

## SHIPS AND SHIPPING



As mentioned on the main page I sailed on many ships during the period 1960 to 1971 in the British Merchant Navy. As I rose up the ranks I sailed on several ships with the following companies:

**Palm Line** (a subsidiary of Unilever) trading primarily between Europe and the west coast of Africa. These were general cargo ships carrying manufactured goods to West Africa and returning with raw materials such as cocoa beans, palm oil and occasionally animal bones! Some of these vessels, such as the Bamenda Palm



(pictured below and on main page) carried up to 12 passengers. These were usually ex patriots going or returning from foreign posts. I remember Lord Baden Powell and his wife returning from West Africa on one trip. These voyages were at a leisurely pace with long port stays (up to seven weeks in Europe).

**United Baltic Corporation.** This company's vessels traded as their name suggests primarily from the UK to the Baltic ports of Finland, (Helsinki, Turku, Pori), ports in the USSR such as St. Petersburg, Riga, Klaipeda etc. These ships were equipped for the freezing conditions encountered during the winter and were the only ships I ever sailed on that had heating radiators in the engine room! Unfortunately I was on the Baltic Comet which made a charter voyage from Cyprus to Ceylon carrying potatoes. A transit through the Red Sea does not



warrant additional heaters in the engine room!

**Athel Line.** A subsidiary of Tate and Lyle, the sugar people. The first Athel tankers were built for the carriage of molasses and some of the vessels were still equipped for this.



However they expanded into the crude oil market and then into refined and chemical carriers. I sailed on the Anco Queen (pictured left as the Athel Queen) twice as Chief Engineer. She was originally the Athel Queen but changed name when converted to carry refined products in 1967. During my time

on board we visited San Francisco several times.

**BLANDFORD SHIPPING COMPANY.** A subsidiary of Fred Olsen of Norway this company built the “Tower Tankers” in Sasebo Japan in the late 1960’s.

The name derives from the shape of the accommodation aft which rose from the main deck in the form of a tower



tapering off on the wheel house. These were large (200,000 DWT +) crude oil carriers equipped with steam turbine propulsion of 28,000 SHP. This was one of the last vessels I sailed on as Chief Engineer and I remember my cabin had sloping bulkheads due to the nature of the accommodation tower. My last voyage on this ship was Loch Long in Scotland in ballast to the Persian Gulf and returning with a cargo of crude oil to the same port. We sailed around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) as the vessel was too big to transit the Suez Canal. The voyage took thirty days each way, a long and very boring time. As a side note the oil terminal in Loch Long, which is situated off the River Clyde near Glasgow, supplies crude oil to the Grangemouth refinery some sixty miles away near Edinburgh.

**H&E MOSS SHIPPING** This was a Liverpool company which had a small fleet of oil tankers and was taken over by Cunard in 1964. I think the enterprise lasted only a few years and now is defunct. The vessel I sailed



on, m.v. Lustrous, was sold to the Australians in December 1964 and we handed over the vessel in Yokohama. The picture on the left shows the Lustrous in an undated photograph transiting the Suez Canal.

This is a brief run down on some of the companies and ships I sailed, the life at sea has changed considerably since those days and although I am glad I had the experience I doubt that I would like to do the same again today!