



SHIPMATES

Reardon Smith Seafarer's Newsletter

Issue No.24 September 2002.

This issue is dedicated to the three
Reardon Smith Line ships that were named
"Vancouver City"

M.V. "Vancouver City" (1)

Built in 1930 by William Doxford of Sunderland, to the order of the Reardon Smith Line she was the fourth motor ship to join the Reardon Smith fleet. An open shelter deck vessel of 4,955 Gross Tons fitted, with a Doxford 4 cylinder opposed piston diesel engine. Capable of a service speed of 12.5 knots on a daily consumption of 11.5 tons marine diesel oil. An ideal vessel for service in the R.S.L. liner service from the Pacific Coast ports of North America. to U.K./Continental ports or for World Wide tramping.

On her final voyage, she sailed from the U.K. in 1938 under the command of Captain Hugh Charles Egerton. July of 1939 found her loading in Suva, Fiji Islands a full cargo of approximately 8,600 Long Tons of bagged sugar for the U.K. It had been a long voyage and her crew of thirtytwo were looking forward to their return home. The Master felt proud of his command, but for him there was a sadness too, this was to be his final voyage, he had reached the Company's retirement age, after a lifetime at sea he wondered how he would adapt to life ashore.

The 14th September, 1939, just eleven days after the commencement of World War 2, when sailing independently at her full speed of 12.5 knots, and in a position 75 miles W.S.W. of Milford Haven, less than a day from the comparative safety of the Mersey, she was unfortunately sighted, torpedoed and sunk by U28. Three of her crew perished, the survivors were rescued by the Dutch tanker "Mamura" of 8245 Gross Tons and landed at Liverpool the following day.

On the 17th March, 1944 the U28 (built 1936), when engaged on a training exercise in the Baltic Sea, was lost due to an accident when diving, there were no survivors. She was located and salvaged by the German navy before the end of the month after which her fate is not known.

M.V. "Vancouver City" (2)

A closed shelter deck ship of 7,261 Gross Tons and a Deadweight of 10,350 tons. Fitted with a Doxford economy 3 cylinder opposed piston diesel engine, capable of 10.5 knots on 10.5 tons of marine diesel oil per 24 hours.

One of three sister ships built by William Oxford and Sons Ltd., of Sunderland for the R.S.L. in 1942. Her hull was the wartime standard Doxford type and of riveted construction with the distinctive Doxford stern.

Her wartime armaments and equipment included:-

Paravane gear for mine sweeping

Anti Torpedo Nets with their associated booms mounted/rigged When streamed the drag reduced the ship's speed by approximately half knot per net.

Twin Oerlikon machine guns either side of the bridge and at the after end of the midship house.

Pillar Box Anti Aircraft Rocket Launcher, mounting 6 rockets per side.

Anti Submarine - 4.5 Gun on poop house. Also 10 depth charges mounted on skids.

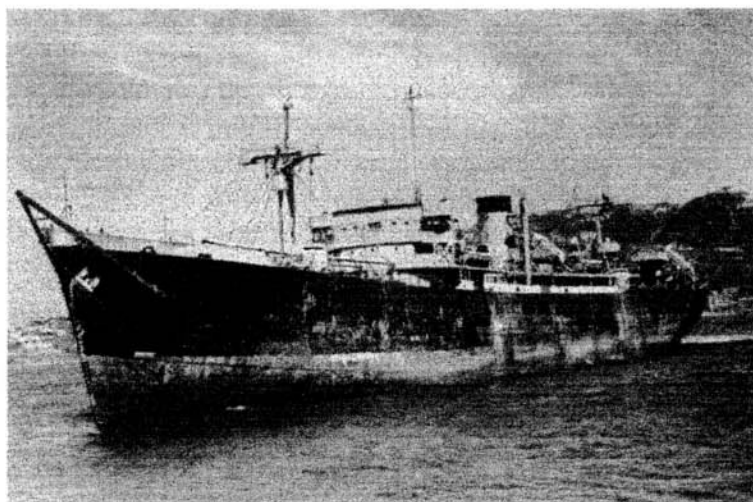
On the Boat Deck were mounted "FAM" (Air Mines) and "J" Rockets.

Ship was equipped with De-Gauzing cabling.

