



# The Porthole

Volume 18 No. 05 May 2018

The newsletter of  
the South Australian Branch of the Company of Master Mariners  
of Australia,

PO Box 1, PORT ADELAIDE, SA 5015

Branch Patron: His Excellency the Honorable Hieu Van Le AC



## Branch Master's Comments

Greetings once more to our readers,

The time is passing faster than ever, and the monthly meeting for May is already upon us next Wednesday. Winter draws nigh, despite the fact that the temperature here is in the 20s during the day, and my dams are crying out for a decent drop of rain. 50 years ago, we used to mutter about H-bomb testing; today the muttering is about global warming. The reality is that the weather has always been fickle, as we at sea have known throughout our careers, and in God's good time, our dams will fill again.

The Federal Court has been very quiet of late, but I am mindful of the old adage concerning sleeping dogs. The only missive of late has been from the Federal Treasurer reminding the branches of the approaching time for remitting our capitation levies earlier in the year than usual, as per our recent AGM. Our own good Capt. Ian has replied with the updated membership list for the branch. Our Past Master, Paul, has signified that a legal acquaintance of his who has been practising Maritime Law in Europe, has agreed to speak to us later on in the year after one of our monthly luncheon meetings.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our meeting on Wednesday.

Happy Sailing

Bob W. (BM)

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**There will be no speaker this month, as, due to an unforeseen change of circumstances, Philip Hammond will be unable to attend the meeting.**

**The next Branch meeting will be held at the Largs Pier Hotel, 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay, on Wednesday, 30 May, 2018, at 1145 for 1200.**

**Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology before 1200 on Monday, 28th May 2018 with Bob Westley (0427 644 947) or David Holmes (0417 444 742)**



The Company of Master Mariners of Australia Ltd. is a Company established to promote and further the efficiency of the Sea Service generally, and uphold the Status, Dignity, and Prestige of Master Mariners in particular.

## And the Freight Was Not Supported By The Ship.

By Paul Phillips.

Summary of a talk given to the SA Branch of the Company of Master Mariners of Australia on 24 April 2018

In June 1979, when a Chief Officer with P&O Strath Services, I was asked if I would agree to a secondment, initially for 6 months, later extended to 18 months, to the P&O Cargo Services Department as a Supercargo. My rate of pay, seniority and conditions of employment would be the same as a sea-going Chief Officer, except that annual leave would accrue at a different rate, 6 weeks within the year. There was also no requirement to wear uniform.

The Cargo Services Department consisted of a Manager, Assistant Manager and 7 Cargo Superintendents; 5 in conventional trades and 2 in containerised trades. The 5 conventional Cargo Superintendents each had 2 Supercargoes reporting to them. There were no Supercargoes on container ships.

It was mandatory for the Supercargo to talk to his Superintendent at least once a day, discussing if any changes needed to be made to the Pre-Stow Plan prepared by the Superintendent, and reporting space used and remaining, cargo loaded and advising of future requirements for lashing materials and dunnage, this after consultation with the ship's Master and Chief Officer.

European load ports were in the Hamburg-Antwerp range, with an occasional call at Barcelona. U.K. ports included London, either Millwall, the Royals or Tilbury; and/or Hull, Middlesbrough, Glasgow or Liverpool. Supercargoes would normally travel between load ports on their appointed ships, except for Barcelona calls, when the Supercargo would fly to meet the ship on arrival. The Supercargo was not to be involved in the navigation of the ship. Subject to schedules, there might be additional time at home or a Supercargo may find himself working two ships in the same port.

Ships could be on one of three trades: the Red Sea and East Africa, South Asia or the Arabian Gulf, and stows were generally determined by the port discharge rotation. There was one exception. If loading cargo on behalf of ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company, but since 1980 the Saudi Arabian Oil Co.), shipments for Dammam discharge had to be top stow, and Jubail cargo was loaded for optional discharge after the ship passed Muscat. ARAMCO cargo was loaded under the supervision of their Superintendent.

