



Caring for seafarers
around the world

the SEA

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Seafarers: the world is listening

Celebrating the men and women that keep international trade moving

June 25 marks an important day for our global at-sea workforce. For 11 years, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has co-ordinated an annual and international event day celebrating the invaluable contribution seafarers make to international trade and the world economy, often at great personal cost to themselves and their families.

This year, the theme for the Day of the Seafarer is a Fair Future for Seafarers, a topic which is particularly pertinent given the unimaginable hardships that many seafarers have faced since the

start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with contracts extended indefinitely and severe disruption to crew changes.

Every year, the IMO delivers an open invite to all involved in the industry to celebrate the Day. Here at The Sea, we are celebrating the diversity of seafaring in our commemoration of Day of the Seafarer with interviews and contributions from four serving seafarers, each with a very different but equally exciting story to tell.

Maersk captain Knud Præst Jørgensen, celebrating his 40th anniversary at Maersk, opens our feature, speaking

about how the role of the captain has changed from being the 'ruler' at sea to working much more co-operatively. Yrhen Bernard, an active navigator and a maritime journalist from the Philippines, talks about his alarm at the drop in the happiness levels of deck cadets. Jarín Chowdhury, the first female cadet from Bangladesh on foreign flagged ships, explains why she hopes to be an inspiration for female seafarers. And Renat Besolov, a seafarer working on crab-fishing vessels in the Barents, closes our Day of the Seafarer reflections with his musings on a fisher's life.

Forty years and still in love with the sea

By Felicity Landon

What has changed since Captain Knud Præst Jørgensen, master of the *Elly Maersk*, first went to sea with Maersk in 1981? That's an easy question to answer, he says: "I would say that from when I started, almost everything has changed!"

When he signed up with Maersk 40 years ago, who could have predicted how different life at sea would be in 2021? And yet, it's clear that Jørgensen is still happy to be onboard. He's 57 now and says he will continue his career at sea for at least five more years. "We have captains who are more than 72," he points out.

Seafaring was a fairly mainstream career choice for a boy who grew up on the small Danish island of Aero – and his father was a captain before him. "There are a lot of seafarers from Aero and I knew a lot of young people who went to sea. It was an opportunity," he says. "I could have gone into an office, but I don't belong in an office. I am not cut out for that. I enjoy getting around and always went ashore when there was the opportunity to see things. I have always been interested in seeing the places I went to. We can't do that so much now, of course; these big container ships are not that long in port and many of the container terminals are far away from everything. But when I do have the opportunity to go ashore, I take it."

A bumpy start

Jørgensen went straight from school to the Danish nautical training institute Marstal Navigationsskole for a five-month pre-sea training course. He didn't have a contract at that stage but applied to Maersk when he graduated in January 1981. Two months later, at the age of 17, he joined his first ship, the *Kate Maersk*, which carried up to 330,000 tonnes of crude oil.

"I joined the ship in Lyme Bay in the south of England; it was at anchor there because the draft didn't allow it to pull into Rotterdam fully loaded. They lightened to barges before sailing into Rotterdam."

He recalls the impact of seeing the tanker when he arrived. "I am from a seafaring family, my father was a captain in an oil company, so I knew



Captain Jørgensen's first ship command did not go entirely to plan

the environment. But this tanker was huge, it was incredible."

That first six-month voyage took him from Rotterdam to the Middle East Gulf, around the Cape to Curacao, back to the Middle East Gulf, and then back to the Caribbean, to Aruba – from where he disembarked to fly home.

He served as a cadet on four ships, then went back to college to get his master's ticket in 1986.

"I got my master's ticket but not my Certificate of Competency. I had to gain experience first," he says. He joined the gas tanker *Sally Maersk* in his first position as a senior officer. Three years later, in 1989, he switched over to container ships, where he has stayed ever since.

He took command of his first ship, the *Gudrun Maersk*, in 2001 and set out on a trip never to be forgotten. "I joined the ship in Halifax, Canada. The outgoing master was going to be onboard for three weeks to train me.

We headed down to Newark, where I took over command. We went from Newark to Norfolk, Virginia, for my first arrival as captain."

With pilotage and towage in place, the vessel headed along the river.

"There was a strong current and a tricky sharp turn into the berth. We did that but didn't stop the starboard turn and ended up sitting on the riverbed for half an hour."

His immediate reaction? "I thought that was the end of a very short career." Within half an hour, the tugs were able to free the vessel, which was undamaged. The grounding was found to be due to pilot error, but Jørgensen is swift to add: "The captain is still responsible."

Welcoming the ISM Code

Twenty years on, he says the biggest change he has seen was the implementation of the ISM Code. "Before ISM, each ship was like an autonomous unit going around. The captain was

the ruler on board, and he decided almost everything. The ISM Code more or less standardised shipping and it changed the captain's role – now we all follow the same rules and directions. That is very significant.”

Pre-ISM, some captains were “very independent” and found the adjustment difficult – but not all people are suited to be independent, he believes. “The ISM Code certainly improved matters for some captains because they can go by the book.”

And then there is the administrative burden on today's officers. “There is certainly a lot of paperwork and admin. If a captain's job was mainly on the bridge, now it is behind the desk. There is so much paperwork and communication.”

There is more and more decision-making ashore, he points out. “Of course, the captain is still the highest authority on board, but for issues such as maintenance and budgets, we have much less to say, with decisions being made by the superintendent.”

When he first went to sea, the radio officer communicated via shortwave and Morse code. Perhaps the captain received a few telexes a week. “Today we get at least 50 emails a day. We also have Teams meetings.”

Another notable transformation has been in the matter of speed. Before the global financial crisis the top priority was to get cargo from A to B as fast as possible. “It was full speed all the time. As a captain departing from port, it was full speed and what was the best ETA. Today it is all about controlled speed and reduction of fuel consumption.

“Now we compete more with our competitors on who can make the best cost savings and profit. We are looking for just-in-time arrival and we have software to help us to optimise the load of the main engine, calculating with the current and wind to enable just-in-time with the least fuel consumption.”

Jørgensen has also witnessed the evolution towards international crews. “Forty years ago, my first ship was all Danish. Today I am sometimes the only Danish person on board with Indian officers, Filipino and Ukrainian ratings. It is truly international.”