Note: Prior to 1943, merchant vessels were not permitted by International Agreement to be equipped with guns forward of the bridge. However, due to unfortunate events that occurred at sea during the war, it appears that the Allied governments in 1943 decided to give merchant shipping greater protection by arming merchant vessels with anti aircraft weapons mounted forward of the bridge.

This class of vessel was very suitable during the war for the carriage of military equipment etc and served in all the military operational areas. In the post war years they were successful for service in the bulk and general cargo trades.

On "VJ" day the vessel was in Liverpool and was to have commenced loading military equipment for the Far East, this was cancelled by the Ministry of War Transport and the vessel returned to commercial employment. Her first commercial cargo being bagged barley from Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, B.C. to Littleton, Timaru and Dunedin,



The foregoing photograph was taken in Wellington, New Zealand on the 11th January, 1946. At that time vessel was under Time Charter to Shaw Savill, loading at N.Z. ports general cargo for the Middle East. You will note that the Anti Torpedo nets and associated booms have been unshipped and landed but the main armaments remain, it was not until vessel returned to the U.K. in April 1946 that the guns and paravane equipment were dismantled and landed, it was some time later before the protective concrete on the fore part of the wheelhouse and the gun pedestals were taken off.

She traded successfully, mainly engaged in world wide tramping, on voyages usually in excess of 9 months, mainly carrying bulk cargoes and was a profitable asset to the fleet. After 19 years of service in the fleet she was sold to Liberian interests and was renamed "Everbloom", two years later on the 10th September, 1965 she was driven ashore at Wakayama, the victim of a Typhoon. Her damages were such that she was declared a constructive total loss and she was sold to Japanese shipbreakers.

M.V. "Vancouver City" (3)

The first of seven almost identical bulk carriers of approximately 16,644 Gross Tons built for the Reardon Smith Line by Upper Clyde Shipbuilders on the Clyde between 1970 and 1972.

The design and construction of these ships were undertaken with the close co-operation between Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and Technical and Management Departments of R.S.L. The class became known as the "CARDIFF CLASS". They were the first ships to be fitted with the new model B & W KEF74 engine built at the Kincaid Engine Works, Greenock

She served in the R.S.L. fleet for nine years and was then sold and re-named "Stasia" to sail under the Liberian flag.

The majority of the subscribers to "Shipmates" will either have sailed on one of the seven ships or have had head office management, technical or administration knowledge of them.

"SHIPMATES" REUNIONS

Such was the regard, affection and the memories of past ships and shipmates held by the past sea staff of the old Company that by popular request a retired ship-master of the company, the late Captain A.C. Thomas took on the task and with the active support of his wife Stephanie, arranged a reunion dinner which was held at the County Hall, Cardiff Bay, on the 23rd September 1991. This was indeed a grand affair and a truly memorable and successful evening was spent by the 150 guests attending, enjoying the excellent food and reminiscing over times past.

Over recent years a number of past R.S.L. employees expressed a wish for another reunion, this year two members of "Shipmates", Captain M.E. Jones and Mr.

Reg. Smith, Radio Suptd., have taken up the challenge and have arranged for another reunion to be held on the 12th September, 2002 at the "Queens Head", Ockbrook, Near Derby. This is a large public house owned and run by one of Reardon Smith's Catering Officers, and a member of "Shipmates", Mr. Leighton Seabrook. There will be a leisurely midday buffet, also for those wishing it an evening meal. Many of you will have been shipmates at some time with Leighton, and will know that you can look forward to a very pleasant day. The venue being fairly central appears to be an excellent choice, close to a motorway giving easy access, and there are several Travel Inns/lodges in the near proximity for those wishing to stay overnight. Probably, many of our members will choose to enjoy the evening and stay in a hotel overnight.

SHIPMATES AWAKE

Despite requests to Shipmates to forward in to the editor stories of Reardon-Smith ships for publication in the newsletter the response has been pitiful. This is very discouraging and is now threatening the very future of the newsletter. If you, the members wish it to continue you must play your part too, before eight bells is struck.