Although P&O had part ownership of Strick Line since 1919, it was not until 1972 that the Strick fleet and operations were absorbed into the P&O General Cargo Division (P&O Strath Services), and at the same time P&O entered the joint service that Strick Line had operated with Ellerman & Bucknall since 1903. P&O Supercargoes thus supervised the loading of Ellerman ships loading for the Arabian Gulf.

By 1979 and 1980 containerisation had badly affected British ports, and, on each occasion, my ship was the only ship working in either the Millwall or Royal Docks. We did load 20'ft GP containers, but these were handled as heavy lifts, and, except for "Phoevos" (SD14), "Aeolian Sky" and the Ellerman ships, required lashing in stow. Flat-racks or platforms were not available, which caused inconvenience at times. When working "Phoevos" in the Royal Albert Dock, one gang was composed entirely of former shop stewards; the rest of the 'wharfies' refused to have them in their gangs. Liverpool docks were run down, and loading was often delayed because the wharf cranes had broken down or were unable to move because the wharf had partially subsided, in which case it was necessary to use fork-lifts, which were themselves coming to the end of their usefulness, to push and pull the cranes into position.

The P&O Strath Services fleet at the time consisted of about sixteen general cargo ships, of which four were on the Australia/New Zealand/ Arabian Gulf trade, and the remaining twelve split between Europe – Gulf and East Asia – Gulf trades. Apart from the Ellerman ships on the Arabian Gulf trades all other requirements were met by chartered ships, some of very questionable standards.

Many ships had previously been owned by British shipowners including "Mount Dirfys", ex-"Sheaf Field" (1971); "Phoevos", ex-"Strathdare" (1974) ex-"City of Exeter" (1976); "Plotinos", ex-"London Citizen"; and "Angelina", ex-"Apsleyhall" (1963), ex-"Wenduyne" (1969).

Many of the ships, excluding Ellerman and "Aeolian Sky", suffered rat infestations. "Mount Dirfys" was one such vessel, and when my wife joined me for Christmas 1979 and the New Year in Liverpool she stayed at a hotel. "Angelina" was another ship where rats were noticeably prolific. I discovered only recently that "Marianna N.L." had been declared a total constructive loss in 1972, eight years before her charter by P&O.

It was the custom in British ports, at least, to load heavy lifts with ships gear which usually meant having the heavy lift gear surveyed, repaired, and undergo test lifts before they were fit for service. "Marianna N.L." was one of these, requiring the procedure for both her 15-ton and 30-ton derricks. "Angelina" did not, as all certificates remained valid from her previous P&O charter.

Accommodation varied. On arrival at Bremen on one chartered ship in the midst of winter, the bearing of the accommodation vent fan failed, which meant we could be warm and be deafened by an infernal screeching or enjoy the silence and freeze; the ship chose the latter. I was given a single bar electric heater in my cabin, but that was insufficient to prevent my bedside glass of water freezing and remaining frozen until late morning. For the next three days I commuted from a hotel ashore.

On "Marianna N.L." the first job for the Shipwrights was to construct a shower grating so that my feet would be clear of the grey water that backed up from the shower outlet, and in Hull, due to rats, I slept in a spare cabin on a P&O owned ship on the adjoin-

ing berth.

The Ellerman ships were in two types; "City of Canterbury" and "City of York" which were Progress B standard design, and "City of Hull" and "City of Liverpool", which were of an earlier different design. All four were considered to be 'container friendly'. "Hull" and "Liverpool" were smaller ships and had container dimension hatches, holds and 'tween-decks. Unfortunately, they had been designed for 8' high units, but by the end of the 1970s, GPs were all 8'6", consequently a tier of containers was lost in both 'tween-deck and hold. This could be rectified by leaving the 'tween-deck hatches open, but then the hold container stools could not handle the increased stack loading, and, I was told, the hatch lids could not be safely secured in the open position for sea passages. Except for Nos 3 and 4, which were fitted with 30t SWL variations of Velle derricks, the hatches were fitted with 5t SWL cranes. The Progress B designs, being newer, had benefitted from the extra time that had passed since the introduction of containers. On one occasion, due to weather delays, I found myself working two Ellerman ships at Bremen, on the adjoining berths.