He says an important task is keeping spirits up among the crew who are away from home for long periods. “In fact, I don't find it that challenging because they are generally

positive people. They come on board with a good spirit and are motivated. And we organise table tennis tournaments, bingo, barbecue parties, and so on.”

The Covid-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging, however. “I was on board in March last year and all crew changes were suspended more or less overnight. The challenging part was keeping motivation up because people didn't know when they would go home. Uncertainty is very difficult. It was my challenge as leader to keep morale up. Fortunately, I had very good officers and ratings onboard and they accepted the situation.”

Jørgensen was fortunate to only go over his three-month contract time by a few weeks. Later in 2020, the Danish government put measures in place to use Copenhagen as a crew change hub, although the difficulties of quarantine requirements for Filipino seafarers have continued.

“...People don't know what we do – we are invisible. We have had attention in the media in the past year, and my plea is this: once all this is over, we should not be forgotten”

Travel high spots

Among the highlights of his career to date, Jørgensen recalls serving on-board tankers in the Middle East Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War in the late 1980s. “Back then I thought I was immortal. We had the right to sign off – but I didn't. When I look back at it, it seems crazy.”

He says the best service he worked on was the Oceania route from the US down to New Zealand and Australia in the early 2000s, as master of the *Jens Maersk*. “We went to the Pitcairn Islands – the most remote place on Earth, although we didn't go ashore. It was traditional for ships heading from New Zealand to the Panama Canal to go right by Pitcairn. With no airport, the islands relied on ships going by and picking up passengers and mail. I took the initiative back in 2002 to have a stop there and take on mail, three times.”

When he is on dry land, Jørgensen says he doesn't have enough hours.

“I am very active with my family, of course, and also the terrible habit of playing golf takes a lot of time. I also enjoy gardening, take care of my house, and travel a lot.”

He has two teenage children from his first marriage, both in Denmark, and remarried five years ago.

As we end our conversation, Jørgensen describes his daily routine on board the 15,500 teu *Elly Maersk*. “While more decisions are made ashore, it is certainly not all decisions! There is no management of how we do our jobs aboard, so I plan my work daily. I prefer to do my administrative work in the morning – as much as I can – to have a clear desk by noon. I then use my afternoon walk – at least 10 kilometres every day – to serve multiple purposes, including getting around the ship to check maintenance and talk to the crew. I like to go out in the fresh air. I then work in the evening, after

dinner, on whatever emails need my attention, so I have a clear desk before rest.”

Covid-19 has changed port calls though: “Now in China [speaking from the Port of Shanghai], we cannot really interact with any of the stevedores. Wherever we are, the pilots come on board almost in space suits and stay on the other side of the bridge. But we have been able to keep moving cargo without major delays. Cargo work continued to function throughout the crisis and we should be proud of that.”

On a positive note, the pandemic has drawn attention to seafarers, with increased awareness in the media, he says. “Being a seafarer is like being an individual person because no one knows what you are doing. People don't know what we do – we are invisible. We have had attention in the media in the past year, and my plea is this: once all this is over, we should not be forgotten.” ☺ >>

A female first for Bangladeshi cadets

By Carly Fields

Jarin Chowdhury is the first female cadet from Bangladesh to sail on foreign-flagged ships. She was awarded the Cadet Award at The Mission to Seafarers annual Seafarers' Awards, presented to the cadet or trainee who has made a significant contribution to seafarers' welfare at sea or ashore. The judges described Jarin as "an exceptional example of inspiration and achievement for the maritime community especially for female mariners". Here, she shares her experiences with The Sea.

"For a developing country like Bangladesh, it was taboo for females to sail as seafarers, so it is an honour to be the first Bangladeshi female to serve on a foreign-flagged vessel and represent my country in front of the world.

"During my service as a cadet on a chemical tanker, it was a great experience to work in a multinational environment.

My fellow crew members were helpful to me and I learnt a lot and polished my skills. Every day was full of hardships, but I learnt something new, and I felt alive. My entire contract was full of adventure, learning and especially understanding that seafaring is not a job; it's a way of life."


Jarin conveys her gratitude to the master and chief engineer of the *Oceanic Crimson* as well as her fellow seafarers, who assisted in her learning and in developing her skills. She is keen to pay that support forward to help other women coming into the sector. "As the world's economy is based on seafaring, I want to inspire females to engage in the maritime sector. I strive to develop my skills further and empower women to contribute to the maritime sector of Bangladesh and society as a whole."

Asked about her ambitions for her future career at sea, Jarin says that she plans to work hard with honesty, but she does share some of her concerns about

a career at sea. Job security, onboard safety and the unwillingness of some male seafarers to co-operate with female seafarers are the main points she raises.

That said, she would still encourage women to take up a career at sea. "If they have the hunger for winning the sea, as well as belief in the Almighty, knowledge, capacity and confidence, then why shouldn't they get the chance to come into this profession and rule over the sea as a Viking?

"While it may be a physically demanding career, with wisdom and courage women can step up and achieve excellence in their workplace."

Jarin lists two points that could improve the lure of the industry: shorter contract periods and a year-round salary. "This may encourage youngsters who might be planning to join the industry but are uncomfortable with the idea of staying away from their family for several months." 

Jarin is a trainee marine engineer.

Through the lookout's binoculars

By Yrhen Bernard S Balinis

The evening sky is illuminated by the colourful city lights visible in the distance. The sounds of revving vehicles rushing to reach their destination reverberate. It's a typical Friday night in South Korea where *Gwen* is currently berthed.

I gaze from my porthole admiring the festivities thinking, had it not been for Covid-19, I would have immediately grabbed my bag and sports camera to experience life in a foreign country.

If there's one trait common to all seafarers, it's that we are born adventurers and explorers. The promise of seeing the world attracted me to this profession. But with this pandemic, that perk has long lost its meaning. The thrill of visiting a country and ticking it off my bucket list can only be lived from the gangway.

As I see it, the inability to conduct shore leave presents several challenges to seafarers who have served six, nine months, and even a year on board. First, it contributes greatly to the detrimental decline of mental health among crews. Without an avenue to unwind and take a break away from the monotony of shipboard operations, seafarers' wellbeing takes a major beating. Thankfully, we have found solace in connecting to the world via the internet.

