

Capt. Michael Pratt MEMORIES!!

BRIEF RESUME OF MY CAREER FROM LEAVING SCHOOL

I left school in July 1951 aged 17 and commenced my sea career in September when I joined the British India Steam Navigation, and was indentured as a cadet on the cadetship Chindwara. After signing my Indentures at the London Head office was taken down to KGV docks where I was signed in for the next 3 1/2 years. In addition that is where I remained for the whole of my sea time as a cadet on the training ship, on this my first trip to sea, I and 13 other first trippers joined 20 other cadets to experience what my life was to take over the next 3 years. 2 months and 26 days This was about the 12 September 1951 when I had flown back after spending the end of my last term school holidays with my parents who were also with the BI and who was the marine super in Karachi.

What an experience I flew back to London and after getting all my outfits and equipment from the outfitters Miller Raynor and Haysons.

On arrival at the ship I was in a total upheaval having been wrenched from an innocent school boy to a bemused cadet and taken below decks to our quarters, where we were told to get out of our civvy gear and to initially attire ourselves into working gear of dungarees etc., and put to work washing the

paintwork on the bridge to break me into the type of existence we experienced for the remainder of cadet training period. Fortunately I was not on my own and on this occasion I with 12 others formed 13

first trippers which in turn joined up with 20 other cadets, and thus we had a protection in our own right against the normal sort of bullying and teasing.

Coincidentally at the time and just on preparations for sailing it was discovered that one of our 13 had jumped ship and I was detailed along with the Cadet instructor Henry Severs to pack his belongings for landing with the pilot at Gravesend. As a matter of interest this young lad did go to sea at a later date but due to it being discerned that he was colour blind went as a trainee purser instead (I think he got a

better deal.) I then spent the next 3 1/4 years as a cadet on the cadetship which was spent mainly on the UK/Australia service which amounted to 2 voyages a year. On the first trip we spent 17 days away from the sight of land after leaving Aden and arriving in Melbourne and went coastal discharging and then back loading for Europe and the UK . I can still recall after discharging at Melbourne missed out

Sydney then Brisbane and back to Melbourne coming up Port Phillip bay on 24 December 1951 at 6 am was the wettest and coldest day and which was sleety with rain showers just as it has been like recently, so nothing changes!

We eventually returned to the northern hemisphere in February 1952, to discharge at Hull and Immingham to hear the news of the demise of King George VI.

After several voyages between UK and Australia I finally signed off the Chindwara on the 4 October 1954 at Swansea receiving the end of my cadet time and sitting for my second Mates certificate and returned to sea in March 1955 as a 3rd Mate on a crappy BI Tub namely the Palamcotta, where in fact I was utilised as a cadet with a second mates ticket.

I then stayed for the next 7 years sailing mainly on the Indian coast between there to Australia/Japan, NZ/ East African coast and left BI after obtaining my Masters Certificate in 1960. Soon after this I joined the Cunard Line and was appointed to the Queen Elizabeth as an extra 3 officer, each of these vessels had 10 Master mariners, during this time it was a real experience to be able to steam across the

Atlantic at about 29 knots, and after being on BI tubs doing 9 1/2 knots it was a real buzz. It was also during the period when I was on the Mauretania where I met my wife to be, who was one of the nursing sisters.

Soon after we got married the Queen Mary was sold to Los Angeles Maritime as a floating Hotel, and with other ships being sold we decided to migrate to Australia and that we did in March 1967 where we were sponsored by my relative in Mt Eliza and have been in Melbourne ever since.

After writing away for sundry positions none of any success I eventually decided to knock on the door of the Victorian Stevedores namely Capt George Smith and was very lucky to be accepted. This was a very interesting period as not only was in employment again but it was something I could relate to. It was also quite a coincidence that one of my references in the UK was a Department of Navigation

Surveyor who suggested I look George up, and even though the shipping was changing some conventional stevedoring would last for few more years. Anyway in 1970 I branched into Marine and Cargo Surveying and joined Caleb Brett which later joined forces with a Marine Surveying firm of Evans and Jones and there I stayed until 1984 until I decided to go out on my own for a while..

I then joined another group of Surveyors in West Melbourne for a while which also withered on the vine and left Mike Ruddlesden and Myself in partnership and from some freak of nature we were offered a back office to operate from in King Street which was Laurie Ogilvie of Bridgefords outfit. Whilst there, we utilised the Curry place across the road. This is the same place that we all still enjoy the convivial company of the present day.

It is now 45 years since my wife and I settled in Melbourne where we have had 3 children and now 4 grandchildren. This is another story as my daughter

went of with a girl friend to the UK in1994,met a young man in the West Country and live in Westward Ho! With the advantage of Skype we are able to be in touch every week