



# SEATIMES

The Newsletter of the Nautical Professional Education Society of Canada  
(Society founded in 1995 by the British Columbia Branch of The Nautical Institute)



May 2024

*From "Sea Breezes": November 1970. A wireless operator or radio officer in the earlier days of radio at sea was often a man of many parts, according to the ship he was in. Here, FRED G. SHAW recalls some memories of his time at sea in this capacity.*

**The Wireless Operator – Part 2:** It must be impossible for the present generation to realise what the old days were like. In the old White Star Australian/New Zealand service you'd leave Panama, send your TR to Balboa Radio NBA and say, "Now lvg Panama for NZ good bye OM" and I've known that to be the last wireless sound for 21 days in spite of winding up "Maggie", the magnetic detector every six hours.

You could go right across the Pacific and never hear nor see another ship. And what a thrill when you eventually called Awanui, North Island, New Zealand on the rusty old fixed spark gap and got a reply from VLA. Twenty years later when I was with the New Zealand Shipping Company in their *Hororata*, I called up VLA and got a reply, "Hey, old timer, it's been ZLA for many years now!"

But years before that, the silence of the Pacific had been broken, and with the introduction of better receivers one could hear in a single watch and occasionally exchange signals with VAE, Alert Bay or was it Estevan, Canada, KPH in California, VAS Sydney and ZLW Wellington.

I wonder what things are like at sea nowadays. I remember being sent from Newcastle over 40 years ago to join a horrible East Coast tramp at Immingham. I wont give the firm away.

Immingham to Puget Sound in ballast for orders: No electric light. No icebox. Salt beef in the English Channel. When I went to the saloon for a meal the skipper said. "Gerrou, we dinna want scum like you in here – Gerrou to the engineers' mess hole", which I discovered to be a small room with a wooden table and two wooden benches – accommodation for four people – black with grease and coal dust.

There was no bedding, no sheets, no blankets, not even a "donkey's breakfast" and the wireless shack had half an inch of filth in it. All complaints received four-letter word replies.

Ah well, what could one do – better get cleaned up and try to survive.

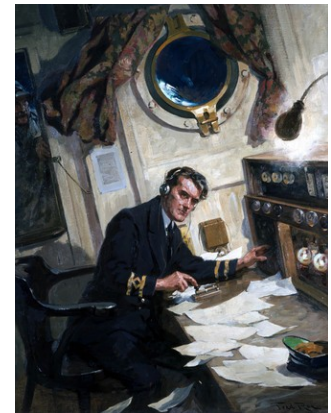
The bosun appeared to be a very decent little Welshman who helped me to clean up the place and then we discovered that the wireless accommodation was directly above the steward's stores and the water was percolating through the interstices. The steward was coming after me with a chopper. I sought the help of the skipper who turned out to be three parts drunk and I told him I was going to wireless the AWCT before we lost touch with land. He seemed to sober up rather quickly.

Now, if ever there was a case for the repeal of the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act – here it was.

The only friend I had was the bosun and he said, "Don't worry, bach, I'll fix it". He left the hose running in the wireless cabin and waited for the steward who soon turned up with his huge chopper. But Dai Jones was waiting for him, laid him out with one blow and then trussed him up and sent for the skipper.

The result was that I got bedding supplied and the deck of the cabin caulked, but it was months before the steward spoke to me.

The voyage was long and miserable. Immingham to Puget Sound for orders; Vancouver to Yokohama with lumber; to Miike for bunkers then Shanghai for orders. To Java for orders then back to Muroran in Japan for bunkers. To Vancouver again for grain and then to Gibraltar for orders; discharge in Genoa and Marseilles; back



to Gibraltar for orders and hopes of home, but no luck. To Cuba for sugar and Land's End for orders but caught in a hurricane and had to put into Newport News for repairs and bunkers. Finally to Silvertown, London with the sugar and I've never liked sugar since.

Who remembers the 1920s when Britain exported 50 million tons of coal a year and there was a steady stream of colliers on every tide from the North East Coast to Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Dunkirk and Rouen as well as time charters to London River, a charter devoutly to be desired.

I remember well the black and white chequered funnels of the *Shildon* and *Aydon* of Ridley, Son & Tully, and the red chequered funnels of the *Stesso*, *Tosto* and *Lesto* of the Pelton Steamship Company.



They were happy, dusty and dirty days and there was a camaraderie that one doesn't see these days. The wireless shack was usually just a shack on the top deck, with a quarter-kilowatt battery set, a coal-burning bogey stove for the cold weather, a few blankets and a bucket to wash in.

In one tide and under the tips at Dunston or Pelaw or Felling and out the next – with the occasional glory of a weekend in port, but not often. There were two 'watches', the Mate's and the Second Mate's, and one watch was free one trip and the other free the next, and so it was a matter of luck for time ashore. Coming into port the watch off was all dressed ready to jump ashore and each man left his address on a piece of paper with a shilling wrapped up in it

for a telegram to be sent by the watch 'on', and when it was seen when the ship would be ready to sail the telegrams would be sent off, and the men returned and off went the ship all covered with coal dust from stem to stern. Outside the Tyne piers she was put off course for a few minutes and she dipped her bows into the swell and was soon washed down.

I remember once asking the skipper, Nobby Clarke, for a sight of the chart and he gave me a look of withering scorn and said, "Why hinny, we never look at the chart, it's a sign of weakness man".

I soon learned how they smelled their way down the coast, by the signs and sounds and the sky reflections of the blast furnaces.

They were happy, friendly days and the men stayed in the trade for years and years. Nobby Clarke, the skipper, ran his collier like a clockwork train. He used to clean my shoes on nearing port and I had to clean his, the idea being that if you did it for somebody else you did a better job.

