



The Porthole

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

PO Box 1, PORT ADELAIDE, SA 5015

Branch Patron: His Excellency the Honorable Hieu Van Le AC



Branch Master's Comments

Good Day to all our CMMA members;

Note that one of the minor changes to come about as a result of the AGM in Sydney last week was that the term CoMMA has been put to rest, and in future our Company of Master Mariners will only be abbreviated to CMMA. A trifling change, but one which occupied a fair amount of discussion. Another proposed change to the constitution is that a Branch Court meeting can be held in the absence of the Branch Master, providing that it is conducted by a court member delegated by him, so that branch matters may continue without his presence.

But I'm jumping the gun a bit, so I'll report on the AGM in full: - please note that this is just my take on proceedings, and in no way constitutes the official minutes of the meeting, which will no doubt make their appearance in due course.

The Federal Court convened in a meeting room of the Grace Hotel in Sydney, and we kicked off at 0945 in the morning of Saturday 17th April '21. The Federal Master reported that he had sent our formal condolences to Her Majesty on the occasion of the death of Prince Phillip, and he then read his official report for the past year. Reports were then tabled and read by their authors, namely the Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar and the Website Administrator. Four applications for ratification were then read, which engendered no comment from the Court members present, and which will be sent to the branches for reading as per the norm. A mention was made by the Federal Master of the fact that he had a superfluity of Company ties, and so we all relieved him of a few each, and I will pass the half dozen in my possession to our treasurer for gifting to new members.

The accountant, Tim Ryan, and the auditors, Hourigans, were reappointed for another year. All Federal Court members will remain in their roles for another year, there being no further applications for the positions. The Federal Secretary was voted to receive the existing honorarium for the future year, on a year-to-year basis. A discussion was held over whether retired members should be levied less than ordinary members, which was decided in the negative, as there being so many retired members in the Company that the capitation charges for ordinary members would have to be increased, particularly if our Magazine was to be put out in a printed form again. The Master Mariner would be, for the present, published electronically twice a year, in a printable format for those who wish to avail themselves of a hard copy. It was pointed out that postage would cost more than the magazine. In future the magazine would give space to each branch for photos and reports of any branch activities, assuming there are any due to COVID 19 precautions.

The Outstanding Achievement Award for 2020 was given to the Sydney pilot, Capt. Michael Kelly, who has been extremely active in the placement of cadets in foreign shipping, and also in distributing 'comforts' parcels to crews unable to get off their ships - in fact unable to go home on leave even - during this current pandemic.

The Boulton Lecture will be postponed again for this year, but will probably be held in the West next year.

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COVID-19 restrictions permitting, the next Branch meeting will be held at The Largs Pier Hotel. 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay, on Wednesday, 28th April 2021, at 1145 for 1200. Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology before 1200 on Monday, 26th April 2021 with Bob Westley (0427 644 947) or Ian Dickson (0418 807 788)



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.

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The bulk of the meeting's discussions concerned the putative changes in the constitution, and due to the large amount of work circulated around the Federal Court and various state branches, argument was at a minimum, and changes to be put before the members for voting on were clarified with as little fuss as possible. Minor changes should proceed without much acrimony, but I can see the big change causing some heartburn. This is the question of allowing what used to be Masters class 2 and 3 into full membership. The British Honorable Company of Master Mariners has allowed it, and closer to home, the Nautical Institute has allowed it. I think it is a sign of the times and ultimately inevitable, but we'll see what the voting result is.

We have agreed to remain in IFSMA for the present at least.

We have agreed to four Federal Court meetings in the year, with our next meeting by phone in July. The next AGM to be held in April 2022.