"City of York"



"City of Hull"

On another occasion I flew into Bremen to commence loading "Plotinos" to find it had yet to report inward to the Weser Pilot station. On further enquiry it was found in a Rotterdam dry-dock; someone had forgotten to keep the next charterer advised! In Bremen, I completed all my preparations for the ship (receivals had closed), and, finding I still had over twenty-four hours free and it was a weekend I was able to visit both East and West Berlin.

The SD 14 design "Phoevos" was fitted with container stools on deck but, due to deck camber, the outboard stools were about one metre above deck. As flat-racks or platforms were not available, it required stools to be built to load and stow a Chubb Pathfinder Airport Crash Tender within reach of the heavy lift derrick at the after end of No.3 hatch for discharge at the Seychelles. This ship was unusual as it had a Ralston Stability Indicator and some time was spent instructing the Master and Chief Officer in its use.

The 1963 built "Angelina" was anything but angelic. Built at Sunderland, she had five holds, three forward of the bridge and two aft. No.4 Lower Hold was also a Deep Tank. A single screw ship, the space each side of the shaft tunnel was given to cargo space – totally unsuited for palletised or cased cargo. She came on charter in London's King George V dock, where all hatches were worked. After completing the port load of the after hatches, the ship took Fresh Water using a filling pipe that ran through No 4 Tween-deck.

On departure from London, the pilot anchored the ship for two hours in Gallions Reach, with tugs fast, until repairs to communication between bridge and engine-room were completed to his satisfaction. We were approaching Hull the following day when I realised the ship was turning in circles, and, through an open window (my cabin was under the port bridge wing) I could hear the Captain in a heated discussion on the VHF. When I went on the bridge I realised we were circling the Humber Light-float; the Captain was telling the Pilot he had arrived but couldn't see him, and the Pilot was telling the Captain he was waiting but couldn't see the ship. As previously mentioned Supercargoes were not to be involved in the navigation of the ship, but, as there was labour waiting, I pointed out to the Captain that while we were circling the Humber Light float, the Pilot was waiting at the Spurn Light Float about 12 n. miles, or so, to the south-east and hidden in the haze. I later found out that during the coastal passage only four of the six main engine fuel pumps were running (the engine, being an older model, operated a common rail fuel feed).

At Hull, where the ship was starboard side to, we had two small deck fires due to the crew not switching off portable hatch lights, but leaving them face down, with no wire guards, on either the hatch tarpaulins or rain tents. Loading was to resume at No.5 Hold but, on opening, about a foot of fresh water was found. Precise readings were unavailable as the bilge sounding pipes had wasted away. Investigation found a hole in the Fresh Water filling pipe and also sufficient holes in deck and bulkhead plating such that all four cargo spaces aft of the bridge were one compartment.

We were to load a 40 ton railway locomotive for Dar-es-Salaam using the ship's jumbo derrick situated at the forward end on No.2 hatch. All certificates were valid having been issued during the previous voyage charter to P&O. When loading commenced, I was standing outboard on the port side. As the lift was being swung inboard I decided to transfer to the starboard side and to do this by walking around the aft end of No.1 hatch. It was while doing this that I noticed the dog clutch locking pin keeping the topping lift purchase in gear had sheared and the topping lift wire drum was walking itself out of gear with each revolution. Fortunately, the lift was clear of the hatch coaming and the lift was landed on the starboard deck until repairs could be made.

Departure Hull, for Bremen, was on a sunny Saturday afternoon. I was in my cabin as the ship moved astern from the berth towards the locks when I heard the Pilot ask the stern tug to report which way the propeller was turning. Finding this unusual I went on the bridge, and, talking to the Pilot, found that neither the main engine rev counters, nor the reply indicators on the engine room telegraphs, were working. As I was about to leave the bridge wing the engines stopped momentarily, then restarted and the stern tug reported the engines turning ahead – they had been turning astern before the stoppage! At that moment I decided to leave the ship in the locks, which I did. Later while waiting for a train at Hull station I booked a flight to Bremen and re-joined the ship when it arrived.