In colliers you didn't bother about other duties. I used to write the skipper's letters for him, help him with the wages and the insurance stamps, help him with any first-aid jobs, take the wheel occasionally, help with the mooring ropes and other jobs; and all for about £9 per month.

Somewhere in the house I have a copy of the 'Wireless World' of about 1913 and though I can't lay my hands on it at the moment, two things stand in my memory. One was the price – 3d – and the other was 'The Wireless Operator's IF', which I have never forgotten through the years.

I don't know who wrote it but it is very true and I end these ancient memories with a repeat of it. If anybody has a copy anywhere it would be interesting to see how near I've got to the original.

*If you can keep your nerves when all about you  
Are stations jamming hard and blaming you;  
If you can "Hold the Air" though others flout you  
Until you get your longest message through:  
If you can send and not get weary sending,  
Nor overtire the man who has to read;  
If your mistakes are rare but prompt their mending,  
If you believe that haste is never speed.*

*If you can calmly contemplate the chatter  
Of greenhorn operators fresh from school:  
If you can sit with messages that matter  
And wait until they're finished – and keep cool.  
If you can read through half a dozen stations  
The weaker signals that are meant for you  
And pick 'em out with few interrogations  
Yet never feel ashamed to ask those few.*

*If you're a Jack-of-all-Trades, tinker, tailor,  
If there is scarce a thing you cannot do,  
If you're an electrician and a sailor,  
Telegrapher, accountant, lawyer too:  
If you're propelled by energy that's tireless  
If you don't fear a job that's never done,  
Then, take my word; you're fit to work at wireless  
And anything you get, you'll EARN, my son.*

Following is a copy of a letter written in 1936 by 19-year old Rhys Smith from Vancouver, who was serving an apprenticeship with the British shipping company, Reardon Smith Line <http://reardonsmithships.co.uk>. He began his service with that company in 1933 but it was paused when he was admitted to hospital in Penang, Malaya, with amoebic dysentery. Upon recovery he was sent to Britain where he resumed his apprenticeship. This letter describes a voyage, late in the year, through the North Atlantic en route from Panama to Denmark.

m.v *Houston City*\*  
Middle Dock,  
South Shields,  
Tyne River.  
Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 1936

Dear Aunt Letty,

This is a family letter addressed to you just for convenience sake. Did you get my postcard from Aarhus?\*\* It was just to let you know that I was all right and to hope the same to you and everyone.

Our voyage from Panama was a fine one for the time of year as we took the southerly and slower course. We had comparatively warm weather until about a week out of Aarhus when the barometer suddenly fell extremely low. We had a bit of a blow for a couple of days, and just off the north of Ireland and the Hebrides it developed into a strong gale. The wind blew on the port quarter – in from the North Atlantic. To ride the seas better we altered course a little so the wind blew more from aft. The wind started to rise about 11am, and when I left the wheel at 2pm it was blowing pretty stiffly. As I was working in the lower forepeak I did not see the fun begin, I felt it though. There was not the same lurching about which was so annoying in the lighter wind. The ship became strangely steady and stiff with only the straight up and down see-sawing of waves passing under her. When I came up at eight bells (4pm) the scene and noise were really awing. The wind had a queer sound. A harsh dull booming, a high varying note like around corners and roofs, etc and above all this an unthinkable high piercing shriek. I was up in the fo’c’sle alleyway and decided to stay until it dropped a bit. The air was full of flying water & mist. The wind lifted the water off the seas & blew it into spray & mist. The wind was bobbing the derricks up and down in the middle. No seas ever stayed on deck long enough to say good-bye. The seas luckily were not big enough to do any damage as the wind was too strong to allow them to rise; but beat them down into short, steep walls of about 18-20 ft. high. As it was nearing five (we have supper at five) I decided that something to eat was worth a taste of unpleasantness. First, I got down quite safely. If one chooses the right moment there is very little danger of a sea hitting you overboard. You sense rather than reason out this moment. The motion of the ship as she heels to the weather side, a glance at the seas on the weather side, an ear for a lull in the wind – all sounding rather complicated and nonsensical, but nevertheless they all take place in a couple of seconds.

About 5.15pm we hove to as the alteration in the course was steering us for the Hebrides. By 8pm the wind had dropped a bit, allowing the seas to rise in height, but still remaining fairly short. She’s a fine sea ship and took it like a lady. It was my 7 to 8 lookout on the bridge, and to see the way she lifted her nose out of the sea was wonderful.

The night was black, but the seas were outlined by white breakers and the fo'c'sle head by white paint. Ahead can be seen a dark, white fringed speeding wall into which the ship seems to be burying its head. Slowly she rises till at the last moment about ten feet of water are sure to topple over her. The wall vanishes to leave empty blackness into which we suddenly tilt, like the cars on the big drop of a "Scenic Railway" or "Leap the Dips", only to be cut off by another seemingly larger wall which also passes under except for its last few feet of summit which somehow seems to part as it must break over the ship. The only fault of these flush-deck ships with the raised fo'c'sle head is that the seas are constantly breaking over 'midships' between the bridge and engine superstructures. We took only one over the starboard side, which was slightly the lee. It smashed our alleyway skylight in (which I had to repair somehow or other) and was going to, I am sure, smash our bulkheads and ports in.

Next morning two of us nearly went into the briny. We were putting a ventilator cover on the fore port side of the saloon when a sea came over green. I was standing on the inboard side stretching up in an attempt to put the cover over the top of the cowl. The A.B. was standing on the forrard end and got the full force. He was banged into the hatchcombing and carried back to the weather rail when the ship heeled back. Stretching up, I was caught off my balance and was carried on my back, head, feet and stomach in turn at the bottom of a few feet of water between the hatch and the superstructure, to be brought up straddling a ventilator. The A.B. got the worst of it as he'd half slipped through the rails and had got a good knock on the head. He was alright after a minute or so and we rescued the ventilator cover and put it on.