Happy Sailing until next month,

BobW (SABM)

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The Blame Game

By Michael Grey

It is interesting to note how the investigation of accidents has moved on since the advent of the Vessel Data Recorder. When these devices first appeared in the 1990s, it is fair to say there was a good deal of apprehension among those whose words and actions might be recorded, if not for posterity, or used in evidence against them. An old shipmate who commanded a large ferry told me that the bridge team had started to communicate in whispers, lest their off the cuff remarks about their management be picked up by the microphones and lead to unfortunate consequences. I recalled that I rather sympathised, as I used to sing to keep up my spirits on the graveyard watch and I wouldn't have wanted this to be subsequently awarded "nil points" by some surveillance officer.

But VDR was effectively "sold" to those afloat on the grounds that it could become a valuable friend, rather than the feared "spy in the cab". I went to a VDR demonstration in which a hair-raising incident in Tokyo Bay showed that the ship was completely in the clear for the "near-miss". Another case in which those aboard a ship were blamed for damaging a dry dock proved that the ship was still in the custody of the ship-repairer when the bump came. Subsequently, people became used to this device, and its presence in the bridge and engine control room is now quite unremarkable.

But above all, the VDR provides real evidence in a way that logbooks and the memory of participants never did. Prior to its arrival on the scene, anyone seeking to determine what had happened in an incident would often have to attempt to reconcile widely differing accounts. It was not necessarily because people were attempting to pull the wool over the investigator's eyes – memory and recollection of incidents, often a long time past, can be notoriously faulty. Some of the most notorious collision cases were never satisfactorily settled because of the utter conviction of those on each ship (furiously backed up by their employers) that their action was wholly in the right. If anyone doubts this, they should consult the records of the "radar-assisted" 1956 collision between the liners *Andrea Doria* and the *Stockholm* (which latter ship has, amazingly, just gone to the breakers).

One would like to think that the VDR data reveals exactly what happened aboard the giant containership, *Ever Given*, as she veered into the bank of the Suez Canal and precipitated one of maritime history's most notable traffic jams. Unlike incidents in the past, where there would be months, if not years, of legal and professional argument, the recordings of voices, helm, rudder and engine data ought surely to provide a quick and easy resolution to the many questions raised.

Nevertheless, one cannot completely rule out the possible interference of professional pride and politics in discussions about such an event, with all their sensitivities, almost regardless of what the data reveals. For the proprietors of a waterway to admit that the wind had blown a ship out of the channel, it would be an admission that the canal was unsafe in certain conditions for certain important ships. But should they risk the wrath of an enormously important customer by suggesting that the ship is in some way deficient? It wouldn't be the first time the pilots, bridge team, even the steering abilities of the helmsman, had been called into question after an incident in a tight waterway. But let us hope that the VDR "speaks its truth" sufficiently clearly to avoid these sensitive issues. Then the lawyers, adjusters and insurers can get down to many productive months of lucrative work.

At the same time as the containership was being dug out of the canal, the US National Transportation Safety Board was publishing a fascinating report into the 2019 collision in the Houston Ship Channel, in which the tanker, *Genesis River*, went out of control and ploughed into a tank barge being pushed in the opposite direction by the tug *Voyager*. What makes it sort of relevant is the account of "bank effect", interaction with another passing ship, excessive speed and doubts about both rudder effectiveness and course stability. People who think that big ships handle like cars need to read of incidents like these, graphically revealed by the faithful recorders.

Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List.

Source: *Maritime Advocate* 775

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**** 50 years ago ****

In a report dealing with recent incidents in the English Channel, a British Merchant Navy Officer said: 'We found a Greek freighter of about 12,000 tons bearing down on us. We were virtually on a collision course when we saw to our horror the only living thing on the bridge was a large black dog. The dog was barking furiously. Suddenly a hatch opened and a man in what looked like a boiler suit came up and steered the vessel clear. We reckoned the dog had been trained to bark at the approach of another vessel. We were shaken and absolutely appalled.' - *The Telegraph*, April 1971.

Source: *Flashlight* 220

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Search Continuing for a Dozen Missing After Lift Boat Capsizes Off Port Fourchon; 6 Rescued, 1 Deceased.