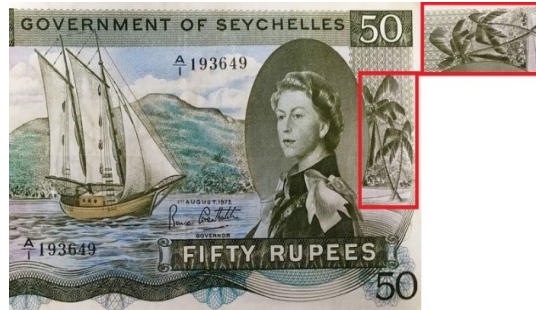
Fortunately, I had written a scathing report about the ship before leaving Hull and the company did reimburse my air and train fares. In 1981, on passage from Durban, "Angelina" was holed and later caught fire about 240 n. miles off Mar del Plata and sank.

In contrast to "Angelina", the "Aeolian Sky" was only a year old when she commenced loading at London's RAD for Red Sea and East African ports. Four hatches, one tween deck and lower hold each, all forward of the bridge. She was fitted with derricks and an 80t jumbo derrick, which was off-set to port and could serve both No.2 and No.3 hatches, and which caused no problems during the load. The initial loading program was London, Hull and Barcelona, with the Supercargo to remain on board between Hull and Barcelona, but, due to a preponderance of volume cargo the ship filled at Hull and the Barcelona call was cancelled. Included in the cargo were 102 Land Rovers, 96 of them for the Royal Jordanian Army (at the time the waiting time for a new Land Rover in the U.K. was over 6 months); and two railway locomotives for Dar-es-Salaam, both loaded with the ship's heavy lift gear. A late



"Aeolian Sky"

booking, long after receivals had closed, was received from the Crown Agents for 12 tea chests of currency notes for the Seychelles. These were replacements for the infamous 'sexy' 50 Rupees notes issued between 1968 and 1973 (and selling on E-bay, in 2016, for about \$2,000 each).



As the ship was filling tween deck hatch squares or working deck cargo by this time, the currency was stowed in an empty cabin on the starboard side, aft of the Captain's cabin and immediately forward of the Dispensary.



"Aeolian Sky" sinking

"Aeolian Sky" sailed from Hull on a Friday and I went home, being due to report to the Cargo Department in London on Monday morning, but on Saturday morning I received a telephone call advising the ship was sinking, due to a collision. I passed the rest of the morning on the telephone discussing stows.

"Aeolian Sky" was steering in a south-westerly direction about 20 n. miles off the Channel Islands (and therefore going "wrong way" in the traffic separation scheme), in a SWly gale, when she was struck by a West German container ship just forward of the bulkhead between Nos 1 & 2 holds, resulting in damage to the bulkhead. The crew were rescued by a Fleet Air Arm helicopter, although the Master, Mate and Chief Engineer, to their credit, remained on board. A French salvage tug "L'Abielle Langue-

doc", from Cherbourg, got a tow-line on board and removed the three remaining crew members. It then turned, intending to reach shelter at Spithead, but both the Queen's Harbourmaster at Portsmouth and the Harbourmaster at Southampton, fearful of "Aeolian Sky" sinking and blocking their approaches, refused the ship refuge, so the tug altered course, struggling to tow the sinking ship into the lee of the Bill of Portland. However, "Aeolian Sky" sank on the south-western edge of St. Alban's Ledge in 30 metres of water and its wreck is now popular among divers (Refer "Dorset Dives" website).



The wreck of the "Aeolian Sky", at rest on the sea bed.

A day or two later a couple of whales were found dead on nearby beaches. Although "Aeolian Sky" was initially blamed (she was carrying hazardous cargoes), tests revealed the whales had died from exposure to chemicals lost overboard from another ship in the same gale. Some currency notes turned up in lobster pots and on nearby beaches but the vast majority, about one million Pounds Sterling, were never found.

