



MY TIME SERVED ON THE LEVERNBANK

The Leverbank was built at Harland and Wolff and delivered to her owners, the Bank Line Ltd., in mid-1961. The ship was a late derivative of the Cloverbank Class.

Being mid-way through my apprenticeship and following 6 weeks home leave in Hong Kong, I joined her at Yau Ma Tei anchorage on 1st January 1963. At this juncture, the ship was relatively new and I distinctly recall thinking to myself what a picture she looked as my launch approached the accommodation ladder. I had been informed by the Bank Line office in Hong Kong that the ship would be engaged more or less permanently in the Orient-Africa Liner Service. This suited me well, because being a Hong Kong resident it meant regular calls at my home port.

I was also pleased to learn that the crew was Hong Kong Chinese, in fact exactly the same crew I had sailed with for 16 months on my previous ship the Weybank which had been sold late the previous year in Hong Kong for continued trading, and renamed Silver Moon.

At the time of my joining the Master was Captain Holland, whom I found to be a true gentleman. He later handed over command to Captain Louis Wigham, who was subsequently relieved by Captain Williams. I served under all three Masters for the duration of my time onboard until completing my indentures and signing off, again in Hong Kong, on 6th October 1964, a voyage of some 22 months. However, I must confess, the prolonged period was no real hardship since I was regularly calling at my home base and the scheduled run was fantastic. Very few wanted to leave or sign off the ship and a number of the officers requested to extend their time onboard when crew changes were planned. The result was, having spent very little time ashore whilst an apprentice, I completed my sea time quite early at the age of 19 years and 10 months.

The ship itself was easy to work and she always performed well. She was relatively fast (16 knots) but we generally averaged about 15 knots whilst in the OA Liner Service, in order to maintain a schedule. Accommodation was comfortable and being senior apprentice I had my own, good sized cabin, located on the port side of the boat deck. Two other deck apprentices were situated in an adjacent double berth cabin, which was separated from my cabin by the apprentice's study. The bulkheads were all adorned with light teak veneer and furnishings such as curtains, bed and settee covers, tastefully colour co-ordinated.

The Chinese crew were great and good to work alongside, especially so because I was able to converse with them in their native Cantonese, which I had been taught as a kid. The ship was a good feeder with decent variety, no shortages of provisions, because, due to our frequent port calls, we were always able to top-up with fresh produce. Obviously we had our weekly Chinese extravaganza which was highly relished by all, but the cooks also produced some mighty curries which always went down well. I do not recall hearing a single complaint about the quality or quantity of food during my entire time onboard.

The mates and engineers were all Brits, mostly Scots or Geordies, except for our long serving chief engineer who was a Kiwi. Also, one of the electricians was South African, from Durban. The run was great, if not a little hectic at times. Departing Hong Kong (which served as the Company's Regional Head Office and Far East Hub) we would proceed northbound to Taiwan after which we would spend one month calling at various ports around the Japanese coast. Southbound, we would proceed to Hong Kong, with prior calls at Manila or North Borneo if cargo inducement so required.

We usually spent 3-5 days at Hong Kong loading before proceeding southwards to Bangkok, Singapore and Port Swettenham. By the time we sailed from Port Swettenham the ship was generally well laden.

The voyage across the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean to Mauritius (and occasionally Reunion) was the longest stretch. Dar-es-



The 8,567grt Leverbank was built in 1961 by Harland & Wolff at Belfast. On 9th July 1973 on a voyage from Chittagong to Buenaventura, Colombia with general cargo, she ran aground in fog 3.75nm N. of Matarani, Peru. She was refloated and towed to port, but the tow-ropes broke and she sank on 11th July.

Salaam was our next port followed by Beira, Lorenzo Marques, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London and Cape Town. The port of Capetown was our southern limit, where we started to backload progressing our way back up the same African coastal ports, with additional load ports of Mtwara, Tanga, Zanzibar (usually high revenue cargo-chests of cloves or tea and bags of coffee) and Mombasa, on the northbound sector.