Second, this will negatively affect future maritime professionals' perception of


seafaring. If, just like me, one of their primary motivations for joining this profession is to travel the world, but they have not been able to fulfil that, will there still be job satisfaction and will they stay for the long haul? This has been further aggravated by the unresolved crew change dilemma. Will young seafarers still want to embark given the uncertainty of whether they will be able to disembark on time, thereby delaying their own plans and aspirations?

The global health pandemic sent shockwaves not only through the international supply chain but also through the future maritime workforce as well. The industry was already dangling by a thread when it came to attracting and retaining qualified seafarers before the pandemic. Now that thread has further frayed.

On a positive note, the pandemic has put a spotlight on the dependence of international trade on ships and their seafarers. As the virus spread, roads became silent and empty but not so the world's waterways, which remained busy with ships delivering everyone their goods.

Looking forward, to ensure that shipping remains appealing to future generations, we must instil pride in the maritime profession. The International

Maritime Organization's World Maritime Theme this year is 'Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future', while the theme of this year's Day of the Seafarer is 'Fair Future for Seafarers', both of which are relevant and timely. Next year, why not put cadets, young seafarers and maritime professionals at the centre? Poll their opinions. Consider their inclination on matters concerning their future. Get them involved in the discussions of the view of the industry ten years from now. Appoint an ambassador for the newcomers in the industry to serve as their lead. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest a World Maritime Theme for 2022 of 'Young seafarers steer the helm for the next generation'. #IMO2022IBelongtotheSeaToo.

Having sunk deep into my thoughts, I am interrupted by my telephone suddenly ringing. It's time for my watch – the sea is calling, awaiting my reply. 

Yrhen Bernard S Balinis is an aspiring deck officer, an advisory board member for Human Rights at Sea, a member of the Royal Institute of Navigation (RIN), the international and maritime representative for the Younger Members' Group at RIN, an associate Member of The Nautical Institute, and a member advocate of the 2030 Youth Force in the Philippines.

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Highs and lows of crab fishing

By Renat Besolov

Working as a seafarer offers many opportunities. I work in the fishing fleet; we fish for snow crab in the Barents Sea. The work is physically hard, but it brings in a good income of about \$8,500 a month after taxes. And don't forget that a seafarer does not have any expenses on board as food, accommodation and all expenses with flights to the ship and home are paid for by the company. You also can't spend your money anywhere on a fishing vessel, so at the end of the voyage I collect the entire amount at once.

Usually, I work four weeks on, four weeks off. But because the Covid-19 pandemic made crew change problematic, flights have been co-ordinated differently. Because of this, in 2020 I had to spend seven months on the ship, but on the upside, I earned a good income.

Working on a fishing boat is hard work. You work for eight hours and rest for eight hours, then head back to work, seven days a week. This can result to around 360 working hours per month. Sometimes, if more products are caught than usual, the fishers continue to work beyond their shift end to process the products on time and then may only be able to grab four hours of sleep before starting work again.

One serious problem that I have encountered with some fishers is that, in order to cope with the workload, they use stimulants or drugs to allow them to work 24 hours a day, without sleep. Of course, they catch more product

and earn more money, but over time this greatly impairs their health and eventually they are unable to work at all. Drugs and alcohol are strictly prohibited on our vessel and if either were discovered, the fisher would be fired immediately.

Norwegian processes

I work in the Norwegian fishing fleet and I really like the maritime system of this country. To study as a navigator, a person must first work at sea for at least 36 months as a seafarer, and only after that can he or she start their studies. This gives a person a decent amount of time to decide whether this is the right profession for them. This also applies to obtaining a seafarer's ticket, as a person must have worked at least 12 months at sea to be able to apply for this document. For a watchkeeping certificate, they must evidence at least six months at sea. This means that Norway produces first-class seafarers.

This is not the same in other countries. In some, students go from school directly to study for marine specialties, without any experience of work at sea. Upon graduation, they receive their diploma but perhaps only 5% will actually go to sea. And if they do get positions on a ship, they have no real experience, which leads to mistakes.

The fishing sector also has its operating quirks. The main problem for fishing vessels in many countries of the world is that the State usually does not have full control over the catch of seafood. Norway has overcome this

problem by banning all transhipment of products at sea so that the vessel must come ashore and unload the produce at a factory that keeps records of the seafood types and weights.

Norway has a unified network for all fishers, fishing ships and onshore seafood factories. When the ship comes ashore, the factory notes on this network what has been delivered and subtracts the amount from the quota. This allows everyone to see in real time how much of its quota a vessel has left. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to cheat this system. Other countries do not have such a transparent system. Some, for example, permit ships to unload products directly at sea to other ships, which then go to other countries and the quota accounting disappears. This leads to corruption and undercounting. [S](#)

Renat Besolov is a trawl-master on the Northeastern, a crab fishing vessel operating in the Barents Sea.

Personal touches make lasting connections

MtS chaplains bring considered gifts to crews to let them know that they are cared for

By Verity Relph

Most of the world will never get the chance to hear about, never mind taste, a Welsh cake, but the port chaplaincy team in South Wales makes sure visiting crews get to experience this local delicacy. These homemade cakes, and the many other gifts that are handed out to seafarers around the world, are a central part of the work of The Mission to Seafarers. This goes hand in hand with ministry, sharing hospitality and welcome, saying thank you to seafarers and offering help.

The gifts vary enormously from country to country and port to port. In Busan, South Korea, they show respect for different cultures by preparing cookies and cakes for national holidays, such as Myanmar Day and Philippines Day. In Rouen, France they hand out miniature Eiffel towers, while in Seattle they prepare holiday 'ditty bags' for seafarers, homemade sewn bags containing hand-knitted woolly hats, toiletries, playing cards and sweets.

The Revd Cristi Chapman, executive director of the Seattle Seafarers Center, gives an example of how the bags can act as a gesture of goodwill to seafarers, crossing cultural and religious divides: “Ken Hawkins, my predecessor, always tells the story about a Hindu seafarer who was unsure whether to accept a bag because he was not Christian, and Ken responded by saying, “here, take two!”

Many ports offer something local to the area, allowing seafarers to get a taste of the country they are in. In Panama, for instance, crews are welcomed to the port with gifts of Panamanian coffee and chocolates. With most crews unable to

get ashore, this has been a particularly poignant gesture during the pandemic.