We passed through Pentellen Firth\*\*\* the next day and arrived in Aarhus on October 30 or 31. The Danes are a fine people. I like them. They have surprisingly clear skins, both men and women. They, as a nation, definitely frown on Hitler and are divided I think to advantage against Mussolini.

We were tallying the bags of beans as they came from the holds, and that combined with fresh milk (3 pints a day), butter, eggs, cheese, fruit, tomatoes, honey bought by ourselves from ashore and eaten sometimes with our regular meals, or given to the cook to be cooked for ourselves. This and the inactivity of 10 days – my waistcoat fitted me on arrival. On departure I didn't wear a waistcoat or button my suitcoat – (it was far more comfortable).

We left on 11 November and arrived after a fine passage at our present place. As soon as the drydocks were emptied, surveying and work commenced, and stopped Saturday midnight. We have had the bottom painted, the propeller taken off and tested for pitch, the lignum vitae\*\*\*\* bearings relined, new rivets put in, have been fumigated (holds and fo'c'sle only) (also odd jobs) since 4am Saturday to 10pm Monday, and no work Sunday, and are leaving 4am tomorrow. The Tyne River is naught but a canal bordered by docks, drydocks, shipyards, ships and more docks. I went up to Newcastle today, Monday, to do some shopping and met a Scotland Yard detective and a retired real estate man. Both were about 60 and it was interesting for the ¾ hour journey, having them tell me of the City of Newcastle, the river, of financial scandals, etc. I bought a lookout coat from the excess police stores very cheaply and it will serve its purpose fine. Also numerous other things. (I forgot to say that I'm watchman so of course had the day to myself). Warters went home for the weekend while Jones' father appeared from Wales this morning and has gone back tonight.

Next trip we are bound for Houston in the Gulf for cotton for Japan & hence?

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate has just been along and I've to turn to and get a few things ship-shape before I call the sailors at 2am.

I got your letters in Aarhus, Dad. And yours too Verna, Thanks for the addresses Verna. I have got the address book you sent me.



Must say good-bye now to you all till next time. Give Puck (Aunt Clarice's cat) a pat for me Aunt Clarice.

Love, Rhys

p.s. Aunt Letty, please forward to Verna. Rhys.

\* *Houston City* was a British Motor cargo vessel of 4,935grt that was mined off the East Oaze light buoy and beached on the 21st October 1940 when on route from Rosario for London with a cargo of grain. Salvage was abandoned after continued air attacks from 1st November 1940. Read more at: <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?73779>



**m.v. *Houston City***

Nationality: British  
 Type: Cargo ship  
 Built: 1934  
 Tonnage: 4935 grt  
 Engine: 1 x 4 cyl. SCSA Doxford Diesel Engine, single shaft, 1 screw  
 Power: 687 n.h.p.  
 Speed: 12 knots  
 Call Sign: GWBF  
 Builder: Furness Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., Middlesborough  
 Owner: Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons Ltd.  
 Lost: October 21<sup>st</sup> 1940. Struck a mine and ran aground.



\*\* Aarhus: <https://www.portofaarhus.dk/en/>

\*\*\* This should be Pentland Firth [https://www.openwaterpedia.com/wiki/Pentland\\_Firth](https://www.openwaterpedia.com/wiki/Pentland_Firth)

\*\*\*\* Lignum Vitae: one of the hardest and heaviest woods in the world. It was used for bearings on ship propeller shafts. <https://www.wood-database.com/lignum-vitae/>

Arthur Rhys Smith remained with the Merchant Navy until 1940 when he joined the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve. Throughout the war he served on Corvettes in the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous battle of the Second World War, and in the Gunnery School in Halifax: - <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-of-the-atlantic#:~:text=The%20Battle%20of%20the%20Atlantic,shipping%20crucial%20supplies%20to%20Europe.>

He remained with the Naval Reserve after the war, becoming the Commanding Officer of HMCS *Tecumseh*, the Calgary Naval Reserve Division, and rising to the rank of Captain.



**The Value of Commercial Marine Shipping to Canada.**

The impact of the marine shipping industry on the lives of Canadians in the past, present, and future.

How the marine shipping industry affects Canadians in different regions across the country, and the linkages to international economies.

The economic, cultural, environmental, and security impacts of marine shipping from local, regional, and national perspectives.



Trends that may increase or decrease shipping activity in Canada and around the world.

### SUMMARY

This second report commissioned by Clear Seas and produced by the Council of Canadian Academies examines the value that Canadians receive from marine shipping. The study examines a scope that extends beyond economic impacts and draws conclusions about how marine shipping contributes much to Canadians' daily lives – whether or not they live in coastal communities.

The report was developed by a multidisciplinary and multisectoral panel of ten experts (the Panel). Guided by Mary Brooks, Professor Emerita, Rowe School of Business, Dalhousie University (Halifax NS) the Panel examined the best available evidence on marine shipping and its value for more than a year.

Overall, this study confirms how marine shipping's contribution to the lives of Canadians and the Canadian economy is frequently underestimated.

Read the report at: [https://clearseas.org/wp-content/uploads/ValueMarineShipping\\_fullreport\\_EN.pdf](https://clearseas.org/wp-content/uploads/ValueMarineShipping_fullreport_EN.pdf)

**Q. Why is this ship sitting on the dock in Japan?**

**A. It was dropped there in February 2011 after the Tohoku Earthquake and the ensuing Tsunami.**



**Plastic pollution: Waste from across world found on remote British island. Thousands of pieces of plastic debris from all over the world have washed up on a remote South Atlantic island, according to conservationists.**



Litter found on the south-western coast of Ascension Island has been traced back to countries including China, Japan and South Africa, they say.