At the end of each loading the Freight Manager would issue a report commenting on revenue and freight. The report for "Aeolian Sky" was issued on the afternoon of the Friday she sailed from Hull.

Due to there being little deadweight cargo the ship was nowhere near its marks and the final line of the report read "The ship was not supported by freight". The following week the report was returned to the Freight Manager's desk with a pencilled addition: "And the freight was not supported by the ship".

## This is the Longest Sailable Straight-Line Path on Earth

May 3, 2018 by Mike Schuler

In 2012, reddit user *'kepleronlyknows'* posted a map claiming to show the longest straight line a vessel could theoretically sail on earth without hitting land.

The map showed a route from Pakistan, through the Mozambique Channel, around the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn, and north through the Pacific to eastern Russia. The user provided no details about how he came to his conclusion, writing only "The Longest straight line: you can sail almost 20,000 miles in a straight line from Pakistan to Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia.



*The Longest Sailable Straight-Line Path on Earth.  
Credit: Rohan Chabukswar and Kushal Mukherjee*

The post generated a lot of interest and led to subsequent attempts to prove and disprove *kepleronlyknows'* route, while some others chimed in with their own theories about the longest sailable straight-line earth.

Now, some six years later, a pair of researchers have developed an algorithm claiming to solve the problem once and for all. Interestingly, what their models showed looked nearly identical to *kepleronlyknows'* original route.

According to the authors, Rohan Chabukswar and Kushal Mukherjee, the longest straight-line path on earth can be found using "branch-and-bound" algorithm, which the authors say uses great circles.

"Although it does not look like a straight line on the map, the algorithm using great circles ensures that it is," Chabukswar and Mukherjee noted.

The line originates in Sonmiani, Las Bela, Balochistan, Pakistan, threads the needle between Africa and Madagascar, between Antarctica and Tierra del Fuego in South America, and ending in Karaginsky District, Kamchatka Krai, Russia. The line also covers an astounding distance of 32,089.7 kilometres (19939.62 miles), further corroborating *kepleronlyknows'* findings.

In their conclusion, researchers Rohan Chabukswar and Kushal Mukherjee write:

"We proposed an innovative approach for relaxation of an optimisation problem for utilising the branch-and-bound algorithm. On the way, we managed to prove that *kepleronlyknows* was right about the longest sailable straight-line path on the Earth."

Source: gCaptain 180507

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## Damen introduces new class of Fast Crew Supplier

May 2, 2018 by gCaptain

Press Release – Damen Shipyards Group – Damen Shipyards Group has announced the introduction of a new model to its Fast Crew Supplier range. The FCS 2710 builds on the success of the best-selling FCS 2610, first introduced in 2011. The first vessel is already in build at Damen Shipyards, Gorinchem, for delivery in July 2018. The FCS 2710 retains the successful twin hull, axe bow design that has made the Damen FCS 2610 so successful. However, as the offshore energy industry has evolved in recent years, so has its requirements for crew transfer vessels and the regulations that govern them. Damen has listened to the feedback and designed a vessel that retains much of the fundamental design of the 2610, but delivers the additional capacity and performance sought by operators today.



"The 2610 really was the first vessel of its kind. It's an excellent boat, but of course there are

always lessons to be learned, says Wim Boerma, product manager at Damen's High Speed Craft product group. "We've taken the very best of the 2610 in all its fundamental characteristics and updated it to deliver more flexibility, more tank capacity, greater deck space, increased comfort and more accommodation."

The FCS 2710 achieves this in part by being one metre longer than its predecessor and also one metre higher. The extra metre above the water not only increases the hull volume but also allows the vessel to operate in wave heights of above two metres. This substantially increases the range of weather conditions in which it can be at sea, an important consideration given the longer distances that maintenance crews are now having to travel.



It can also carry twice as many passengers as its predecessor; 26 in its standard configuration. This has been done by optimising the available deck space by changing it from a stepped layout to one that is level. This has enabled a larger wheelhouse and a more than doubling of the interior volume available for the accommodation, all without any loss in deck space available for cargo transportation.