In other parts of the world, gift giving has a special cultural significance. In the port of Yokohama it is inspired by the Japanese custom of always taking a gift when you visit someone. “When arriving at a home, bringing along a small gift, called *omiyage* in Japanese, of snacks or fruit is always appreciated,” Andrew Dangerfield, port chaplain in Yokohama, explains. “It doesn’t have to be expensive or big but putting it in a nice bag and presenting it in a polite manner is a central part of Japanese culture.”

“While giving a gift, most Japanese people say “tsumaranai mono desu ga” which means, “it’s nothing special but here is a little something for you”. It’s a humble way of offering thanks without making it a big deal. We put local Japanese snacks into a bag for the entire crew to share. The reaction is always positive, and the seafarers receive them with thanks.”


Impact of Covid-19

The practice of giving gifts has been challenging during the pandemic, with chaplaincy teams only able to meet crews at the bottom of gangways, if they are lucky.

Monica Park, port chaplain in Busan, has seen first-hand the effect that these small gifts can have: “Crew always show a way of thanks like bowing or saying “thank you” loudly because we have to keep away. Just a few days ago, I left the gifts on the gangway, and the Myanmar crew member picked them up and went back to the deck. When I got into the driver’s seat, I saw him raising



his arm and he waved until I left. I was so moved."

With face-to-face contact so limited, the gifts have also been an important way for teams to show that they and the rest of the world still care and that seafarers are not forgotten about. As Cristi in Seattle reflects: “When we didn’t know what else to do, when everyone was in intense lockdown and all we knew about the virus was that it was dangerous and very scary, it was the gift giving that helped refocus us and remind us of the core of our ministry. Gift giving was the first (and only) thing we could do for a while, and it helped us regain our footing to find new and different ways to connect with seafarers. Generosity provided the way forward and ended up being an antidote to fear and uncertainty.” 

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Seafarers always greatly appreciate their gifts: Top right Busan; left Yokohama; above Seattle


P&I clubs ensure that seafarers receive the best possible care for any medical problems

club, which will then, if necessary, contact their correspondent in the relevant port to assist with that seafarer's immediate medical needs, repatriation and ongoing medical care. Ensuring that seafarers receive prompt and appropriate medical attention is an absolute priority for shipowners and their P&I clubs.

As regards actual payment of the costs for which the shipowner is responsible, the shipowner may pay these first and then send a claim to their P&I club for reimbursement. In some cases, the club will pay the costs up front. It is important to understand that the insurance provided by the P&I club is for shipowners, rather than for individual seafarers.

In order to ensure that seafarers are as safe as possible while onboard, the UK P&I Club has a dedicated Loss Prevention (LP) department, which uses the insight and experience gained from the many claims it deals with to identify risks to seafarers' safety, and work out how these can be minimised. The aim is to analyse exactly how major accidents occur and develop strategies for preventing them.

One of the leading LP initiatives is a Crew Health and Pre-Employment Medical Examination (PEME) programme. The department has developed an enhanced medical examination with a network of approved clinics to detect common medical conditions and therefore prevent illness among seafarers.

In summary, the relationship between a shipowner and its P&I club is designed to ensure that seafarers receive the best possible care for any medical problems, and that the shipowner receives practical assistance and advice on minimising the risks of injury or illness among the ships' crews. 

Victoria Brown is senior claims executive at Thomas Miller P&I Ltd, which is the manager of the UK P&I Club – one of the oldest P&I clubs in the world. For more information, visit www.ukpandi.com.



By Victoria Brown

Looking out for seafarers' safety

Protection & indemnity clubs may have relationships with shipowners, but they still care for seafarers' well-being

Protection & Indemnity, or P&I, clubs provide insurance for shipowners for the costs they incur as a result of legal liabilities arising from the operation of their ships. This includes shipowners' responsibilities towards seafarers, as set out in their employment contracts. It is the relationship with their P&I club that enables a shipowner to ensure that their crew are properly assisted when signed off a ship due to sickness or injury, and to provide all due assistance to families in the event of a seafarer tragically losing their life.

The International Group of P&I Clubs (International Group) is an industry organisation to which 13 P&I clubs belong. These 13 clubs provide marine liability insurance for around 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage. The International Group clubs share their maritime expertise and cover a wide range of liabilities, including loss of life and personal injury to crew.

The cover that clubs provide in respect of seafarers is for certain

types of legal liabilities the shipowner has. If a seafarer is signed off due to illness or injury (regardless of whether this is something major or minor), it will respond to the shipowner's responsibilities under the employment contract to ensure that the seafarer receives immediate medical attention and, if necessary, repatriation for ongoing treatment until they are fit for duty. If a seafarer is injured and left permanently unable to return to sea, it will cover the payment of any compensation for disability that is due under the contract. In the event of death, if the seafarer's contract provides for the payment of compensation to his or her family, P&I clubs will also cover this.

Assisting seafarers

P&I clubs have an active role in handling these matters and work closely with shipowners and their network of local correspondents based in ports all over the world. When a seafarer is signed off due to injury or illness, the shipowner will notify their P&I

A champion for seafarers

Anglo-Eastern Univan Group CEO Bjørn Højgaard has given seafarers a welcome voice during the pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, Bjørn Højgaard has championed tirelessly for seafarers' rights. He has staunchly promoted key worker status for seafarers and continued to challenge crew change issues, even when others could see no solution to the humanitarian crisis caused by closed national borders.

As CEO of the crewing and ship management specialist Anglo-Eastern Univan Group and chair of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association, Bjørn sat on the frontline of what became a very real emergency in the early months of the pandemic. But he has more than a business link to caring about seafarers' welfare.

Having spent more than seven years at sea and as a master mariner, Bjørn tells The Sea that he appreciates how important it is for seafarers to have confidence in their contract duration. For him, it has been a personal 'high' to be able to meet those obligations through the pandemic.

"I've been very disappointed, though, when I've met policy makers and regulators who readily want the ships and goods being moved into and out of their ports, but who have refused to be part of the solution for crew rotation," he notes.

For him, there have been too many failings related to seafarers since the start of the pandemic, not least the weak role of many leaders who should have been protecting seafarers. "Leaders are paid to take the big view and make sweeping decisions in times of crisis, but many forget that real leadership is to lead for everyone, not just the popular focus. It's the ability to leave no one behind that defines great generals on the battlefield and our political class has failed that litmus test dismally in ignoring the plight of the seafarers." That, Bjørn says, is a real tragedy.