Mike Schuler April 14, 2021

April 13: The U.S. Coast Guard and multiple Good Samaritan vessels rescued six people after a commercial lift boat capsized Tuesday afternoon off Port Fourchon.

A search for multiple people still missing continues 8 miles south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana.



A Coast Guard Station Grand Isle 45-foot Response Boat-Medium boatcrew heads toward a capsized 175-foot lift boat *Seacor Power*, April 13, 2021. U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Coast Guard Cutter *Glenn Harris*

Coast Guard watchstanders received an EPIRB notification at 4:30 p.m. from a 129-foot commercial lift vessel in distress. The watchstanders issued an urgent marine information broadcast, which multiple good Samaritan boatcrews responded to.

The crew of the pre-commissioned Coast Guard Cutter *Glenn Harris*, a 154-foot Fast Response Cutter, arrived on scene within 30 minutes and rescued one person from the capsized vessel. A 45-foot Response Boat-Medium boat crew from Coast Guard Station Grand Isle rescued another person, and good Samaritan vessels on scene rescued four other people from the water. Local media reports have identified the vessel as the *Seacor Power*, operated by Seacor Marine.

As of 11 p.m. CDT, the name of the vessel and how many people were on board had not yet been confirmed by the Coast Guard, however, preliminary reporting indicates there could have been eighteen people on board.

An earlier report by the Coast Guard incorrectly stated the vessel was a 265-foot lift boat. *Seacor Power* is actually a 265 Class lift boat with jacking capability of 244 feet max separation and 195 feet max working depth. It has three legs total, about 250-feet each. It appears in the photo at the top of the article that the legs were up, which makes sense assuming the vessel may have been underway prior to the capsizing.

Lift boats are basically self-propelled and self-elevating barge-like vessels used for various jobs in shallow-water offshore oil and gas activities and offshore construction. They jack their legs down to the seabed, providing a stable platform for working offshore. They can also be equipped with large cranes.

AIS data shows the *Seacor Power* departed Port Fourchon earlier in the afternoon:

The National Weather Service in New Orleans earlier issued several Special Marine Warnings for the waters south of Port Fourchon.



Image from Seacor Marine's website showing the *Seacor Power* (left). Credit: Seacor Marine

Update 1: No new updates overnight. The Coast Guard has scheduled a news conference for 11 a.m. CDT. in New Orleans. Seacor Marine has confirmed to various media outlets that it was one of their vessels.

Fourchon and Grand Isle after a strong line of thunderstorms moved through the area and pushed offshore.

Update 2: In a morning news conference, U.S. Coast Guard New Orleans Sector Commander Captain Will E. Watson confirmed the vessel as

the *Seacor Power*, operated by Houston-based Seacor Marine, and provided an update on the ongoing mass search operation in the waters south of Port Fourchon.

So far, six people have been rescued, one deceased victim has been recovered, and a search is continuing for 12 missing people, according to Capt. Watson.

Winds during yesterday's storm were reported around 80-90 mph. "This level of weather was not anticipated," Capt. Watson said in the news conference. The investigation into the circumstances of the incident is on-going so few details were released.

The search is continuing today amid challenging weather.

The *Seacor Power* remains stationary and is possibly grounded, Capt. Watson noted.

According to Seacor Marine's website, *Seacor Power* can carry up to 40,488 gallons of fuel oil, but at this point there is minimal environmental damage, Capt. Watson said.

Watson also thanked the maritime industry for the huge outpouring of support they have received along with offers to assist in the ongoing search effort.

Assets involved in the search include:

- Coast Guard Cutter *Glenn Harris*
- Coast Guard Cutter *Amberjack*
- A Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans MH-65 Dolphin helicopter
- Two Coast Guard Station Grand Isle 45-foot RB-M
- HC-144 Ocean Sentry airplanes from Coast Guard Air Station Corpus Christi and Coast Guard Aviation Training Center Mobile
- Four good Samaritan vessels

The Chinese ban on coal imports from Australia has shaken up coal trades in the east, a new report from ship owning organisation BIMCO highlights.