M.S. "Askari"

The above ship of about 10,000 DWT was building for Belgian owners in 1940 at either Hamburg or Antwerp when Germany invaded Belgium and seized the uncompleted vessel. She was completed by the Germans but her wartime operations are unknown

At the end of the European conflict she was awarded to Great Britain and delivered to the control of the British Authorities in the Firth of Forth. She was apparently placed under the management of the Reardon Smith Line and sailed for Barry Dock under the command of Captain W.C. Thomas, the Chief Engineer was Harry Orr and the Second Engineer A.Svenson.. On arrival Barry Dock she berthed at the Westerly end of No.1 Dock, parallel to Broad Street, Barry and in full sight of the road. She remained there for several weeks and many of the viewers on the road stopped and remarked on what attractive vessel she was.

R.S.L. Management and Technical Superintendents spent some time inspecting the vessel and there were rumours at the time that R.S.L. was considering purchase. However it was not to be, the Belgian company for whom she was being built claimed the ship.

Maybe some of our senior members will be able to give more information on this vessel.

O.J.T.L.

MEMORY OF THE DOXFORD ENGINE

Our member Mr Tom Major wrote the following letter to the Lloyds List in the early 1980's, in reply to an article written by Mr Church, Superintendent from another company, the article was called "What hope for Doxford?"

" Mr Church is of course absolutely right in proclaiming that the present Doxford engine, as now developed, is probably superior to any other engine in existence, but the fact that it has no licensee, in particular Japanese licensee, means that without licence fees to support adequate R&D then it is unlikely that the engine can now catch up.

The damage was done between 1950 and 1960. Dr Keller gave the Doxford engine a 20-year start over its Continental rivals. One looks back at the position that this engine held, with a complete fabricated engine structure, virtually no out-of-balance forces, high mechanical efficiency, no tie bolts or coves, the advanced technique of fitting many components using rubber rings for sealing, fresh water cooling, ease of overhauling, and constant pressure fuel injection. If it were referenced in the way Continental manufacturers insist it would probably be, even now, the equal or better than any now existing. For the working engineer it had, luxury of luxury, an electric crane for ease of overhauling.

All this was thrown away by those who succeeded Dr Keller and by a board of directors comprised largely of shipbuilders and accountants who presumably did not study their cash flow sufficiently to realise that it was the Doxford engine which supplied their funds. They were also unable to see that they had available in Percy Jackson a worthy successor to Dr Keller, a man with all the innovative skill which Dr Keller would have admired. But this skill was largely left unused so that Continental rivals were left to catch up with and overtake the Doxford engine, with development into higher powers which brought about the downfall of the Doxford engine.

In the early 1950s at a lecture given before the North-East Coast Institute of Shipbuilders and Marine Engineers, Mr Purdy stated that it was not Doxford's intention to develop the engine beyond the 7,500 bhp then available from the six-cylinder 750-bore engine. Accepting this size bore, and the present day developments of the engine, such an engine would probably now develop over 20,000 bhp. If memory serves me, a contributor to that discussion stated quite emphatically that in his view there was no development of the Doxford engine, which was clearly the case.

While Doxford were having trouble with the 750-bore engine crankshaft, another Continental manufacturer was also having trouble with their bigger crankshaft, perhaps to a greater degree than Doxford, but the Continental manufacturer took care to see that no publicity for this defect in design leaked out.

Another Continental manufacturer ran into serious problems with bedplate fracture, but again great pressure was brought to bear on owners and, I am given to

understand, the technical press, to see that none of this was brought to the attention of the outside world.

Doxford's on the other hand appear to have taken a masochistic delight in publishing their failings, admittedly with details of what had been done to correct them. But the strong commercial approach of their Continental rivals would not allow the admission of any defect in their product in the first place.

By the late 1950s a line drawn on a graph of Doxford engine output vis-a-vis the combination of all their Continental rivals showed Doxford's output falling rapidly, and the Continental output of rivals rising equally rapidly. This period coincided with the Japanese looking around at suitable engine designs to build under licence in Japan, and Doxford had little development available to show, or even anything in the pipeline.

It was Robert Atkinson, now appointed Chairman of British Shipbuilders, who realised the enormity of what had happened and steam rolled the "P" engine, later developed into the "J" engine, into production on the basis of Percy Jackson's ideas, and this has developed into the excellent engine of today. Regrettably it would seem that his efforts, and those of his successors, came too late to save the present down fall. Without cash flow from licensees there seems little chance for the engine as Government funds will be unlikely to be available after the debacle of the "Seahorse engine". As with British shipbuilding, British motorbikes and British motor cars, yet another tragedy of British management incompetence."