In his mind, there is no confusion: seafarers are truly key workers, working tirelessly to discharge their duties

on the front line so we can all have our daily necessities and fight the pandemic. Sadly, they have not received the public recognition they deserve. "It must be our industry's biggest regret – that despite all the good shipping is doing for the world, the world is not understanding the plight of the individuals who serve onboard," he says.

With the vaccine rollout underway throughout the world, there is light at the end of the crew-change tunnel for seafarers. But that is not an excuse for the industry to take its foot off the brake or lose ground on the achievements already made.

As a starting point, Bjørn urges that travel restrictions in place be eased for vaccinated seafarers. "Unfortunately, until today, when a country closes for seafarer travel, there is still no differentiation whether the seafarer is vaccinated or not. That's of course not workable – not only does it not solve the crisis, it

"It must be our industry's biggest regret – that despite all the good shipping is doing for the world, the world is not understanding the plight of the individuals who serve onboard"



also makes people ask the very relevant question: ‘if getting vaccinated does not change anything, why would I get vaccinated?’” The ultimate goal must be that all seafarers are afforded key worker status and once vaccinated they must be able to travel unimpeded to and from ships.

Bjørn’s achievements in supporting seafarers through the pandemic were recognised at the MtS Singapore Seafarers’ Awards, where he was presented with the Shore-based Award for the shore-based person who has made a significant contribution to seafarers’ welfare.

Future challenges

Looking beyond the current crisis, The Sea asked Bjørn how he sees the role of the seafarer being redefined to embrace autonomy and remote operations. He said that while he does not expect to see truly autonomous ships – capable of existing independently, without human oversight or interference – within his lifetime, he does believe that the industry is on the cusp of a spate of automation in shipping which will change the role of seafarers. However, technology will “augment more than replace” the humans onboard ships, he says, which will lead to the positive outcome of safer, better ships with fewer risks of human errors.

“I am hugely positive about the improvements that technology will bring, both in terms of physical and mental welfare,” he says. “What automation will do is take away the most mundane tasks and leave the humans to higher-level decision making, and that can only be positive.” He gives the example of the introduction of autopilot which meant the helm no longer needed to be manned 24/7, freeing up crew to do to undertake a greater variety of jobs.

There is also innovation on the horizon when it comes to communications. To-date, shipping has suffered from subpar communication technology. Even with very-small-aperture terminals (VSAT) the bandwidth has been too small and the cost too high for shipping to really be ‘hooked up’ and thereby able to take advantage of digitalisation. “That is changing, however,” says Bjørn. “With low-earth-orbiting satellites now being deployed in the thousands, cheap, ubiquitous broadband connectivity will soon be commonplace for remote locations all over the planet, including onboard ships. That will be a game changer as ships will then have the same level of connectivity as we have come to expect ashore.”




Anglo-Eastern Univan has worked hard to maintain contract lengths. These images were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic

Connectivity advantages

This has the added benefit of granting “always on” connectivity for seafarers, allowing them to keep in touch with friends and family at home and allowing access for remote content including news and TV. “This comes with its own set of challenges but is overall a great boon to a lifestyle that implies months on end away from home and it’ll be very welcome onboard,” he says. A ship will always remain a special place of work and living, and the basic premise of being a seafarer is not about to change. But with ships increasingly able to access the same information at the same time as can be accessed ashore, ships will become more connected, not just in a real, physical sense, but also in terms of belonging and purpose.

“Belonging and purpose are two of the biggest determinants of engagement and satisfaction on the job and I believe seafaring is going towards a bright future. Yes, you still have to be away from your family, friends and colleagues ashore, but you don’t have to be alone while being at sea.”

What this all boils down to is that people in this industry, whether at sea or ashore, need to feel valued and that they are contributing. For Bjørn, this means the provision of nutritious food, access and time to exercise, and real rest. “When those basic needs are met the best you can hope for is a sense of autonomy: you know what the job entails and you have appropriate freedoms to decide how to meet the job requirements, a sense of mastery or competence: you have the right tools, knowledge and attitude to do the job well, and a sense of purpose; and you understand how you belong to the ‘bigger picture’ and how what you do contributes to a mission beyond yourself.”

As the industry evolves, Bjørn remains confident that companies will continue to improve their provisions for seafarers. The proof will be a workforce that benefits from the motivation and satisfaction that comes with feelings of being valued and belonging. 

Urgent review of seafarer training

Teaching has not kept pace with change in the shipping industry, leaving crew ill-equipped to handle challenges

By Carly Fields

This year's UK Chamber of Shipping conference featured a People Panel, where experts gave their views on the new skills that will be expected of seafarers in the future. The discussions centred around innovation, shipping transition and the urgent need to update seafarer training.

Colin McMurray, group managing director of Stream Marine, kicked off the discussion by noting that tomorrow's seafarers will need a blend of skills and technology, breaking the former down into three distinct areas: higher cognitive skills – for example, advanced literacy and critical thinking; social and emotional skills – for example, soft skills, advanced negotiation skills and high levels of empathy; and leadership.

Philip Fullerton, managing director of Northern Marine, gave the view from a shipping company perspective. He observed that while traditional training has followed STCW requirements to cover competency skills, increased connectivity with ships and interaction between ship and shore means seafarers need higher levels of IT competence. He called for sizable changes to be made to current training to equip incoming seafarers with the skills they will need. "People lose touch with what we have today," he said. "Most of the training we do is outside of mandatory training

because there is a big gap in mandatory training. I think training should cover much more, with more competency-based criteria and competency reviews, perhaps at five-year intervals."

He also highlighted the rising importance of sustainability in shipping and the skills that will be needed to manage that, including handling of the proposed new marine fuels, such as ammonia and hydrogen.

Brian Johnson, chief executive of the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency, agreed that the big trends in play at the moment – including new fuels which are "an order of magnitude harder to handle than crude oil" – will bring a step change in seafarer training. "Seafarer education and the way we deliver it – we will have to get used to change at a pace that we have not been used to in the past.

He also recognised that people going to sea are spending less time in the seafaring part of their career and therefore seafarers need to be prepared at the training stage not only for a life at sea, but also for a life onshore.