We always seemed to spend a decent number of days loading at Mombasa. From Mombasa it was either direct to Port Swettenham or with an intermediate call at Mauritius (usually to load bagged sugar). From Port Swettenham we would proceed to Singapore and Bangkok, prior to calling at Hong Kong and Taiwan before spending another month traversing the Japanese coastal ports. We did not use our deep-tanks for liquid cargoes during my tenure on board, but rather they were usually full of rice, latex, packs of timber or bagged sugar or coffee. Occasionally we might fill deep-tanks with bulk maize for Japan, from one of the African ports. Tweendecks were usually reserved for mixed general cargo, which were carried in abundance, whilst the bagged or more bulky cargo was stowed in the lower holds. I well recall we would occasionally load pallets of stinking cow hides, mainly from East African ports for Singapore. Smelling so awful they were usually loaded in one of the after hatches, segregated as much as possible from other cargo to avoid tainting due to their odour. Shipping the cow hides was the only downside to the round trip, and we always disliked loading them.

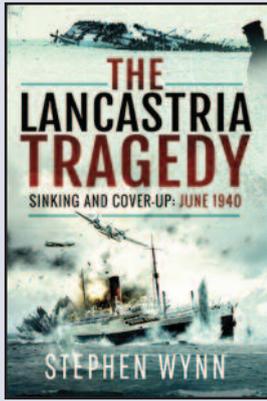
Nevertheless, going by the volume of cargo lifted, both north and southbound, it must have been a profitable enterprise for Bank Line because the cargo plan was like 'Liquorice Allsorts' because there being so many different parcels of cargo, large and small. The cargo plans produced by the 2nd Mates were true masterpieces. Obviously this was before the onset of containerisation. The ship was also fitted with reefer lockers which were always in demand, especially when northbound from South Africa. We apprentices were always tasked with separating and marking the various parcels, which were numerous in number.

Three other Bank Line ships were regularly engaged in the OA Liner Service, namely Garrybank, Riverbank, Cloverbank.

Many friendships were forged with us being on a regular service over a prolonged period and the crew became well known, gaining 'squatters rights' at many of the pubs, bars and hotels and sometimes places of less repute along the route. The result was that few of the officers had much saved when payoff time arrived. It did not matter to us apprentices because we didn't earn enough to save much anyway.

A great ship engaged on a great run. I was genuinely sad to leave the vessel when the time eventually arrived and quite shaken when I learned of her loss at Matarani in 1973. What a sad ending for such a graceful lady.

BOOK REVIEWS



THE LANCASTRIA TRAGEDY

Sinking and Cover-Up: June 1940

by Stephen Wynn

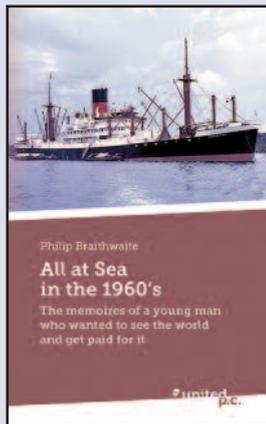
The Lancastria was a British ocean liner requisitioned at short notice as a troopship and this book recounts its bombing and destruction while it was waiting for a destroyer escort out of the port of Saint Nazaire.

The book also investigates Churchill's cover-up. It is estimated that there were between 3,000 and 5,800 fatalities when the Lancastria was sunk, the largest single-ship loss of life in British maritime history. Perhaps because of the likely damage to British morale if this figure were widely known, the prime minister issued a D Notice to prevent the press from reporting on the loss of the Lancastria, and the survivors were told not to speak about what happened.

Official documents will continue to be kept secret until 2040, fuelling suspicions that something remains concealed. So the truth must remain incomplete for another two decades.

This is a very well researched and well written book which I would very highly recommend to our readers.