In the absence of Australian coal exports to China, other exporters have been scrambling to fulfil China's coal demand. As a result, some countries are lacking their usual coal imports, a gap which Australia on the other hand is trying to fill.



Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group

For the first time in many years, South Africa started exporting coal to China in December 2020. Since then, exports have averaged 760,000 tonnes a month, about a sixth of total South African coal exports in that period. On the other hand, exports to India and Pakistan, which together took almost 70% of South African seaborne coal exports in 2020, have slumped. Exports to the two countries have fallen by 44.5% in the first two months of the year to 5.6m tonnes.

Indonesian exporters have also increased focus on China. The country's exports to China have risen significantly while exports to the rest of the world have fallen, in particular to India. The drop in Indian imports from South Africa and Indonesia has been compensated for by Australia.

"Shipowners have been fast to react to the changes in the coal trade, as importers and exporters have scrambled to find new buyers and new sources," said Peter Sand, BIMCO's chief shipping analyst. "In addition to South Africa and Indonesia, countries such as Russia and Mongolia are set to benefit from the Australian coal ban in China."

In terms of tonne mile demand, the changes almost cancel each other out. Looking at China in isolation, the average sailing distance so far this year for a cargo from Indonesia is about half that of a cargo coming from Australia, while coal from South Africa sails 1.5 times longer.

Imports from Russia provide a tonne mile boost compared to Australia if they come from the Baltic or Black Seas. However, the vast majority of Russian seaborne coal exports to China are shipped from East Russia, lowering tonne mile demand. Any increase in imports from Mongolia is also bad news for shipping as they are all imported by land.

When looking at distances covered by Indian coal imports, distances sailed increase by respectively 1.9 or 1.5 times when Indonesia or South Africa replace Australian coal. Japanese and South Korean imports both see higher tonne miles generated by imports from South Africa compared to Australia, while tonne miles fall if the imports instead come from Indonesia.

"Seaborne coal has traditionally had the lowest average haul of the major dry bulk trades, and the changes currently happening are unlikely to change that, as some trades are replaced by longer hauls and others by shorter ones. It will be more important to see how demand for Chinese coal imports develops and how tensions between China and Australia unwinds in the future," said Sand.

Trade ties between Canberra and Beijing have soured over the past year as Australia has led a campaign to seek the origins of coronavirus. China has slapped bans on many Australian products.

Inventories of coal in China are low for this time of the year. China's main economic planning agency met this week to ensure that the country has enough supplies to meet the summer demands when the use of air-conditioning peaks.

"Prices for domestic coal have spiralled, but as imports are restricted by a quota system, inventories at more than a quarter of the country's utilities can only last for a week's consumption," a report from brokers Lorentzen & Stemoco noted yesterday.

The number of bulk carriers still waiting in China to discharge Australian-loaded coal counts 35 vessels this week, down by roughly 50% from its peak in a trade spat that has seen more than 1,500 seafarers caught up, waiting for many months at anchor off the Chinese coastline.

Source: *Splash247 210409*

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Famous people – the next job interview

Julius Caesar - My last job involved a lot of office politics and back-stabbing. I'd like to get away from all that.

Jesse James - I can list among my experience and skills: leadership, extensive travel, logistical organisation, intimate understanding of firearms, and a knowledge of security measures at numerous banks.

Marie Antoinette - My management style has been criticized, but I'd like to think of myself as a people person.

Joseph Guillotine - I can give your company a head start on the competition.

Hamlet - My position was eliminated in a hostile takeover.

Lucretia Borgia - My greatest accomplishment? After I took over the department, our competition just seemed to drop out of sight one by one.

Pandora - I can bring a lot to your company. I like discovering new things.

Genghis Khan - My primary talent is downsizing. On my last job I downsized my staff, my organisation, and the populations of several countries.

Macbeth - Would I go after my boss's job? Do I look like the kind of guy who would knock off his boss for a promotion?