Key priorities

Changes to seafarer training – within the constraints of STCW – are urgently needed as the industry transitions through a period of great change. For Mr Johnson, these changes need to

focus on four key priorities:

1. Training should be based on a judgment of capability, not time.
2. Leadership and personal skills should be brought into training.
3. Greater use of simulation.
4. Addressing sea-time consistency, improving it and thinking about ongoing college tutoring while the seafarer is at sea.

Meanwhile, Gemma Griffin, vice-president of human resources and crewing at DFDS, called for a focus on leadership and an examination of future career opportunities for seafarers onshore. "We have to do a body of work on the concept of taking a ship-based person into a shore-based environment. We need to ensure that all these fantastically competent people that we have on vessels are trained and can be immersed in the onshore environment," she said.

Here, Mr Johnson had an interesting suggestion based on his experiences in the Royal Navy. The Navy takes a cyclical approach to seafaring, he explained, where sailors go to sea, come ashore, go to sea and then come ashore in a continuous cycle. Whereas in the UK merchant navy, seafarers are either at sea or onshore, with no rotation. "Giving people a more rounded early career adds real value and would probably improve retention in the sector," he concluded. 



Seafarer training needs to evolve to cover the hot topics of today and tomorrow

Credit: Jamie Smith/their job safely

Long tail of crew travel disruption

Some altered working practices related to crew rotations are here to stay

By Nikos Gazelidis

The pandemic has brought with it a whole host of challenges never seen before within the shipping industry. To overcome these, marine companies have taken things into their own hands by introducing new, innovative approaches to crew travel. Through research conducted during CrewConnect Global 2020, ATPI Marine & Energy found that crew changes are now significantly more time consuming and stressful compared to before the pandemic. We have also seen new ways of working, some proving to be successful and likely to last well into the future.

Factoring essential quarantine requirements into crew contracts is a change predicted to continue. With so many varying requirements across borders worldwide, until there is a consistent and successful worldwide approach to vaccination programmes and travel, quarantine and isolation periods will remain for the foreseeable future.

Crew charter flights were a very rare occurrence before the global pandemic but over three quarters of shipping businesses have now reported making use of specially commissioned charter flights to enable crew changes to happen. As airlines continue to operate with reduced fleets and networks and lower capacity to weather the economic storm, the increased use of private charters, particularly for large movements of crew, is here to stay.

Crew change costs have increased significantly over the course of the pandemic and are a major challenge for the shipping industry. Higher costs will linger in some areas, for example the cost of flights. Costs for popular, high demand routes with low capacity due to continuous restrictions will continue to soar for some time.

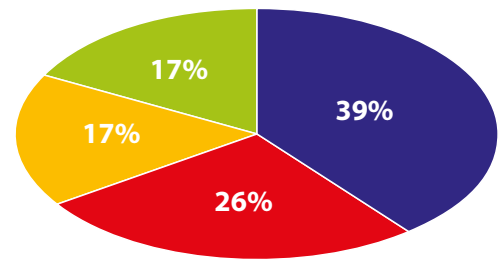
Longer contract periods are a new normal. A tactic used to reduce costs, these extended contracts are likely to be used by shipping organisations into the future. Longer contracts also help to reduce any risks associated with changeovers, as well as easing the amount of administration time required to make crew changes possible in the current circumstances.

Enhanced forward planning

Uncertain times bring with them a greater

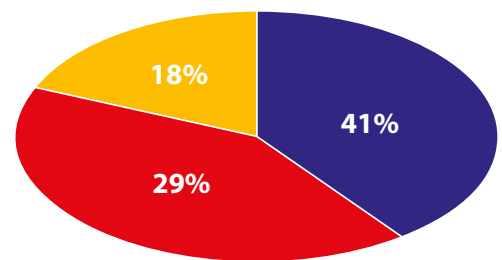
Crew change time increases in 2020

- 1.5x longer
- 2x longer
- 3x longer
- 4x longer



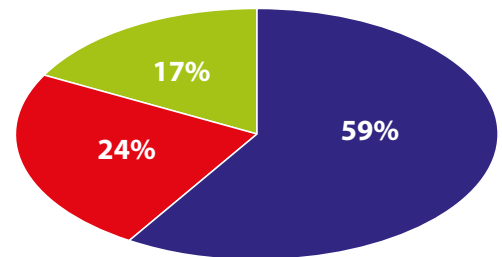
Planned changes to crew changes include:

- Consolidating to one team/location
- Consolidating on/off signers to one team/location
- Automation via a crew management system



Crew travel booking is a process that is best..?