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) team spent five weeks assessing the extent of plastic pollution there.

More than 900 species of marine life are at risk, they reported.

Ascension Island has a wealth of species native to the island that have been affected by plastic pollution, such as the land crab, frigate bird and various species of sharks, turtles, fish and seabirds.

The remote British-owned island has been subject to many schemes aiming to conserve its natural biodiversity, launched by the government as well as independent groups.

"There is too much plastic being used badly," Fiona Llewellyn, a marine biologist at the ZSL Marine conservation team, told the BBC. "It was heart-breaking seeing the state of the plastic over there," she said, adding that big brands and governments needed to be made to account for the mess.



Ms Llewellyn and her fellow researchers found 1,000 pieces of plastic waste in just one beach and more than 7,000 pieces in total during the expedition.

The small island, with a population of just 800 people, is concerned by the crisis. Only a small amount of plastic that washes up on its shores is coming from the island itself. Ms Llewellyn said: "It's easy to see that most of it is coming from elsewhere."

Animals are ingesting the plastic and getting tangled in it, which can cause harm. There are growing concerns around microplastics and how they work their way up the food chain.

The types of plastic commonly found on the island's coastline include plastic bottles, hard plastic fragments that have broken down, fishing gear and cigarette butts.

Much of the waste ends up beached on rugged cliffs that are hard and dangerous to reach. "It was really challenging straggling down the rock faces to get to this shoreline and count all the plastic that was there," she said.

The ZSL Marine conservation team worked with the Ascension Island government's conservation team, St Helena National Trust, St Helena's government, the University of Exeter and South Africa's Nelson Mandela University in a collaborative effort to tackle plastic pollution.

The total project will last for three years and consists of monitoring the currents and movement of water, identifying the plastic bottles and assessing their expiry and production dates to distinguish when they might have entered the water and where from.

By Nayana Mena BBC News. Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-63484729>



**Are you familiar with the New Westminster Quay?** <https://tourismnewwestminster.com/our-neighborhoods/westminster-quay/> This is Pacific Coast Terminals which occupied that site until the early 1980s. There could be eight or more ships in New Westminster at one time.



## What Happened to New Westminster's Port?

Find an answer at <https://www.sfu.ca/waterfront/our-working-waterfront-1945-2015--museum-exhibition/what-happened-to-new-westminsters-port-.html#:~:text=The%20short%20answer%20is%20globalization,small%20to%20accommodate%20shipping%20containers.>

Also see: [https://www.sfu.ca/waterfront/our-working-waterfront-1945-2015--museum-exhibition/new-westminster\\_s-international-shipping-terminal.html](https://www.sfu.ca/waterfront/our-working-waterfront-1945-2015--museum-exhibition/new-westminster_s-international-shipping-terminal.html)



**Sea carriage of EVs and lithium-ion batteries:** As this is written, the cargo vessel *Genius Star XI*, loaded with lithium-ion batteries, continues to burn off Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands. <https://maritime-executive.com/article/cargo-ship-with-lithium-ion-battery-fire-sails-after-securing-cargo> It is being closely monitored by the US Coast Guard. This, once again, appears to confirm the



inherent dangers of these devices and the vulnerability of the ships that carry them. Regrettably there have already been several serious fires involving these batteries, especially when fitted to electric vehicles (EVs).

A recent report in *Seaways* (Dec. 23) sets out how such an accident has to be managed, using a hypothetical situation involving a large car carrier loaded with 3,500 cars, including 500 EVs. An expert panel concluded that such fires on board are extremely difficult and dangerous to deal

with, due to extreme heat, toxic gases, and melting steelwork.

Given the global popularity of EVs, it is very likely that the ocean carriage of such vehicles will rapidly increase – not only from factory to markets, but also on coastal ferries, and in inland waters and rivers. This raises the question of whether the shipping industry, and the global and national regulatory systems, are ready for this significantly more dangerous form of cargo. There does not seem to be sufficient evidence that they are. Although the issue appears to have been raised at the IMO, to the best of my knowledge it does not seem to have moved much further.

The underwriting industry, in particular Allianz Insurance, has raised its concerns, stating that the potential danger posed by EVs in terms of fire, explosion, toxic gases and the potential for thermal runaway will have to be addressed comprehensively and quickly.



The shipping industry itself has said very little – with one very interesting exception. Quite recently the Norwegian coastal shipping ferry company Havila Kystruten has decided that it will no longer carry EVs on its vessels <https://safety4sea.com/havila-ban-of-electric-and-hydrogen-vehicles-due-to-fire-hazard/>. The company based its decision on a detailed study by Proactima Consulting which concluded that although existing marine technology was sufficient for the carriage of traditional vehicles, this was not the case for the carriage of EVs.

If the Havila policy is taken up by other ferry companies, or perhaps even by other sea carriers, it would have serious implications for the EV industry. It is assumed that before this happens a rapid assessment and overhaul of maritime technical and regulatory requirements will take place. Hopefully this will happen before further serious 'battery assisted' maritime accidents occur.

**Prof Captain Edgar Gold, AM, CM, KC, PhD, FNI**

**This letter appeared in the February 2024 edition of *Seaways*, the Journal of The Nautical Institute. I added the USCG photo and the two links to news stories. David**

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**Another item from the January 1995 edition of the BowWave,  
the Journal of the BC Branch of The Nautical Institute**

## The Professional Marine Education Society of British Columbia

For those that attended the A.G.M. back in June of 1994 you will remember there was lengthy discussion on the formation of the above captioned society. Since that day the Directors have been working hard to bring this venture to fruition. We are now in a position to give you an update on the present situation. The incorporation of the Society is under way and close to conclusion due to the expertise and diligence of Gerry Stanford. He has guided this project through the meandering channels of bureaucracy and the legal process. Following approval of the Constitution and By-Laws by the Registrar of Companies an application will be made for the Society to be registered as a Charitable Foundation.