The first FCS 2710 is due to be delivered in July 2018 to High Speed Transfers Ltd, a new entry into the offshore transfers sector based in Swansea, Wales. Started by three experienced operatives from the offshore industry, HST sees the FCS 2710 as the way to make an immediate impact using an upgraded version of a vessel-type that is already well known in the market.

“We’ve worked with Damen vessels at our previous companies,” said HST managing director Tom Nevin, “and appreciate the quality and the level of support that they offer.” HST plans to initially focus on serving the offshore energy sectors in German and UK waters, but has global ambitions. “We hope to build a fleet of four to six FCS 2710s over time,” adds Tom Nevin. “We see exciting times ahead, particularly in offshore renewables.”

“I am very pleased that HST has chosen to start their operations with the all-new Damen FCS 2710,” added Arjen van Elk, Damen Sales Manager for UK & Ireland. “It has been designed with a lot of practical input from various clients and end-users such as Vattenfall, Siemens and E-On, and, like the 2610, it is optimised to support the offshore oil & gas and survey sectors as well as renewables. Customers will also benefit from a choice of propulsion systems with conventional shafts, water jets, IPS and Voith Linear Drives all available as options.”

HST and Damen will be showing their new vessel to the world for the first time at this year’s Seawork International exhibition and conference, being held in Southampton, UK, from 3 to 5 July.

Source: gCaptain 180504

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## Drug Smugglers Light High-Speed Craft Ablaze in Eastern Pacific; 1,080 Pounds of Cocaine Seized

April 26, 2018 by gCaptain

Crews from the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection and Navy intercepted more than 1,000 pounds of cocaine from a high-speed drug trafficking boat in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.



A suspected smuggling vessel that went ablaze, as U.S. Coast Guard and Navy crews approached to intercept it, burns in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean April 7, 2018. U.S. Customs and Border Protection photo

The interception of the low-profile go-fast vessel (LPGFV) was made by the crew of the *USS Zephyr* after a Customs and Border Protection P-3 surveillance aircraft detected the drugs smuggling vessel during a routine counter-narcotics patrol.

The LPGFVs are custom-made ocean-going, high-speed motor boat built by drug traffickers to smuggle large quantities of illegal drugs. The boats are primarily made of fiberglass and they travel barely above the surface making them difficult to see or detect by radar.

As the *Zephyr* changed its course to intercept the vessel, the suspected smugglers allegedly began jettisoning their cargo and jumped into the water as their boat caught on fire.

A Coast Guard boat crew aboard the *Zephyr* later rescued four suspected smugglers and transferred them to the patrol cutter.

After the fire was extinguished, authorities recovered 1,080 pounds of suspected cocaine from the vessel.

The LPGFV was severely damaged by the fire and was subsequently sunk as a hazard to navigation.

“There was no doubt in our minds what needed to be



All four suspected smugglers who abandoned the burning boat were rescued, the fire was extinguished and approximately 1,080 pounds of cocaine were removed from the hull before it was sunk as a hazard to navigation. U.S. Coast Guard photo

done to salvage the evidence needed for a successful prosecution, even if it meant laying *Zephyr* alongside a burning hull, with the intense heat and acrid smoke hindering our 90-minute firefight,” said Lt. Cmdr. Grant Greenwell, commanding officer of *Zephyr*.

Source: gCaptain 180504

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## 19th Century Shipwrecks Found During Search for MH370

May 7, 2018 by gCaptain

Two shipwrecks discovered around 1,500 miles off the coast of Western Australia during the initial search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 have been identified as 19th Century merchant sailing vessels carrying cargoes of coal.

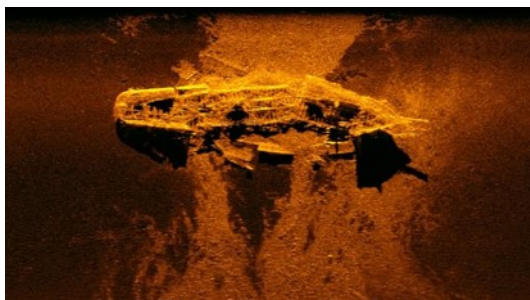


Image credit: AMSA / Western Australian Museum

The sites provide tangible archaeological evidence for use of the historic Roaring 40s trade route for ships between Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan.