- Outsourced
- Done in-house
- Hybrid of the two




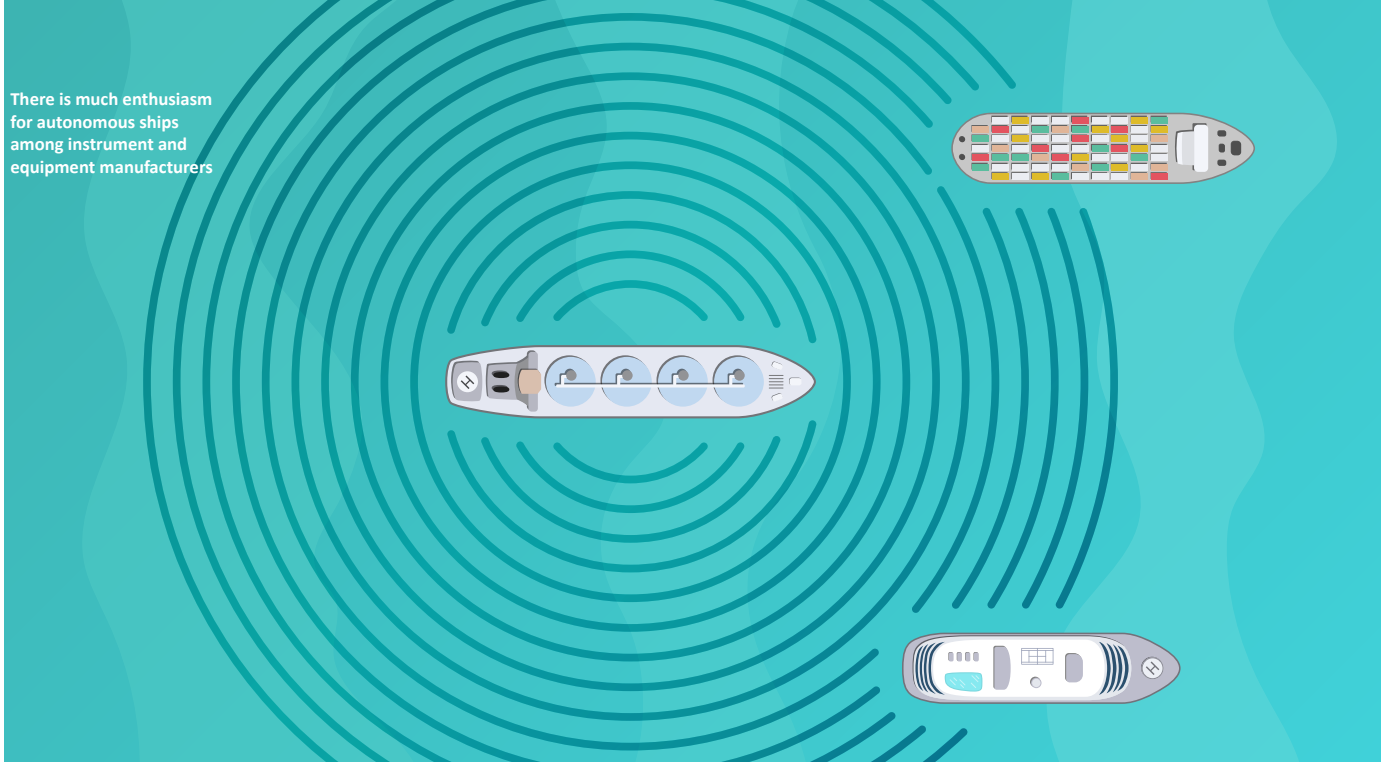
Source: ATPI.com

need for planning in order to consider all possible outcomes. Driven by a desire to mitigate higher travel costs, lengthy planning periods will remain important well into the future. While steps are being taken in the right direction to get crew changes back on track, we are still a way off any global commitment that seafarer travel will be prioritised.

Greater technology integration and proactive solutions to enhance forward crew change logistics planning are areas that shipping companies have been investing in heavily throughout the pandemic. These integrated systems can help to identify challenges that, otherwise, may prevent a successful crew change in the future and at the same time provide significant cost savings. This investment in technology has been accelerated by the pandemic and is something that has proven its worth. It

is an area that will only see greater focus into the future.

Shipping companies have managed to overcome a range of hurdles throughout the course of the pandemic, many never seen before within the marine industry. With crew changes highlighted as being twice as stressful and time consuming as pre-pandemic, ATPI Marine & Energy is just one of the businesses continuing to push for change on behalf of its shipping clients. Navigating these uncertain times can be difficult, especially with many of these changes likely to continue well into the future. The support of a trusted travel management company is invaluable in assisting shipping companies to traverse these uncharted waters.  Nikos Gazelidis is global head of marine at ATPI, a specialist travel provider to the energy and shipping sectors. Find out more at www.atpi.com.



Ships with a mind of their own

Do not underestimate the huge amount of regulatory review necessary to bring autonomous ships into the commercial shipping fold

By Michael Grey

With plenty of other things to worry about in the last year or so, we haven't heard so much about the quest for autonomous shipping. Covid-19 seems to have delayed the commissioning of the Norwegian coaster which will be controlled from ashore, although there has been the occasional news about experiments with remote-controlled tugs. I had a remote-controlled tug when I was about 13, which sank on our local boating lake, but I understand that the modern derivations are rather more advanced.

Serious advances have also been made in the use of autonomous naval craft for mine clearance, while the offshore world appears enthusiastic about their possibilities for seismic and underwater surveys. So, if ships with a mind of their own are to be let loose in the world of commercial shipping, it is important that their regulatory relationship with more conventional ships is fully formulated and understood. As the law stands, for instance, a ship at sea with no-one aboard might be considered a 'derelict', which means that anyone passing might put a line aboard and claim salvage! But that is just one of hundreds of laws, rules and regulations which need to be reviewed in the light of a possibly autonomous future.

All of which means that the International Maritime Organization

(IMO) has been on the case for some time, conducting what has been named a 'Regulatory Scoping Exercise' for the use of what are termed Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships, or MASS. In fact, there is a huge body of regulation, contained in all the various IMO conventions, which need to be reviewed as to their application to MASS appearing around the world's seaways. The scoping exercise has had to be very wide-ranging indeed and has thrown up all sorts of questions that will have to be answered, from the obvious – like the application of the Collision Rules – to the sort of qualifications that will be needed by a remote operator.

Steps forward

There has been important agreement on some of the more basic definitions surrounding 'autonomy', with four degrees of autonomy identified. The most basic has been termed 'decision support', where there is a degree of automation aboard a ship, with instruments or equipment helping a crew to operate their vessel. You might suggest that we are a long way into this stage already. The second degree provides for a certain amount of remote control, but with seafarers aboard the ship who are able to take control if required. The third and more adventurous degree of autonomy will see a ship with no-one routinely on board, controlled remotely from ashore, with somebody sitting in a comfortable chair looking at the read-

outs from all the ship's sensors. The final degree, which would take a great deal of faith if it is to be applied to commercial shipping, would be full autonomy, with the ship clever enough to make decisions of its own.

The scoping exercise has unsurprisingly found very few IMO regulations that do not need to be evaluated in the light of MASS developments, and they have been sorted into degrees of urgency to make future progress practical, amid all the other work that IMO has to do. The development of maritime law and the role of insurers also have to be considered. Who, for instance, is the 'Master' of a ship controlled from ashore with no-one aboard? Who takes liability when something goes badly wrong? Who is in charge?

It has to be said that while there is a lot of enthusiasm among those making sophisticated instruments and clever computers for MASS, the shipping industry is keeping an open, even sceptical, collective mind. The challenge for the promoters of MASS will be not only the development of these vessels, but convincing the industry that there are any advantages in using them. There have, after all, been very advanced ships built in the past, but in most cases their huge capital and development costs has left them unable to compete against conventionally and cheaply manned, more basic vessels. Time alone will tell. [See Michael Grey's cartoon on pg 14.](#)



By Sudhir Malhotra

One rung at a time

Crew must be properly trained on the use, storage and maintenance of pilot ladders to avoid serious injuries to pilots

Pilot ladders are critical equipment for ensuring the safety of personnel who use them to board and disembark vessels. The incorrect rigging of pilot ladders can result in severe injury or tragic loss of life; the penalties imposed in certain jurisdictions may lead to considerable fines and/or imprisonment of the ship's crew.

