

history of the Confederation and its constituent parts and it has enabled me to meet many interesting local people and to participate in some memorable local and national events".

Ian is widely respected throughout the Confederation and in particular by his fellow Officers of the Confederation who recognise in him a hard-working, committed, loyal and wise colleague who carries his exalted unique position in a modest and unassuming manner and whose presence and commitment in and to the Confederation is second to none. It is a great privilege to know and work with him. Perhaps the last words however should be given by the current Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle, Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL who was

appointed in 2004 and is the only naval officer to have occupied the position apart from Admiral Robert Blake during the 17th century. "The Cinque Ports are enormously proud of their long and distinguished heritage, and are always prepared to work together to nurture it. However, given that the key players - the Speakers and Mayors - mostly change every year, it is vital that there is someone to provide a continuity and coordinating function. This duty lies naturally with the Registrar and Seneschal and the Confederation is most fortunate in having as the current incumbent of this post Ian Russell: a person whose knowledge of the subject is second to none and who is prepared to devote, with great conscientiousness and wisdom, a significant amount of his time to ensure that the Cinque Ports remain a strong entity now and in the future."

The Story of Bruce Lilley 1928 - 2014

Part 4

Bruce and Merrill Lilley

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fifties

1950 started with a number of short trips during which nothing memorable occurred. In February I did a standby job on the Highland Prince as a relief while the regular cook was on holiday. However I was the cook in charge of the galley which was a good experience for me and a slight increase in salary. Generally speaking a small ship might have a cook, two assistant cooks and a galley boy. Larger ships could have up to ten assistant cooks. A position as second cook and baker also had a higher salary. My standby job was followed by two

trips to the Eastern Mediterranean, as assistant cook on the Sycamore, a small ship which carried cargo and twelve passengers who were mainly government employees. We loaded guns in Cardiff and ended up in Beirut, having stopped in Cyprus and Egypt. My next trip on the Vasco was also to the Med. I had a longer trip to Cuba on the Lord Codrington at the end of the year. It was a lousy ship with chain steering and bad conditions for the crew. We took general cargo to the southern states and loaded grain to go back to Antwerp. When we got

there we found Antwerp a sad city almost in ruins still from bomb damage during the war. Many people had nothing and were in a sorry state.

At Antwerp I went straight on to the Nimares as second cook and baker for a few weeks. Then I had the same job on a tanker belonging to Esso called the Missionary Ridge for a few weeks before I got a longer trip for nine months on the English Prince, visiting the States and the Persian Gulf. Again I was second cook and baker.

On 16th September 1952 I joined the Marinia, a salvage tug as cook/steward. This was only a small ship but for the first time I was in charge. I bought the stores and cooked. I had a small cabin to myself, box-like but my own. This applied to most of the jobs on salvage tugs as they would have a crew of only six or seven men. I then had several trips on the Marinia when it was on standby in Falmouth and ready to go at any time to ships in distress. We might be on shore in a pub or a cinema and a message would come telling us to return immediately to the ship, 'Crew of Marinia return'. The tug belonged to the Overseas Towage and Salvage Company who also owned the famous salvage tug, Turmoil, which went to the aid of the American-owned Flying Enterprise and made newspaper headlines for a few days. Sadly they failed to salvage it and it finally sank.

Early in 1953 I was on a few delivery jobs, once again as cook/steward in charge of the galley. On 9th January we delivered the Plymstock from Falmouth to Gibraltar and came back to England by train, a fairly straightforward assignment.

My next trip was a very different matter and one I could never forget. On 18th February we set off to deliver to Kuwait the Danube VI, a London tug owned by the Westminster

Dredging company and towing a barge also for delivery. There were four able seamen, a bosun and myself. We all shared the same crew accommodation I did not have my own cook/steward cabin as I had done on other tugs. In addition there were two barge men who stayed on the barge and were supplied by me with stores to last them between bunkering stops, when they were on their own. You can imagine my feelings on facing this trip - taking a London tug from Southampton to Kuwait and towing a barge!