The Western Australian Museum was asked by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) to analyse sonar and video data taken in international waters by the search vessels *Fugro Equator* and *Havilah Harmony* in May and December 2015. The work was undertaken by Dr Ross Anderson, Curator of Maritime Archaeology at the WA Museum.

“Both wrecks were found at depths between 3,700 and 3,900 metres, roughly 36km apart. We used a combination of all of the data supplied by ATSB, historical research and maritime archaeological analyses to determine both

wrecks were in fact 19th Century merchant sailing ships – one wooden and one iron – both carrying coal,” Dr Anderson said.

Dr Anderson said the wooden sailing ship would have been in the 225-800 ton range. None of the hull structure or loose ship’s timbers were observed at the site, appearing to have totally degraded, leaving only the remains of the vessel’s coal cargo and metal objects such as fastenings, anchors and fittings.

“Most of the material widely scattered on the seabed consists of the remains of the coal cargo that spilled out of the hull prior to it striking the seabed,” Dr Anderson said. “The evidence points to the ship sinking as a result of a catastrophic event such as explosion, which was common in the transport of coal cargoes.

“One very interesting find was a large rectangular metal object of 6m in length, which was the biggest feature discovered on the site. This was identified as a ship’s iron water tank.”

The second wreck was more intact, lying upright on the seabed. Sonar and video images enabled it to be identified as an iron sailing ship with at least two decks, between 1,000 and 1,500 tons. Deck rails and stanchions on the bow, and portholes at the stern were visible.

“Historical research into all 19th Century merchant ships that disappeared in international waters is incomplete so we cannot conclusively determine identity of the individual ships,” Dr Anderson said. “However, we can narrow the possibilities to some prime candidates based on available information from predominantly British shipping sources.

“For the wooden ship the brig *W. Gordon* and the barque *Magdala* are two possible candidates; for the iron ship the barques *Koorunga* (1894), *Lake Ontario* (1897) and *West Ridge* (1883) are possible, with the *West Ridge* best fitting the evidence.”

Both ships are likely to have carried crews of between 15 and 30 men. Sometimes captains travelled with their wives and children on international voyages and both vessels may have carried additional passengers as well as cargo.

“Then, as now, the disappearance of so many lives would have had a devastating impact on maritime families and communities,” Dr Anderson said.

Source: gCaptain 180508

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## China Retreats from U.S. Sorghum Probe Amid Global Market Chaos

May 18, 2018 by Reuters



By Hallie Gu and Tom Polansek BEIJING/CHICAGO, May 18 (Reuters)

China dropped its anti-dumping probe into imports of U.S. sorghum on Friday, beating a hasty retreat from a dispute that wreaked havoc across the global grain market and raised concerns about rising costs and financial damage at home.

The move was seen as a goodwill concession as Chinese Vice Premier Liu He was in Washington for talks aimed at resolving trade tensions between the world’s two largest economies.

The end of the investigation came as a huge relief to U.S. sorghum growers, who saw sales to the top grain buyer come to a halt and prices plummet over the past month. But U.S. farmers and traders said they remained worried that China might still implement restrictions and tariffs on other agricultural products such as soybeans, corn and cotton.

Tensions between the nations have climbed. U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to impose up to \$150 billion in punitive tariffs to lower trade deficits and combat what he calls Beijing’s misappropriation of American technology.

China has threatened equal retaliation, including tariffs on some of its largest U.S. imports including aircraft, soybeans and autos. China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement the investigation into sorghum, used in animal feed and liquor, had revealed that anti-dumping and anti-subsidies penalties would inflate living costs for Chinese consumers.

China's investigation, launched in early February, showed its top trading partner how much financial pain it could inflict on U.S. farmers, analysts said. Last month, Beijing imposed hefty anti-dumping deposits on imports of the grain.