Lady Godiva - What do you mean, this isn't business casual?

Elvis - My last boss and I...say, are you going to eat those fries?

Source: *Maritime Advocate 776*

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New Zealand to Phase Out Livestock Exports

WELLINGTON, April 14 (Reuters)

New Zealand will cease the export of livestock by sea following a transition period of up to two years, Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor announced on Wednesday.



MV Gulf Livestock 1. File Photo: MarineTraffic.com

"At the heart of our decision is upholding New Zealand's reputation for high standards of animal welfare. We must stay ahead of the curve in a world where animal welfare is under increasing scrutiny," Damien O'Connor said.

"This decision will affect some farmers, exporters and importers, and a transition period will enable the sector to adapt", he added.

Live exports by sea represent about 0.2% of New Zealand's primary sector exports revenue since 2015. O'Connor said officials had spoken to key trading partners about the decision.

"I recognise the importance of our trade relationships with our international partners and we're committed to working with them as we transition away from the shipment of livestock," said O'Connor in a statement.

He said at a news conference that officials had spoken to China and Australia about the decision.

Asked if there were concerns that the move would upset China, a top importer of live cattle from New Zealand, he said, "This is not about China. It's about animal welfare and our reputation."

Last year, New Zealand introduced new measures for the safe transport of livestock, and said it was reviewing live exports after a ship that left its shores for China with nearly 6,000 cows and 43 crew members capsized.

O'Connor said responses were mixed in the review. Improvements had been made to the practice in recent years, but despite everyone's best efforts, the long journeys to northern hemisphere markets always pose animal welfare challenges, he noted.

"We have not been able to guarantee the safety of these animals at sea and that's an unacceptable risk for New Zealand."

The value of New Zealand's livestock exports has averaged around NZ\$60 million (\$42.32 million) per year from 2015 to 2019. The value of livestock exports increased dramatically, after the 2019 announcement of the review, to NZ\$261 million for the year ending December 2020. New Zealand exported 113,285 cattle by sea last year.

(Reporting by Praveen Menon Editing by Chris Reese and Richard Chang) (c) Copyright Thomson Reuters 2021.

Source: *Shipping News*

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Former *MSC Gayane* Crew Member Sentenced to Prison for Role in Record Breaking Drug Bust

Reuters April 16, 2021

A former crew member on board *MSC Gayane* containership has been sentenced to more than five years in prison for his role in a plot to smuggle \$1 billion worth of cocaine through the port of Philadelphia, the U.S. Justice Department announced this week.

Vladimir Penda, 27, of Montenegro, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Harvey Bartle III to five years and ten months in prison plus two years of supervised release on charges of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute.

Penda is now the eighth former crew member of the ship to plead guilty to the drug smuggling conspiracy.



MSC Gayane at the Packer Mariner Terminal at the Port of Philadelphia. Credit: Michael t Mallon/delawariveraerials.com

Federal, state, and local law enforcement agents boarded the *MSC Gayane* when it arrived at Packer Marine Terminal in Philadelphia on June 17, 2019, and seized about 20 tons of cocaine worth over \$1 billion U.S. dollars found in shipping containers. It was one of the largest drug seizures in U.S. history and the largest in the history of the Customs and Border Protection.

According to the Justice Department, Penda was serving as the ship's fourth engineer when he conspired with other crew members on board to smuggle the drugs.

During *MSC Gayane's* voyage to Philadelphia, on "multiple occasions" the crew members helped load bulk packages of cocaine onto the vessel from speedboats that approached the vessel at sea in the middle of the night. Crew members used the vessel's crane to hoist cargo nets full of cocaine onto the vessel and then stashed the cocaine in the vessel's shipping containers. They even bent railing and pulled back doors on the containers so they could fit the

huge quantities of cocaine inside. After hiding the drugs among legitimate cargo, crew members then used fake seals to reseal

them.

The other crew members included the ship's chief officer, second officer, and other members of both the deck and engine department, but not the captain.