The founding members of this new Society are the Directors of the B.C. Branch of the Nautical Institute. Once everything is in place the fledgling Society will be encouraging new members and there will be a requirement for Directors to be elected included in which will be a Treasurer, there will also be a need for auditors to be appointed. The Society has already been promised "seed" money by the Provincial Government and once in full operation will seek sponsorship and donations from other sources. You are encouraged to become a member of this Society which will be totally separate entity from the Nautical Institute.

For more information on this venture please contact Gerry Stanford or one of your Directors.

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**Read the Spring Edition of Maritime Magazine at: -**

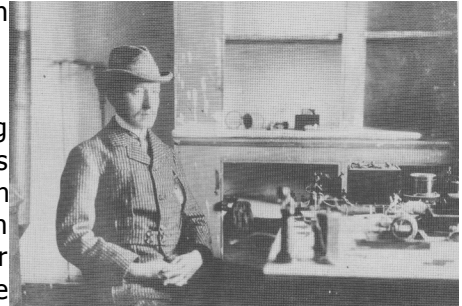
[https://maritimemag.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/112-web\\_compressed-2024-04-30-19-34.pdf](https://maritimemag.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/112-web_compressed-2024-04-30-19-34.pdf)



**Send me another electrician:** When Marconi was trying to get his wireless system recognized, he encountered problems in Britain. But he did have some success with the Royal Family at that time. This story, if true, is a measure of the distance maintained in Victorian times between the Royal household and the public at large.

**Marconi at Signal Hill with the apparatus used to receive the first transatlantic signal in December 1901 (Marconi Marine photo).**

In the summer of 1898 the Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VII) had suffered some injury in an accident and was recuperating aboard the Royal yacht *Osborne*, cruising off Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Queen Victoria, in residence at Osborne House on the island, was filled with a proper maternal anxiety to receive regular news of her son's progress towards recovery, but the yacht's distance from land and the intervening high ground ashore made visual signalling impracticable. If Her Majesty held her head exceedingly high she did at the same time contrive to keep her ear pretty close to the ground – or at least her advisers did – and the wide interest aroused by young Marconi's achievements had penetrated the barrier between Royalty and the public as surely as his signals had spanned the Bristol Channel. Accordingly and doubtless after serious deliberations, Queen Victoria summoned him to Osborne House to discover whether his wireless could be made to serve the Royal requirements on this occasion.



The story goes that in due course he arrived at Osborne House but had the audacity to present himself at the main entrance. This was announced to the Queen with the additional information that on being directed to the tradesmen's entrance he had stubbornly refused to go round the back and was standing his ground on the front doorstep awaiting admission to the presence.

"In that case," Queen Victoria is said to have commanded, "send him away and fetch me another electrician".

Whether or not thus spake the Queen cannot be ascertained with any certainty, but it is a fact that by whatever entrance Marconi made his way into Osborne House, equipment was eventually set up there and aboard the *Osborne*, and the first medical bulletin ever sent by wireless was transmitted from the yacht on August 4, 1898, to be followed by some 150 more messages exchanged during the next fortnight. It is to be assumed that this success effected some change in Her Majesty's regard for "electricians".

**From: "5,000 weeks of Fairplay", the International Shipping Journal**

From Seaways, March 2024 – "The NI out and about page".

**Young Members' Council**

Welcome to the newest entrants on The Nautical Institute's Younger Members' Council, Katharine Johns MNI and Shekkappan Kannan MNI.

Katharine is a Second Officer from British Columbia, Canada. She has worked on a variety of ships for the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) since 2014, gaining experience in SAR, tending Aids to Navigation, research operations, icebreaking, fishery patrol work and much more.

In 2018 she graduated Cum Laude with a Diploma of Nautical Sciences in Navigation from the CCG College, and holds a B.Tech in Nautical Sciences from Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia. She currently sails on her Watchkeeping Mate (Unlimited) ticket. Katharine is also a Committee Member of the Canada (British Columbia) Branch of The Nautical Institute, and is a strong advocate for maritime professional development, access to mentoring and diversity and inclusion for all across the industry.



Shekkappan is a Second Engineer and Product Manager from Singapore. In his varied career to date he has accrued over eight years of experience in complex technical operations and project management in shipyards and on board cruise ships and tankers across the US, Singapore, Spain, UK, China, and Hong Kong. He recently graduated as the Valedictorian with a Master's Degree in Ship Management from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Shekkappan also devotes a great deal of energy to social media engagement and influence, public speaking and industry engagement. He is a Strategy Member of the Global Maritime Forum and was recognised as a finalist in its recent Future Leaders contest.



**Master and Shipping Company Convicted Over Pilot Ladder Failure:** For the second time in less than a year, the Australia Maritime Safety Authority is reporting the successful conviction of a ship's Master and the shipping company for the failure of a ladder which resulted in injuries to a pilot during a transfer. While these accidents happen periodically, they are rarely prosecuted but, in this instance, the Australian authority is calling these preventable accidents that place the lives of seafarers at significant and unacceptable risk.

"Pilots rely on a ship's Master and crew to properly maintain, stow and rig pilot ladders, and neglecting a pilot ladder can have deadly consequences," said AMSA Executive Director Operations Michael Drake. He highlighted common issues ranging from ladders that were too short, attempts to combine ladders, and the unsafe use of shackles as well as issues with inspections and maintenance.

*The snapped pilot ladder on MV Boshi 58. Image: AMSA*

In this instance, a pilot was boarding the Panama-flagged general cargo ship *Boshi 58* (12,000 dwt) on May 25, 2023, when the ladder broke during the transfer.