"China has taught a lesson to the United States and showed how it can hurt U.S. exports," said Ole Houe, director of advisory services at brokerage IKON Commodities in Sydney.

"Now they are showing goodwill by halting its anti-dumping investigation into sorghum imports, but it is a cheap way of showing goodwill as the U.S. does not have much sorghum left to export. The next U.S. sorghum crop will be harvested in August."

Agricultural products are considered one of the most powerful weapons in Beijing's arsenal because a strike against farm exports to China would hurt farmers in U.S. Midwestern states that backed Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

The United States accounts for more than 90 percent of total sorghum shipments to China, with the American imports worth just over \$1 billion last year.

Most of Archer Daniels Midland Co's sorghum shipments to China have already been diverted and resold to other markets, said Jackie Anderson, a spokeswoman for the agricultural trader.

The company warned earlier this month it would take a \$30 million hit to trading profit due to the dispute.

"We are continuing to evaluate the impact of these developments on our business going forward," Anderson said on Friday.

## HOPES FOR TRADE AGREEMENT

The National Sorghum Producers, a U.S. industry trade group, submitted thousands of pages of information to China's authorities to show that the United States was not dumping sorghum, the group's Chairman Don Bloss said.

Bloss said he hoped the end of the probe reflects an easing of trade tensions with Beijing.

The deposit scheme stopped trade and disrupted supply chains worldwide, with almost two dozen ships carrying U.S. sorghum stranded at sea as merchants and buyers scrambled to sell cargoes at big discounts elsewhere.

Frantic Chinese importers lobbied the government to rethink the plan amid worries that higher costs would be passed onto feed makers and eventually push retail meat prices higher.

Corn, soybean and soymeal futures in China fell on the news of the end of the probe as concerns eased that feed makers would need to find alternative ingredients.

In the United States, corn futures jumped as traders said the move signalled that supplies of livestock feed would tighten. U.S. soybean futures rose on hopes that the end of the probe is a step toward a broader trade agreement.

Dropping the probe "is an important sign of progress in our efforts to resolve trade tension with China," Kansas Governor Jeff Colyer said in a statement.

China's Commerce ministry said it would return the deposits on sorghum imports it collected, bringing relief to Chinese buyers who still had cargoes stuck at ports.

"This is great news! We are now saved," said a private sorghum trader who had more than 600 tonnes of U.S. sorghum stranded at a Chinese port. "We will clear our goods immediately today."

The government would not, however, compensate traders for losses linked to reselling or demurrage, said Cherry Zhang, analyst at Shanghai JC Intelligence Co Ltd.

"The damage has been done, and mainly to the domestic buyer," Zhang said.

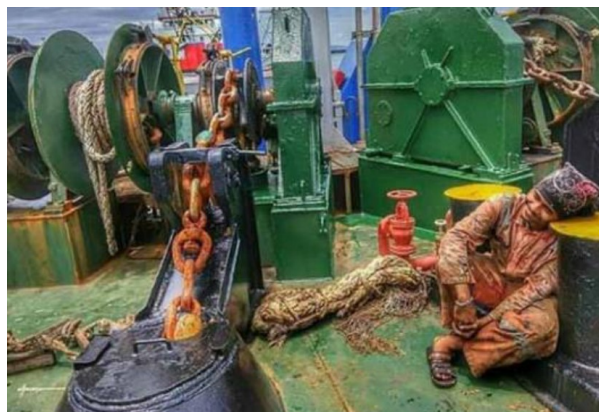
The United States shipped 4.76 million tonnes of sorghum to China in 2017, worth around \$1.1 billion and making up the bulk of China's roughly 5 million tonnes of imports of the grain last year, according to Chinese customs data.

(Reporting by Tony Munroe, Josephine Mason and Hallie Gu in Beijing, and P.J. Huffstutter and Tom Polansek in Chicago; Additional reporting by Naveen Thukral in SINGAPORE; Editing by Tom Hogue, James Dalgleish and Will Dunham)

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During the coastal voyage every moment of rest is welcome...