"It has been nearly two years since federal agents conducted one of the largest drug seizures in U.S. history," said Acting U.S. Attorney Williams. "The follow-up investigation uncovered dark-of-night, clandestine drug trafficking conduct which read like a movie plot, and prosecutors in our Office have been working non-stop since then to pursue justice in this case. With Mr. Penda's just sentence being handed down today, this chapter of the *MSC Gayane* saga is now coming to a close."

The ship was arrested and later released on \$50 million bail paid for by the ship's owner and operator, MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company. Prior to arriving in Philadelphia on June 16, the *MSC Gayane* made port calls in Chile, Peru, Panama and the Bahamas. The ship's final destination was ultimately northern Europe, with calls scheduled at Rotterdam, Antwerp and Le Havre.

"Let [this] sentencing serve as a reminder that 2 years ago this June, Mr. Penda and his co-conspirators attempted to smuggle close to 20 tons of cocaine, with an estimated street value of \$1 billion dollars, through the port of Philadelphia. This sends a clear message to criminals around the world that our critical infrastructure is not a safe harbor for drug trafficking," said Brian A. Michael, Special Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations Philadelphia. "Protecting the Homeland against transnational crime is a top priority of Homeland Security Investigations, and together with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, we are committed to detecting and disrupting transnational drug smuggling."

Other crew members involved in the conspiracy have been listed as Bosko Markovic, 39, of Montenegro, the ship's chief officer, Ivan Durasevic, 31, of Montenegro, the second officer, Nenad Ilic, 41, of Montenegro, the engineer cadet, Aleksandar Kavaja, 27, of Montenegro, the electrician, Stefan Bojevic, 29, of Serbia, the assistant reeferman, Fonofaavae Tiasaga, 29, of Samoa, an able seaman, and Laauli Pulu, 34, of Samoa, an ordinary seaman.

"The many successful prosecutions following CBP's record-setting cocaine seizure of June 2019 should serve as a reminder to those willing to help drug trafficking organizations that narcotics smuggling has very serious consequences," said Keith Fleming, Acting Director of Field Operations for CBP's Baltimore Field Office. "Customs and Border Protection and our law enforcement partners remain steadfast in our commitment to intercept shipments of dangerous drugs before they can be smuggled through our nation's borders."

Source: gCaptain 210417

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Ship Owned by Israeli Firm Attacked Off UAE -Reports

Mike Schuler April 13, 2021

DUBAI, April 13 (Reuters) – A commercial vessel owned by an Israeli firm was attacked off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in Gulf waters, pro-Iran media and an Israeli television channel said on Tuesday.



Israel's top-rated Channel 12 TV quoted unnamed Israeli officials as blaming arch-foe Iran for the assault and said there were no casualties.

Two maritime security sources told Reuters that an Israeli ship was hit near the UAE's Fujairah port resulting in an explosion but that there were no casualties.

An Israeli Transportation Ministry spokesman said he was aware of the media reports but that he could not confirm them. There was no immediate confirmation from the UAE.

The incident comes a day after Tehran accused Israel of sabotaging a nuclear site, and after Iran and the United States began indirect talks in Vienna on ways to revive world powers' 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran.

Lebanon-based Al Mayadeen television channel, citing sources, identified the vessel as *Hyperion Ray*.

Refinitiv ship tracking data showed the Bahamas-flagged vehicle carrier *Hyperion Ray* was headed to Fujairah port from Kuwait.

Unews news agency, also based in Lebanon, said the vessel was transporting cars and had been at Kuwait's Mina Al Ahmadi port 48 hours earlier.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said, in an advisory notice, that it was aware of a possible incident near Fujairah and that investigations were ongoing.

Last month an Iranian container ship was damaged in an attack in the Mediterranean, two weeks after an Israeli-owned ship, the *MV Helios Ray* – owned by the same company as the *Hyperion Ray* according to a U.N. shipping database – was hit by an explosion in the Gulf of Oman.