The pilot was seriously injured in the incident. The ship, which was built in 2006, is owned and managed by companies based in Hong Kong.

AMSA reports during the court proceedings, it was established that the pilot ladder had not been checked regularly. It had also been stored improperly which they said lead to degradation.

The Master of the vessel and the shipping company Fe Ye Shipping each pled guilty for failing to ensure the pilot transfer arrangements complied with the regulations. The Master was fined A\$5,300 (US\$3,450) and the shipping company A\$32,000 (US\$20,850).

AMSA focuses on safety issues for vessels and the welfare of crewmembers. They have frequently cited and on occasion banned vessels for repeated safety violations.

Last year, in June 2023, the company also successfully [prosecuted](#) a similar situation. The Cyprus-flagged cargo ship *AAL Dampier* (18,700 dwt) was departing the Port of Fremantle, Australia in 2022 when the pilot fell and was seriously injured. AMSA inspectors called the condition of the ladder "shocking" citing the Master and ship for improper storage and inspections. In that case the Master was fined A\$5,500 (US\$3,600) for two offences and the shipping company was fined A\$30,500 (US\$20,000).

Last year, the AMSA updated its [marine notice](#) on safe pilot transfer arrangements.

April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024. <https://maritime-executive.com/article/master-and-shiping-company-convicted-over-pilot-ladder-failure>



## On our forum: The evolution of 'acceptable' risk in shipping

One of the advantages (or perhaps disadvantages) of age is an ability to look back and see how custom and practice, behaviour and attitudes, have evolved over the years, mainly, it has to be said, to suit economic criteria. Risk taking has been part and parcel of seafaring since the dawn of time – we still speak of a "marine adventure" – although there are plenty of warnings in our navigation textbooks about how you had "old Masters and bold Masters," but very rarely did you meet "old *and* bold Masters." The inference being that some prudence and caution were to be preferred to downright recklessness, which brought its gruesome reward.

A Master was exhorted by the owner (maybe this is still the case) to prosecute the upcoming voyage with "expedition," albeit with the caveat that the safety of the ship and all on board should never be compromised. In the company in which I sailed, after joining my first ship in 1956, a Master was never criticised for navigational caution, such as delaying an arrival until first light, slowing the ship to avoid damage from slamming or boarding seas, or obeying the rules for navigation in restricted visibility to the absolute letter, even if the tide was missed at the next port. Safety was the cast-iron defence.

You knew that was not the case in other operations. A Second Mate who had come out of the North Atlantic passenger liners told us that they would slow down only when fog, ice and night coincided. There were

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companies in which caution was disapproved of and there was an expectation that the ship would arrive on time. We shook our heads sadly at such behaviour.

But over the years, attitudes to what constituted acceptable risk have changed, and not in a way that has been entirely positive. Looking back you can see this erosion of standards as a series of steps, each of which appeared at the time to be questionable, but was accepted, invariably because of pressing economic advantage.

**Automatic pilot after dark...** In our company, prudence took something of a knock when Head Office announced to the fleet that after dark the ship would remain on automatic pilot and a night helmsman would be no longer employed. We were appalled, although in retrospect our outrage might seem quaintly ridiculous, but we genuinely saw this as a retrograde, “anti-safety” move. Despite the protests of the Masters, it went ahead.



But that was small beer compared with what was happening in the wider world. In the past an owner would build a ship to the dimensions that would comfortably fit into the range of ports in which the ship was expected to trade. Anyone who built a ship that

would be too long, deep or wide would be considered quite barmy. But then, somehow the relationship between ports and owners changed – henceforth the owner would announce its intention to build a ship that would be too big to fit the port – so if the port wanted the business, it better get dredging!

There was professional astonishment when it was announced that laden VLCCs would be entering the Port of London, steaming up Sea Reach on the top of the tide, to sit in a dredged hole off the berth at Shellhaven. What might happen if the ship was caught half way, with the tide falling? Then, in the midst of the concern at “super-spills” after the *Torrey Canyon*, it was revealed that most of these monsters were steaming around with a single boiler, which would leave the vessel helpless in the event of a breakdown.

**How do you stop a giant ship in a hurry?** There were no tugs powerful enough to haul them off a lee shore, as the *Amoco Cadiz* and several incidents off the Cape illustrated. Who remembers the ridiculous and ultimately futile attempts to invent a means of stopping a giant ship in a hurry? One daft idea involved huge doors which would be deployed on each side of the ship to act as a brake. But scaling up shipping was necessary, if the industry was to prosper, so the nay-sayers were promptly shut up.

There were serious concerns about the wisdom of putting containers three high on the foredeck of North Atlantic containerships. A prominent insurer expressed publicly aired doubts about whether the new 2500teu ACT ship then fitting out was “putting too many eggs in one basket.” Think of the level of claims!

It became perfectly acceptable to blast up the Channel in nil visibility at full sea speed. Why have radars been expensively fitted, if not to facilitate such conduct, even if the stick-in-the-mud regulations failed to recognise these modern realities? Ships berthed in marginal weather, because the Master would otherwise be censured for unreasonable caution and the gangs had been ordered. Safety envelopes of all kinds shrank, because they could be, not because there had been any proper evaluation as to whether it might be wise to have an escort tug attached when shooting a bridge, or enough tug power on hand when swinging off a berth with half a dozen parked container cranes on the quay.

**Shrinking crew numbers.** Crew numbers were reduced regardless of what those afloat had to say. Ship sizes grew and crews shrank to such a state that any on-board maintenance was quite impossible. We would repair it all at survey time, was the refrain, and we all knew how that ended up, in the bulk trades during the 80s and 90s. Flags competed with one another to minimise stuffy regulations. The inclination of regulators and class appeared to permit anything new, where in the past they would have erred on the side of caution. If flag state A or class society B did not want to bend the rules, you could shop around and find somewhere more pliable.