J.W. Major.

Members News.

New Member:- Mr. Mike Rigg who lives in Ipswich has joined "Shipmates". He served his apprenticeship with the RSL and was Third Officer from 1973 to 1977. He then joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service. Welcome aboard Mike. Mike has just sent me his life's career which is too late to fit into this newsletter and will be published in newsletter No.25. He has got a project going and would be please to get some helpers. He bought the tug "Lowgarth", which is now at Ipswich, and he is trying to bring it up to full working condition. Any retired RSL Officers (especially engineers) who are having difficulty filling in their time and would like to help him please telephone:- 01473 434097, fax 434098 or email- rigg@nthworld.com

Obituary:- Leslie Allerton crossed the bar at his home on Friday 28th June 2002. Leslie worked for Powell Duffryn Coal Merchants, stationed in the Cape Verde Islands coal bunkering station from 1936 until 1942 when he came home to join the British Army. He returned to the island until the coal bunkering trade came to an end and then worked for the Radcliffe Shipping Company in their office in Cardiff until the coal bunkering trade ceased, due to oil becoming the main fuel for the shipping industry. He joined the Reardon Smith Oil Rig Department in the early 1970's, working in the Cardiff Office until the department closed down. He then

worked for the Reardon Smith Ship Agency Department until the Company went into liquidation, moving to the Cardiff Ship Management Office until his retirement. He spoke the Portuguese Language. Our deepest sympathy goes to Mrs. Allerton and her family. Leslie was a member of Shipmates until the latter years.

Obituary:- Mrs. Marjorie Ellerby of Hornsea crossed the bar on the 11th June 2002. She was the widow of the late Captain George Ellerby who crossed the bar in November 1985. Captain Ellerby joined the RSL as Chief Officer in the 1950's then served as Master for many years until he retired in the late 1970's. The news of Mrs. Ellerby's death was sent to me by our member Mrs. Hirko Terauchi who lives in Daiho, Osaka, Japan, they were very good friends. Mrs. Ellerby was sailing with Captain Ellerby on the "Orient City" (3) in 1969 when they first met. The ship had discharged a cargo in Onohama, East Japan, and then went to drydock at Mitsubishi Drydock in Yokohama. Mr. Kunio Terauchi, working for the Nippon Maritime Shipping Agency in their Yokohama office, was the agent for the "Orient City" during that period. He introduced his wife and children to Mrs. Ellerby and they remained friends for 32 years. Mrs. Terauchi visited Mrs. Ellerby at her home in Hornsea on several occasions. Our Deepest Sympathy goes to Mrs. Ellerby's daughter Adrienne and her family. Below Mrs. Terauchi writes a tribute to Mrs. Ellerby.

Long time ago, my husband was engaged in Shipping agent in Yokohama, Japan, it was my great concern to hear interesting news about foreign countries brought through the vessels all over the sea. Especially Sir William Readon Smith Line was unique in all of them because of its familiar atmosphere.

One night, our family including little son and daughter were happily invited to Christmas dinner by Captain Ellerby and Superintendent Mr. A. F. Osborne on the Orient city at Mitsubishi Dock yard in Yokohama and met Mrs. Ellerby there first time. Although she looked like dignified and a bit rigid lady but I soon came to think of her having sense of kindness and fairness to all people even though any foreign people like us. At the dinner she kindly helped my 5 year-old daughter to have her dish, while Mrs. Ellerby, she frequently stopping her own dinner. There was a little episode during the dinner, when a waiter tried to get her stake back for another dish, she suddenly cried out "not yet" in Japanese as she really enjoyed it, all the people at table broke into laugh and made the atmosphere relaxed.

After dinner, in the Captain's room, Mrs. Ellerby managed to draw a picture of her house and garden with an apple tree talking slowly to let us understand because our family could not understand English at all. Thanks to her hospitality we really enjoyed staying on the Orient city at that night, outside the vessel, on the contrary, cold and dark night spread over the Dock yard just vague lights were sparking here and there.