The incidents have occurred since U.S. President Joe Biden took office in January with a commitment to rejoin the 2015 nuclear pact – abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump in a move welcomed by Israel – if Tehran returns to full compliance with the deal.

Iran said on Tuesday it would start enriching uranium to 60% purity, a move that would take the fissile material closer to the 90% suitable for a nuclear weapon.

(Reporting by Ghaida Ghantous and Lisa Barrington in Dubai, Dan Williams in Jerusalem and Jonathan Saul in London; Editing by Alison Williams, William Maclean) (c) Copyright Thomson Reuters 2021.

Source: gCaptain 210414

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Frightened by ferries

By Michael Grey

What on earth are we to think about the British Prime Minister's great idea about a fixed link across the Irish Sea? It started off as a bridge, but seems to have been transformed into a tunnel, possibly when some expert suggested that the former could be closed by high winds for about 100 days every year. A couple of eminent civil engineers and a world leading expert on buses are currently investigating the possibilities, despite the suggestions of sceptics that it was likely to go the same way as Boris Island which threatened to block up the River Thames with a new estuarial airport and the ill-fated Garden Bridge, which disappeared, possibly eaten by slugs.

Fanciful drawings of such a tunnel in a daily newspaper showed a design for a "floating" structure, to circumvent the problem of the huge trench which runs up and down St George's Channel and which is stuffed with rotting explosives from two world wars. Tethered to the sea bottom by stout cables, the structure appears desperately vulnerable to passing nuclear submarines, while the problem of some of the most powerful tidal streams around these isles seems to have eluded the impressionable artists.

It is, we understand, a Norwegian design, although this might be confusion arising from a similarly improbable scheme to build a "ship-tunnel" between two fjords to avoid some stormy offshore waters. The costs would be stupendous and scarcely worth mentioning, as any estimates would be hugely multiplied, as are those of all such projects. And if it ever got built you could guarantee that the Scottish government would demand all the revenues from the tolls and there would be nothing left for the wretched majority of taxpayers on either island, who paid for the thing.

But why ever bother with such a nonsensical scheme? There has never been a time (if we forget about the pandemic and the insane NI Protocol) when travelling between Great Britain and Ireland has been easier and more convenient. There have never been more routes, offering bigger, better and more luxurious ships for both passengers and freight. Beautiful new ships have been built at no cost whatever to the taxpayers of the five countries served and there is amazing choice available. Why would anyone of sound mind prejudice the prosperity of more than half a dozen such ferry routes, by attempting to funnel all the traffic through a fixed link between the North of Ireland and Scotland?

Ferries are flexible, above all else and can be added and subtracted, or moved elsewhere, to cope with shifts in traffic with amazing speed. If anyone doubts this, within days of the EU's multiplication of trade procedures, imposed in their post Brexit petulance, ferry operators had commissioned new direct routes between the Republic and the Continent. And when it hopefully settles down again, it might be expected that these ships will return to shorter routes and better revenue-earning prospects. Ferry schedules alter with seasons too, which makes maintenance easier.

It isn't as if Boris is short of "shovel-ready" projects that can employ lots of concrete and civil engineers, steelworkers and builders of every trade and description. There is a National Grid close to meltdown and incapable of coping with the green, all-electric future. There are power stations to build, windfarms to plant in every available sea. A sensible scheme for transferring surplus water from the soaking parts of the UK to the dry bits, along with some new reservoirs, is essential. The road and rail network badly need modernising, with more useful links than HS2 between regional cities.

Why is Boris so ignorant about ferries and their manifold advantages? It is probably unfair to single him out in this respect because virtually all politicians and most of the mandarinates involved in transport policy wouldn't be able to distinguish a ferry from a fruit juice carrier. They understand roads and trains and have all travelled on aeroplanes, but the delights and opportunities from ferries leave them ignorant and bewildered. It is conceivable that Boris, when a correspondent in Brussels, was once unable to fly to his destination and was seriously sea-sick in a Channel storm on the awful Ostend boats that used to be run by the Belgian government, being henceforth frightened and repulsed by the prospect of sea-travel.