It is a never-ending process, with bigger ships in every trade, now with the several known unknowns of new and exciting fuels, de-rated machinery to placate the greens and environmental criteria seemingly elbowing out the primacy of safety at sea. And long after I am dead and gone, I expect some other elderly commentator to be noting some of the ways that caution and prudence have been further eroded during his or her long career. And that, I suppose, is progress.

Michael Grey. April 8<sup>th</sup> 2024



Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List. This column is published with the kind permission of The Maritime Advocate.  
<https://maritimemag.com/en/on-our-forum-the-evolution-of-acceptable-risk-in-shipping/>

## Society Book Award: BCIT Marine Engineering 2023

Captain Stan Bowles presented the book, "Marine Auxiliary Machinery" to Cadet Ethan Van Vliet



## Six Workers Presumed Dead in Baltimore Bridge Collapse

BALTIMORE, March 26 (Reuters) – Six workers were missing and presumed dead from a bridge that collapsed in Baltimore Harbor early on Tuesday after a massive cargo ship crippled by a power loss rammed into the structure, forcing the closure of one of the busiest ports on the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.



A view of the *Dali* cargo vessel which crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge causing it to collapse in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S., March 26, 2024. REUTERS/Julia Nikhinson

**No doubt most of us will have seen the stories and photos that appeared immediately after this disaster, so there should be no need to include them in this newsletter. But, I did feel that not many will have seen the following story from the 'Straits Times'. David.**

### Why is Singapore involved in the Baltimore Bridge Collapse Investigation?

SINGAPORE - A container ship that crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore on March 26 was sailing under the Singapore flag, spawning questions about what this means, why Singapore's authorities are involved in the investigation and the parties that could be held liable.

The Straits Times looks at what it means for a ship to be registered in Singapore and why investigators here have been sent to the United States to aid in the probe.

**1. What does it mean when a ship is Singapore-flagged?** Under international maritime law, all merchant ships participating in international trade need to be registered in a country of the shipowner's choosing, called the flag state. Each ship is bound by the laws of the flag state that it is registered in.

The Singapore Registry of Ships, which was established in 1966, is responsible for overseeing Singapore-flagged ships and ensuring that these vessels and their owners meet local and international regulations covering areas such as crew safety and environmental protection.

Singapore's ship registry, which was the fifth-largest in the world in 2023 according to Lloyd's List Intelligence, comes under the purview of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

**2. How many vessels fly the Singapore flag, and what is needed for a ship to get on the registry?** As at January, there were about 4,000 vessels being administered under the Singapore Registry of Ships, representing a total internal ship capacity of more than 100 million gross tons.

Except for certain vessels like fishing boats, all types of ships, including offshore vessels such as oil rigs, can be registered with the Singapore ship registry so long as they comply with the relevant international standards.

According to MPA's website, vessels that are less than 17 years old and meet these requirements are normally accepted for registration.

MPA has said that the Singapore flag has become a flag of choice for many shipowners and operators due to the quality of the ship registry here.

Other advantages of flying the Singapore flag that have been cited within the shipping industry include the ease of incorporating a Singapore company, as well as tax exemptions and various incentive schemes.

**3. Who can be registered as owners of Singapore-flagged ships?** Only Singapore citizens, permanent residents or companies incorporated in Singapore may be registered as owners of Singapore-flagged ships. These companies can be locally or foreign-owned.

For a company to be registered as the owner of a Singapore-flagged ship, it must have a minimum paid-up capital of \$50,000. But this requirement may be waived depending on the number of ships being registered and their aggregated tonnage.

The owner of every Singapore ship must appoint a manager whose residence is in Singapore, according to MPA. The ship manager may be an officer of the owning company or of a management company, and he is responsible for all matters related to ship registration and crew manning, as well as safety at sea.

In the case of the [Dali container ship](#) – which rammed into one of the pillars of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, in the United States, resulting in six people presumed dead – the shipowner is Singapore-based firm Grace Ocean.

The ship's appointed manager is Synergy Marine Group, a Singapore-headquartered company, which hired and manages the crew aboard the Dali.

Synergy, which manages 668 vessels, oversees various aspects of operations for shipowners, such as docking procedures and risk management.

**4. Why is MPA involved in the probe, and what are its responsibilities in terms of maritime safety?**

Mr. Moses Lin, partner and head of shipping at law firm Shook Lin & Bok, said MPA ensures Singapore-flagged ships have complied with relevant safety regulations.

It also ensures that these ships have undergone the regular inspections and certifications needed for a vessel's structural integrity, seaworthiness and safety.

But flag states, he noted, do not have direct responsibility for the day-to-day operational safety of vessels.

In an accident like the Baltimore one, just because the ship involved is registered in Singapore does not mean the Republic is responsible, said Associate Professor Goh Puay Guan of the National University of Singapore Business School and Centre for Maritime Studies.



"Safety checks and compliance checks would likely have been conducted regularly, and as long as these are done in accordance with procedure, the regulatory bodies would have carried out their responsibilities," he added.

Under international law, flag states must conduct an inquiry into any marine casualty or incident involving a ship flying its flag that causes loss of life or serious injury to nationals from another state, or causes serious damage to ships or installations of another state.

The flag state must also cooperate in any inquiries

held by the other state into such incidents.

In the case of a marine casualty or incident, owners and masters of Singapore-registered ships must first take urgent steps on the ground to prevent further deterioration of the situation.



Once that is done, they should alert MPA to the incident immediately or within two hours of the incident at the latest. A more detailed report should then be submitted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

**5. Why are investigators from Singapore's Transport Safety Investigation Bureau (TSIB) being sent to Baltimore?** TSIB – a department of Singapore's Ministry of Transport (MOT) – is the authority responsible for investigating air, marine and rail accidents and incidents here.