She taught us by her attitude that we can make friends each other without any language conversation. Consequently I began studying English by myself and our correspondence had kept until her last stage. In addition, Late Captain and Mrs. Ellerby always welcomed to our visit to Hornsea Yorksher where she had kept good memories of late Captain through her life.

I really respect her as a real British lady with warm heart. Our family never forget the glorious time of Readon Smith Line for ever.

Mrs. H. Terauchi

Another First for Wales

Merchant Navy Appreciation Day

On Wednesday the 17th July 2002 the Merchant Navy was honoured once again. This time the National Assembly for Wales hosted what was to be called "Merchant Navy Appreciation Day."

At 11.30 am, some eighty odd members (numbers had to be restricted on the instructions of the N.A.W.) of the Merchant Navy Association, gathered alongside the Lightship 2000 in Cardiff Bay and formed up in columns of three behind the Aberbargoed Comrades Corps of Drums. The march was to pass in front of the National Assembly Building, where the Salute was taken by the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Cambria, Commander Peter Machin, he was accompanied on the dais by Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Presiding Officer of the N.A.W.), Mr. Rhodri Morgan MP, AM, (First Minister of the N.A.W.) and Mrs. Molly Owen M.B.E. (Deputy Lord Lieutenant, South Glamorgan). Above them, the Red Ensign fluttered proudly from the Assembly flagstaff.

The march past terminated at the Merchant Navy Memorial in Cardiff Bay, where Rev. Graham Francis conducted a multi-denominational service, with music by the Royal Welsh College of Music. As always, the service was poignant and included several readings, each being read by a representative of a different religion. These were followed by the Exhortation, Last Post and Reveille and concluding with the two National Anthems.

The members of the Merchant Service present then attended a reception at the National Assembly.

Lord Elis Thomas addressed the gathering and spoke of the debt owed by Wales and the United Kingdom as a whole to the Merchant Navy, not only because of the sacrifices made in war, but also for its contribution to the commercial prosperity of the country.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan then spoke of the contribution made by the combined efforts of the Coal Industry and the Merchant Navy over the past 150 years, which had brought a prosperity to Wales never seen before. He also paid tribute to Councillor Charlie Gale, whose persistence had been a major factor in the realisation of this Tribute to the Merchant Service.

The concluding remarks were made by Mr. Harry Parry, Chairman, Merchant Navy Association (Wales) who thanked the two speakers for their kind words and expressed the appreciation of all present for the hospitality of the Welsh National Assembly on this memorable day!

Those who wished were invited to take a short cruise around the Cardiff Bay to view the developments.

This is another acknowledgement of the contribution made by the Merchant Service to our Country; albeit fifty-seven years on...I'm sure that you will all agree that it is still appreciated!

Alf Thomas

This story is not about a Reardon Smith Ship but is a story sent to "Shipmates" from Marion Gill about a ship called "Rebecca". She sailed on the ship with her husband Bill Gill who was the ships Chief Engineer.

A story of my epic voyage on the Rebecca owned at the time by John McKrink of Hong Kong.

Bill and I had a good trip to join the vessel at Long Beach, the flight being excellent. However on arrival, the agent didn't turn up at the airport to meet us and we had to spend the night at the Holiday Inn, which was very nice.

We joined the ship next morning and it was a lovely surprise to find our accommodation so comfortable, comprising Day Room come Office, Bedroom and Bathroom. Unfortunately the blankets were only suited for Pygmies so we had to buy a new quilted bed mat from J.C. Penny, one of the large department stores in Long Beach.

While we were at Long Beach the Captain's Wife, Jane and I went ashore one afternoon to visit the "Queen Mary". She was huge and absolutely beautiful. I had quite an eerie feeling while on board as I kept imagining the vessel in all her glory of her sailing days, this being more so when we looked in on the "Tea Dance" going on while we were on board.

We sailed from Long Beach on 29th. November and headed for Shanghai. At this time nearly everyone on board had a very bad 'flu including the Cook who had to take to his bed and never recovered and was eventually hospitalised.

This meant that we had no cook and Jane and I had to do the cooking for the officers on board. We had lots of fun doing this and picked up all sorts of new recipes from the young lad who luckily volunteered to cook for the crew which was made up of Phillipinos, one from Fiji and two from Bangladesh.