I can recall my first experience on a rickety ferry out of Liverpool in the 1960s, in a storm off the Welsh coast, clinging to the 1st Class bar and listening to crashes and screams coming from elsewhere in the labouring ship. "Don't worry Sorr", said the Irish barman as he refilled my whisky glass – "it's just the third class passengers fighting". But times change and if Boris, before he commits serious money to daft fixed links, takes a trip on a beautiful huge new Stena ship out of the Mersey on his next Stormont visit, he will see the pointlessness of such projects.

Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List.

Source: *Maritime Advocate* 774

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Seafarer heads home, ending four years on abandoned ship

Sam Chambers April 23, 2021

ITF

Seafarer Mohammad Aisha boarded an airplane last night to return to his native Syria, ending a four-year battle where he was forced to live on an abandoned ship in the Suez Canal while the vessel waited to be sold.



Aisha was the chief officer onboard the Bharani-flagged *Aman* for just two months before the vessel was detained by Egyptian authorities due to expired safety equipment certificates.

When the owner abandoned the ship an Egyptian court designated Aisha the vessel's legal guardian – preventing him from leaving the *Aman* until the ship was sold or a replacement guardian found.

The vessel had no power and was covered in insects and rodents. Aisha had to swim ashore to charge his phone, and for food and water.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) sealed the seafarer's freedom last week, after he had become the subject of many mainstream news profiles. The ITF offered an Egyptian court to have one its union representatives in Egypt take Aisha's place and become the legal guardian of the vessel.

"So much has changed in the last four years. Mohammad's home in Syria could be unrecognisable. Some of his family died years ago. The delays mean he will never see his mother again, and that is terribly sad. Mohammad has lost four years of his life," commented ITF Arab World and Iran network coordinator Mohamed Arrachedi.

Arrachedi said Aisha's case had put an important spotlight on Egypt's problematic system of legal guardianship in cases of seafarer abandonment, something the ITF is now demanding changes.

Aisha's case is similar to that of Vehbi Kara, a Turkish master who was trapped aboard a ship in the Suez Canal for months when an Egyptian court made him legal guardian of the abandoned *Kenan Mete*. ITF advocacy saw Kara released to a nearby hotel, but he remains unable to leave Egypt.

Source: *Splash247* 210423

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The following poem was composed by Barrie Youde before the *Ever Given* was successfully refloated.

EVER DRIVEN

*At thirteen knots the vessel moves two hundred thousand tons.
Look, look! A sight magnificent! How beautif'ly she runs!
The land is on the port side and is on the starboard, too.
What distance, then? What is the gap allowed between the two?
Why, several hundred feet, Sir! It is wider than the ship!
What could go wrong? What query could be on the pilot's lip?
What is the room for error? Very little, that's for sure.
There's substantial room for terror that she'll end up on the shore.
The ship, d'you see, is longer than the gap allowed for passage.
Some might suggest some caution, speed reduction and some massage.
Some balance of the risks involved. Some due evaluation.
Some call for recognition of the laws of navigation.
Stoutly hearted, on she goes! She's slimmer than the gap!
This needle's eye is useful in the global trading map.
To question calls of commerce is a question quite banal
When called upon to navigate a purpose-built canal.
On, on she goes at thirteen knots, and such a graceful speed.
Here is mankind's magnificence and lunacy and greed.
On, on she goes and happily. Misfortune then arises.
Expect the unexpected, as you should, to meet surprises.
A sudden sheer, for cause unknown, has caught the vessel yet,
And part of her is stuck and dry which should be clear and wet.
And how long will it take to free her, grounded at both ends?
Why, that is for the salvors. What d'you make of it, my friends?*

Barrie Youde

29.03.2021

Source: *Maritime Advocate* 775

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