When it was set up in 2016, it took over the task of carrying out independent safety investigations into marine accidents from MPA.

The bureau will investigate incidents that occur in Singapore with a "very serious marine casualty", regardless of the country the ship is registered in, or those that involve a Singapore-registered ship when it is overseas.

These "very serious" incidents involve the total loss of a ship, a death, or severe damage to the environment. TSIB may also investigate marine casualties and marine incidents where safety lessons can be drawn.

MOT has said TSIB's investigations are aimed at preventing accidents and incidents, and not to ascribe blame or liability. Still, any investigation being conducted by the bureau does not prevent other entities, such as MPA, from conducting their own probes.

**6. Which party bears the liabilities in such accidents?** As early investigations into the Baltimore bridge collapse are under way, it is difficult to ascertain which party would be liable for damages, legal experts told ST.

Major parties that might be potentially responsible include the shipowner, operator, charterer, Captain or Master of the vessel, said Shook Lin & Bok's Mr. Lin.

The *Dali* container ship was chartered by Danish shipping giant Maersk at the time.

Losses would likely include damage to the bridge, business and service disruptions, and the loss of lives, said lawyer Kevin Chan.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, Grace Ocean can seek compensation from relevant parties, lawyers said.

"If it was an engine failure which caused the vessel to lose power and collide with the bridge, it might be the operator or the engineer who was responsible," said Mr. Mathiew Rajoo, partner at DennisMathiew law firm.

The company that hired the parties responsible may then be liable, he added.

Port pilots may also be held liable in certain situations.

"Pilots typically board ships in local waters to direct the ship as these waters could be small and narrow or have conditions that the ship's captain may not be aware of. "So, in certain instances, it could also be the pilot's fault for failing to direct the vessel correctly," Mr Lin said.

Grace Ocean may shield itself from damages by filing for a limitation-of-liability action under maritime law, said Mr. Mathiew. The liability will be based on the tonnage of the vessel.

But the company, he said, will not be entitled to the limitation if it is established that the loss resulted from a deliberate act or omission.

The shipowner would also likely be covered by insurance, said lawyers.

The ship has been insured by the Britannia Protection and Indemnity Club, a mutual insurance association owned by shipping companies, since 2014.

According to its website, the insurance group covers areas such as loss of life, liability to cargo and collision liability.

But there may be instances where shipowners could be denied their claims, depending on the terms of the policy, said Mr Chan.

"Possible situations where coverage may be excluded would include the vessel's failure to maintain its class (a certification of its technical standards) required under the policy, or if the collision was intentional or a result of wilful misconduct by the shipowner," he said.

•Additional reporting by Grace Leong

**Correction note:** This story has been updated to correct a source error related to shipowner Grace Ocean.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/what-does-it-mean-for-a-ship-to-be-s-pore-flagged-and-why-is-s-pore-involved-in-the-probe>

**For the story until April 30<sup>th</sup>, read:** [https://gcaptain.com/baltimore-bridge-salvage-and-wreck-removal-megathread/?subscriber=true&goal=0\\_f50174ef03-881e1f6f4e-169937937&mc\\_cid=881e1f6f4e&mc\\_eid=35ccf165ad](https://gcaptain.com/baltimore-bridge-salvage-and-wreck-removal-megathread/?subscriber=true&goal=0_f50174ef03-881e1f6f4e-169937937&mc_cid=881e1f6f4e&mc_eid=35ccf165ad)

**This and earlier editions of *Seatimes* can be found at <https://npesc.ca/seatimes>**

### **Guinea-Bissau emerges as this year's fastest-growing ship register.**

**Three African flags stand out this year for their extraordinary growth.** The registries of **Gabon**, the **Comoro Islands** and **Guinea-Bissau** have each more than doubled in size in 2024 so far, taking on a significant tranche of the so-called shadow tanker fleet in the process.

**Gabon**, a small Central African nation on the Atlantic coast, was last year's fastest-growing shipping registry, a growth trajectory that was boosted in the opening weeks of 2024 with the reflagging of a swathe of the Sovcomflot fleet.

Latest data from Clarksons Research (open link below to see chart of data) shows Gabon is now the 30<sup>th</sup> largest shipping register in the world and the second largest in Africa with 7.4m gt on its books and has grown by 138.4% in the first quarter of this year alone. A month prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine 26 months ago, the African nation had just 0.8m gt registered.

Among the ships on Gabon's books was the *Pablo*, a 1997-built aframax that exploded in Malaysian waters killing three crewmembers in May last year. The destroyed, uninsured ship, with a history of hauling Iranian oil, was one of the shipping images of 2023, a stark reminder of the risks associated with the dark tanker fleet.

The flag of the **Comoro Islands**, meanwhile, has grown by 109% so far this year, but in percentage terms, the fastest grower has been **Guinea-Bissau**, a West African register that had no ships on its books when Russia went to war but has grown by 333.8% in the year-to-date with Turkish owners among key clients. In early 2022, Piraeus-based G-B International was appointed to run the open registry of Guinea-Bissau. The registry also has an office in Lebanon.

Another African nation making shipping headlines this year has been **Eswatini**, the landlocked southern African kingdom formerly known as Swaziland. The Eswatini Maritime Affairs and International Ship Registry was formed as a private company in Singapore late last year. The International Maritime Organization has since listed a number of vessels that paid to flag with the African nation as 'False Eswatini'. **April 30<sup>th</sup> 2024**

<https://splash247.com/guinea-bissau-emerges-as-this-years-fastest-growing-ship-register/>



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**Articles or comments for inclusion in future editions of *Seatimes* can be sent to me at [whitkni@telus.net](mailto:whitkni@telus.net)  
David Whitaker FNI**

