393
 Email: chairman@mnwmf.com.au

59th ANNUAL COMMEMORATION AT THE MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL AND COLUMBARIUM, AND OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEW & REMEDIAL WORKS

1 HAWTHORN AVENUE, ROOKWOOD NECROPOLIS

SUNDAY 14TH APRIL 2024, COMMENCING AT 1100 HOURS

FOLLOWED BY LIGHT REFRESHMENTS ONSITE



**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC is the
39th Governor of New South Wales,
and was sworn-in on 2 May 2019.**

Prior to her appointment as Governor, Her Excellency enjoyed a long and distinguished law career spanning 43 years, during which time she served as a role model for women in law at both the State and national level. Appointed Queen's Counsel in 1989, in 1993 she was made a judge of the Federal Court of Australia, the first woman to sit exclusively in that Court. In 1996, she achieved the distinction of being the first woman appointed to the New South Wales Court of Appeal and, subsequently, as the first woman to be appointed as its President. She served, on a number of occasions, as Administrator of the Government of the State of New South Wales.

RSVP BY FRIDAY 5th APRIL 2024

PLEASE RESPOND BY EMAIL TO

STAN MORIARTY, SECRETARY, MNWMF secretary@mnwmf.com.au 0418 488163

PLEASE NOTE: RESPONSE PREFERABLY BY EMAIL OR PHONE ESSENTIAL FOR CO-ORDINATION

GUIDANCE FOR THOSE LAYING WREATHS

**(1) PLEASE CONFIRM BY EMAIL / PHONE PRIOR TO COMMEMORATION,
FOR PRIOR CO-ORDINATION OF THE WREATH LAYING CEREMONY**

**(2) ON ARRIVAL PLEASE DELIVER TO THE WREATH RECEIPT TABLE ON THE LEFT-HAND SIDE LAWN,
CLEARLY MARKED WITH CARD INDICATING THE NAME OF THE ORGANISATION, PERSON (S) LAYING & TITLE,
AS MAY BE APPROPRIATE.**

TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

**NO MERCHANT NAVY VETERAN SHOULD BE PREVENTED FROM ATTENDING DUE TO LACK OF TRANSPORT.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE OR ARE AWARE OF ANY VETERAN WHO WOULD ATTEND IF TRANSPORT WAS PROVIDED,
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ASSOCIATION OR**

**STAN MORIARTY secretary@mnwmf.com.au OR
DAVID FIELD, CHAIRMAN MNWMF chairman@mnwmf.com.au**

SYDNEY ANZAC DAY MARCH - Merchant Navy Chapter Coordinator Merrill Barker

Participation in the Anzac Day march is being finalised with Federation of Australian Naval Ships organiser Mr. Brian Grey. We have confirmed that our four WW11 Veterans will be transported by Land Rover. It is anticipated that a marching contingent of approx.. 20 will participate. Contact with the T.S. Sirius Sea Scout training base will be made seeking assistance to have a party provide assistance to carry the M. N. banner and flags. Advice to all members and other M. N. supporters will be presented as soon as final arrangements are confirmed. As in past years, a post march gathering at the Hellenic Club has been confirmed as has the overnight storage of our flags and banner. **I would appreciate members urgent contact to advise their participation as RSL NSW require confirmation now.**

82nd Anniversary U.S. Army Small Ships Section
Commemorative Service and Luncheon

Date: Sunday 19th May, 2024

Location: Level 2, The Grace Hotel, 77 York Street, Sydney NSW

Time: Commencing 11:15 am

Cost: \$110 per person / three-course luncheon

RSVP: Prior to Saturday 20th April, 2024

Please make your booking by returning this form with payment
advice

via Australia Post: Secretary, PO Box 552, Byron Bay, NSW 2481,
or e-mail: usassa@hotmail.com



Captain Stephen Herklots (Captain Bompa) 19/8/1940 - 14/1/2024

It is with great sadness to advise that our Vice President Captain Stephen Herklots crossed the bar on Sunday January 14th, 2024. He died suddenly whilst on his daily walk. As well as being active with the Merchant Navy Association he was also committed to the Company of Master Mariners. Stephen was affectionately known as Captain “Bompa”. Hopefully, we can reflect further on his seafaring career in a later edition of the Merchant Navy News. He will be greatly missed.

Geoff Walls
President, Merchant Navy Association

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

DAVID WILLS 8/11/2023 Ex Burn Philp

Capt. STEPHEN FRANCIS GERARD HERKLOTS 14/01/2024

ALLEN J SEABROOK 19/01/2024 WWII

LEN McLEOD 26/03/2024 WWII US Army Small Ships

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN



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Merrill Barker - Chapter
Coordinator

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