We had main engine turbocharger failure on the 12th. December and after this was rectified and we were under way again we had an electrical fire on the main switchboard which blacked us out completely and brought us to a standstill. There we were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, getting tossed all over the place, and the nearest land 1200 miles away. I really had visions of manning the lifeboats and being rolled about in the huge waves. It is at times like this that your faith is really tested.

However after many silent prayers, Bill in true form managed to get us underway again and we were able to reach the fantastic speed of between 3 and 7 knots instead of our usual 16, so we were really on a "Slow Boat to China." The fire knocked out two of our three Generators electrically and the also the emergency one, leaving only one main machine and a small harbour machine and this meant that we had to deviate to the nearest possible port for repairs which happened to be Yokohama in Japan.

In our limping manner we managed to get within 50 miles of the port when our small labouring machine finally packed up leaving us no option but to call for assistance.

While waiting for the tugs to arrive, the Japan Safety Bureau classed us as a DFO (Dangerous Floating Object)

We were in Japan a total of seven days during which time Jane and I took the opportunity to go up town shopping. We had a couple of nice lunches in a little town by the name of Tsurumi which is very close to Yokohama.

Bill and I enjoyed meeting up with all our old friends from Yokohama Engineering who took us for a lovely meal one evening and kept us well supplied on board with local "Sushi" and "Sake."

We celebrated Christmas on board ship with all the crew on Christmas Eve and the Crew all sang Carols, complete with lanterns, outside the cabins and I felt very moved by it.

A wonderful spread was provided with Jane and I having cooked the turkeys. We were very fortunate that we were in Yokohama for this festivity as opposed to being at sea as it was very rough. A super party was included with dancing and Karaoki, the crew being very good at the Karaoki and a good time was had by all.

This was repeated on Hogmonay except we were at sea headed for Xingang in China arriving there on the morning of 2nd January, but had to stay at anchor because the port was closed due to very strong winds.

When we did get in it was absolutely freezing being approximately minus 10 C. and all the portholes were frozen up. We went ashore that night and found a little eating shop across the way where the dumplings were very good and a bottle of vodka cost only two dollars. Although they couldn't speak a word of English we had lots of fun with them and this was to become our local for the rest of our stay there.

The second day we were there the ship was very busy with Surveyors, Chandlers etc. so we had lunch on board and Jane and I went up to the town centre late afternoon. What a taxi ride that turned out to be. The rule of the road was head for a space and hope that nothing else beat you to it such as another car, lorry, bicycle or person. We drove through areas of terrible poverty, but funnily enough everyone seemed well-dressed.

Apart from the people in our little dumpling shop, the people generally were not at all friendly.

The crew were a great bunch of lads and seemed to regard Bill as their father figure and me the mother and as there was no money on board and they were all broke, they were coming in ones and twos to ask for a loan. Luckily we had a few dollars that we could let them have until the ship got its next supply after China.

Our next port was Shanghai and when we arrived Bill had to go to hospital as he had been having very bad nose bleeds. Jane and I went into Shanghai City ourselves and what an experience that was.

In search of a loo we almost used a "Toilet Display" in one of the department stores, but managed to stop in time when it was realised there was no water in the bowls and obviously no toilet paper, but this latter was really the norm here.

We did find a restaurant at the top of this department store but as usual nobody spoke English. We did however manage to convey that we would like some chicken (shades of Norman Collier) Egg Fried Rice and some Sweet and Sour Pork. The food was beautiful and really cheap. We had a lovely time and lots of laughs but were very disappointed with Shanghai- it really was a slum.

On my return on board I was really quite moved to find that the four catering lads, though broke, had brought me a present of four packets of biscuits and some nuts. We also on our return found that we had received our next sailing orders which were to load in China at Yantai, a cargo of bagged cement for Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

The sail from Shanghai to Yantai was very calm and pleasant and we arrived at 11 am but did not go alongside until almost two in the morning, another unsettled night!!!

We arrived at Yantai on 12th. January having had to cut through the ice on the water, it was so cold. It snowed here for two or three days and was quite miserable. It was even freezing on the ship and we were all going about with several layers of sweaters on.

We left Yantai on the 22nd. January and headed for Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam via Hong Kong where we took on stores and money but no cook so Jane and I still had to do the cooking.