Published by: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 7 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS
www.pen-and-sword.co.uk
ISBN: 978-1-5260-6-638
Paperback: 234mm x 153mm, 184pp illustrated
Price: £14.99



ALL AT SEA IN THE 1960s

The memoirs of a young man who wanted to see the world and get paid for it

by Philip Braithwaite

This book describes the Author's time working as an Electrical Engineering Officer for Alfred Holt's Blue Funnel Line and a short period with Elder Dempster.

The Author quotes:-
 "A capsule in time opens up, literally and pictorially, drawing the reader into the reality of how it was for our maritime engineers, and sets out to show their daily life with its ups and downs and trials and tribulations.

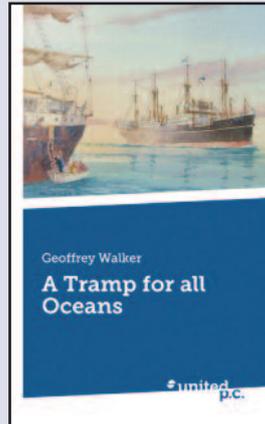
The aspirations of the shipping companies and the new technologies are beginning to make inroads.

The magic of the Orient, the hazards of the seas the elations and thrill of adventure and the unknown await."

The Author's love for the famous 'Blue Flu' ships of this twilight era of British shipping is made very clear and brings back many memories to all of us who loved those days and also respected this great company.

This is a well written book which makes fascinating reading and I would very highly recommend it to our readers.

Published by: United p.c. Publisher, Rauthausgasse 73, 7311 Neckenmarkt, Austria
www.united-pc.eu
uk@united-pc.eu
ISBN: 978-3-7103-4467-1
Hardback: 215mm x 130mm, 149pp illustrated
Price: £19.59



A TRAMP FOR ALL OCEANS

by Geoff Walker

The Author arrived in Hong Kong at an early age and spent the majority of his life living and working there.

From many decades based in Asia, the Author tells his sailor's anecdotes of the adventurous years he spent tramping the sea routes of Africa, India, the Far East, and Oceania under the Red Duster, from Apprentice to Captain.

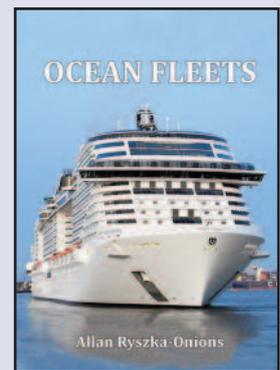
Calling at large and small Ports alike, some little more than clearings in the jungle, up barely navigable rivers, some not even marked on an Admiralty Chart.

The book captivates the last of an era when ships all possessed their own "heart and character", when crewed by what may be described as a "different breed" of seafarer, and which now only lives on in maritime nostalgia.

The book traces the Author's nautical career from being an Indentured Apprentice Navigating Officer to Captain.

This is well put together book I would highly recommend it.

Published by: United p.c. Publisher, Rauthausgasse 73, 7311 Neckenmarkt, Austria
www.united-pc.eu
uk@united-pc.eu
ISBN: 978-3-7103-4020-8
Paperback: 190mm x 120mm, 475pp illustrated
Price: £27.99



OCEAN FLEETS

by Allan Ryszka-Onions

Ocean Fleets is the new name for what was originally intended to be the 18th edition of Ocean Ships, a series that has charted the changing European Shipping Scene for over 50 years.

The new book is again in two sections, the first providing details of the major cruise ships operating worldwide and the second, the fleets of major shipping companies operating deep-sea routes to major European ports. As previously, IMO numbers, expanded vessel descriptions and cargo capacities have been retained.

The book includes date of build, gross tonnage, dead-weight tonnage, length overall, beam, capable speed and in the case of container ships, the number of TEUs that the vessel can carry. It also gives a history of any previous names of the ship.

It also gives details of the owners and their livery and history together with their websites.

This is an essential reference book for anyone interested in merchant shipping and I would very highly recommend it.

Published by: Coastal Shipping, 400 Nore Road, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8EZ
www.coastalshipping.co.uk
info@coastalshipping.co.uk
ISBN: 978-1-913797-00-3
Hardback: 236mm x 168mm, 400pp illustrated
Price: £30.00