We picked up at Southampton and proceeded, via Lisbon and Gibraltar, to Malta where we ran into a problem. The crew of four plus the barge men refused to come back on board the ship for three days and the captain sacked them and picked a Maltese crew to continue the voyage. So we set off from Malta with six new crew members bound for Port Said to transit the Suez Canal and thence to the Red Sea to Aden to pick up more bunkers. The next stop was an island where the RAF were based, to pick up bunkers in 45 gallon drums before proceeding to Kuwait which was a small walled city surrounded by desert. Afterwards we flew home on a DC3. The flight took two days. The first day each of us received a packet with sandwiches, an apple and an orange on a flight to Malta to drop off the Maltese crew. The following day I flew with the bosun to Copenhagen and then to then on to Blackbush airport in the UK. We got home on 23rd April and I was thankful to get some leave before joining another salvage tug, the Secundo, at Plymouth. After that it was to Falmouth which turned out to be my last posting on the Marinia. Then back to Dock Street for another posting.

For almost two years, between July 1953 and May 1955, my job remained the same, described in most certificates of discharge

as 'second cook and baker'. I served in this time on, altogether five ships, the Baltic Pine, the Exedene, the Vardulia, the Arvans and the Blandford. On these larger ships I was no longer in charge of the galley but the pay remained the same. The last of these trips on the Blandford was the longest, from June 1954 to May 1955. The Blandford was a modern ship with good working conditions. Every crew member had his own cabin. The ship belonged to the Blandford Shipping Company, part of the Fred Olsen group. We were working the east coast of America loading oil from Curacao in the Dutch Antilles in the West Indies and delivering it in the winter months to Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In Montevideo we had to unload some of the cargo to lighten the ship before we could proceed up the River Plate. We used to anchor in the Amazon Basin to take on fresh water before we went to Curacao. When we got back to the UK we put into Barry on 18th May 1955.

After this long trip I had some weeks leave due before I reported for another posting. I went as a passenger via ferry from Harwich to Rotterdam where I joined a ship called the Maidenhead on 27th June with promotion to Ship's Cook with the appropriate status and responsibility, I was pleased to have achieved this at last at the age of twenty-seven.

AFTERWORD

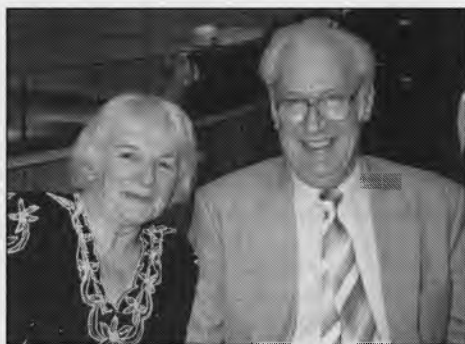
After Bruce achieved the post of Chief Cook in 1955, I do not have any details of his later voyages, except the names in the Ship's record book. For the remainder of his life as a seaman all the existing books from 1951 to his last posting show his postings as Chief Cook and Steward. It seems that many of the trips were on ships like the Sycamore which carried cargo and twelve passengers. Bruce told me that when one of these ships called into Dover, the passengers would go

to the White Cliffs Hotel. It was on one of these trips that Bruce met his wife, Alice, a widow, who liked to choose a holiday as a passenger on a cargo ship, many of which went to the Mediterranean.

Bruce and Alice were married in 1969 and they bought a house in Luton, where Alice lived. Bruce continued at sea until February 1972. There are letters from Cory Maritime Limited, thanking Bruce for all his work for the company. One of these letters mentions that Alice was in poor health at the time.

Alice owned a small paint company in Luton and she was struggling to run it after losing her husband. With Alice, Bruce became a Managing Director of Robinson and Groom which manufactured a sports marking compound called Indeline. It was widely used in sports ground marking and, as Bruce frequently pointed out, was used at Wimbledon and Wembley and by many major football clubs. Bruce would see a match on TV and say, 'That's our paint'.

Alice died in February 1979. I met Bruce in January 1980, having been divorced the previous year. We were both working with full-time jobs and it took a while for us to get to know each other. We married in December 1982 and started our new life together.



Bruce and Merrill