We arrived at Vietnam at 6am and had a lovely sail up river to Ho Chi Minh City (originally Saigon.) Our berth was great there as the "Seamens Club" was right at the end of our gangway. It was a very nice place with excellent service from the waiters, staff and mosquitos, but most of all it was very cheap and good for the crew. We really liked Ho Chi Minh and had some nice visits up town.

Our first night ashore we went to the Rex Hotel where the décor was absolutely sumptuous with the passageways done in hammered brass and beautiful carved wood. We had a very nice meal and were entertained with traditional music and dancing.

The following day, Sam, our ship chandler (female) took Jane and I in an air conditioned Mercedes for shopping. I bought some silk material and she took me to different dressmakers to have dresses made up.

The weather was very hot and owing to the fact that the air conditioning on board was not working the cabin temperature reached 92 degrees, however the bearings required to get it working arrived along with the COOK!!

On Sunday 4th, February Sam organised a trip to the Viet Cong Tunnels where the people fought against the Americans during the Vietnam War. These tunnels were actually built when the French were in occupation and took twenty years to construct. They were on three levels and people lived in them even having their schools and hospitals underground for all the time they were fighting for their independence. Bill and I were very impressed and managed to go down a few with a bit of a struggle and these ones had been specially enlarged for the tourists. I only managed one at the underground kitchen as I felt the steps and the stooping to be too much. At the kitchen they served local tea and a home made Tapioca cake which was actually being made on the spot. It's the first time I have had tea and tabnabs two metres underground. It was very interesting and educational. We had a guide who spoke perfect English but he did ascertain where we were from before he became properly friendly. I think that had we been American, we might have been led down some obscure tunnel, as the guide when referring to America or Americans sounded somewhat bitter.

On arrival back at the dock we couldn't get back on board because the ship was shifting along the quay. But this was most fortunate for us as just then a big passenger ship was arriving alongside the passenger berth and we were kindly included in the welcoming party. It was really lovely to see as the girls were all in traditional dress and doing traditional dances. The passengers were all leaning over the side and cheering and the whole thing was quite moving.

The night before leaving we went to the "Floating Hotel" for dinner, this is a beautiful place and quite famous, but we were rather disappointed in the restaurant, but I wore

one of my new dresses and felt quite elegant for a change. Before leaving Ho Chi Minh the next morning, Sam and Lan (Sam's assistant also female) came on board at 7am to present me with a lovely bouquet of roses. There were a few tears and we were very sorry to leave Ho Chi Minh. We would like to go back some day.

WE arrived Kuala Tanjung, Indonesia (in the straits of Malacca) on 11th. February but didn't go ashore since there was nothing except jungle, an Aluminium Plant and lots of jellyfish with long stingers. One of our crazy lads jumped in when we arrived, right on top of one, silly fellow!!

On 14th. February a barbeque was arranged for my birthday as we might have been sailing on the 16th. The boys really did me proud, decoration the deck, putting up lights and organising all the music. Unfortunately half way through there was a terrific storm and we had to move inside to the smoke room. A great time was had by all,

We went to Singapore to take bunkers, stores and mail and then on to Japan again to a place called Miike. This used to be one of the leading Coal Mining places in Japan and has a wealth of history.

We were very well entertained by the agents here and were presented before leaving with a little coal bust of a miner and a very fine antique ceremonial sake cup.

We then went on to Yokohama from where I flew home. As the shp was only in port for three hours the agent took me to the Narita Airport and I stayed at the Holiday Inn where my dinner cost me £50. It may have been expensive but boy oh boy did I enjoy it. Just to get a nice fresh bread roll was worth it... Japan is very expensive although wonderful.

I had a lovely flight home the next day.

Marion Gill.

Subscriptions.

"Shipmates" has now been under way for six years the first issue being in December 1996 the subscriptions at that time were £2.00. I would like for you to give a thought for Captain Tim Lawson the first Editor, Tim crossed the bar on 2nd January 1999. While running his business he found time to set up and get the newsletter going. From the start there was 100 members, this has increased to 160.

Usually the subscriptions are due on the 1st December but due to a healthy bank balance the subscriptions are being delayed until further notice. This is due to a few members giving generous donations towards the running of Shipmates and the sale of back issues of the newsletter. Forms will be issued when subscriptions are required.

Blec Osborne, Editor.