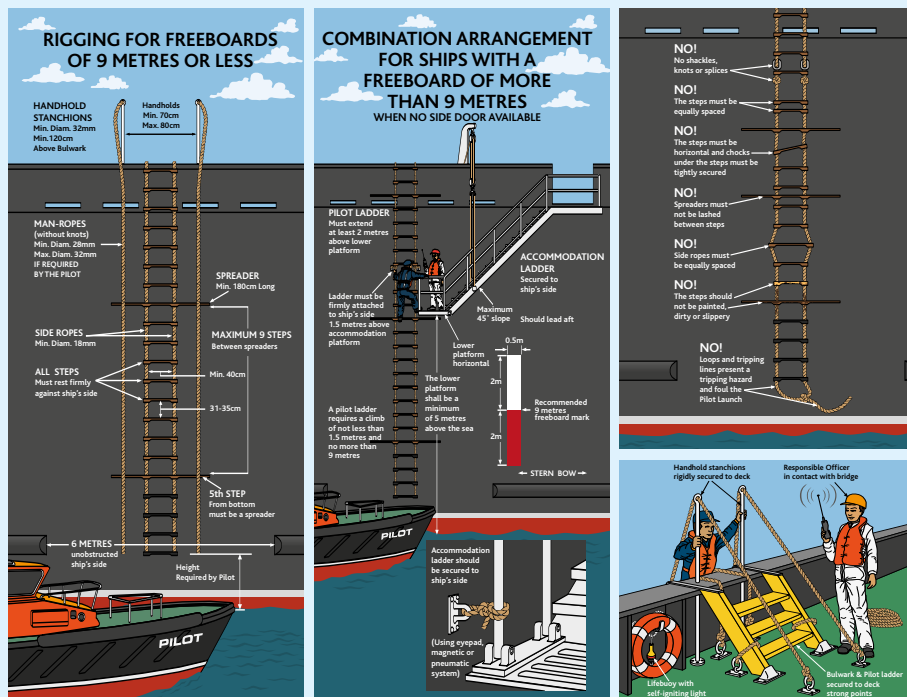
In recent years, the Standard Club has seen numerous pilot ladder incidents. Within policy years 2014-2020, the club dealt with 27 incidents in which pilot ladders were involved, and personnel were either injured (often seriously) or lost their lives.

In a February 2021 TradeWinds article, the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA) voiced its frustration at many vessel operators not complying with safety regulations for pilot ladders, with old or overused ladders being used or being incorrectly rigged by the vessel's crew. Most non-compliances were due to pilot ladder steps not being horizontal, or ladders not being fully secured against a ship's hull.

In the same article, the IMPA noted instances where pilots, having initially refused to use a non-compliant ladder, were then offered a compliant ladder which the seafarers had kept aside for Port State Control inspections. Such a practice to reduce expenses only compromises safety, risks lives and can lead to very expensive claims.

SOLAS Chapter V/Regulation 23, deals specifically with pilot transfer arrangements as does IMO Resolution A.1045(27) and amendment A.1108(29). IMO MSC.1/Circ.1428 and its Annex illustrates required boarding arrangements for pilots as seen in the graphic.

The rigging of the pilot ladder and embarkation of the pilot are the responsibilities of the ship's staff and a responsible officer should supervise its rigging while having a means of communication with the bridge when the pilot embarks/disembarks. The rigging of the pilot ladder may be delegated to an experienced seaman,



To view the full graphic and to print a copy for free, visit www.impahq.org/admin/resources/finalimpapladderposter.pdf.

but the final responsibility remains with the duty officer. The company is responsible for training the crew so they are proficient in rigging the pilot ladder, and the utmost importance must be given to this operation.

Adhering to rules

In accordance with SOLAS requirements, the appliance used for pilot transfer shall be kept clean, properly maintained and stowed, and shall be regularly inspected to ensure that it is safe to use. The appliance shall be solely used for the embarkation and disembarkation of personnel.

Safe and convenient access to and egress from the ship must be provided to the pilot. The pilot ladder must be positioned and secured such that (among other things):

- It is clear of possible discharges (for example from scuppers) from the ship.
- It is within the parallel body length of the ship and, as far as practicable, within the mid-ship half length of the ship.
- Each step rests firmly against the ship side.
- Due allowance is made for all

conditions of loading and trim of the vessel, and for an adverse list of 15°.

Combination ladders must be rigged in accordance with the specifications noted in SOLAS Chapter V/Regulation 23. The requirements for access to ships' decks and for shipside doors are also specified in SOLAS. Mechanical pilot hoists shall not be used.

Despite the many technological advancements in the shipping industry, pilot ladder incidents do regularly occur, often resulting in serious injury and sometimes tragic fatalities.

The importance of properly rigging pilot ladders can never be underestimated. Due care, proper maintenance of equipment, a thorough understanding of SOLAS requirements and best practice, and attention to detail when rigging the ladder would greatly assist with minimising such incidents. Crew training on the proper rigging of pilot ladders would also go a long way in preventing such incidents from occurring.

Sudhir Malhotra is a marine surveyor at the Standard Club, a protection & indemnity club. Find out more at www.standard-club.com.

theSea Leisure Page

There are many health benefits to spending down-time solving puzzles. Lower stress levels, better memory, improved mood, improved problem-solving abilities, and better work performance are just some of them.

Sudoku

The aim of Sudoku is to fill in the empty cells so that each column, row and 3x3 region contain the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once. Find the answers to both puzzles in the next issue.

EASY LEVEL

1	2	5						
		6	7	9	4			
7	9	3	1					
8	2		6	1	3			
3	6						2	4
		7		3	5		6	8
			1	7	4		3	
	7		5	8	6			
			4	7	5			

TRICKY LEVEL

3	2					4		
					2			
6			4	3			8	
7		9		1	6			
8			3				4	
	9	4		8			7	
4		6	2				5	
	1							
6				8	3			

Credit: www.sudokuoftheday.com

MEDIUM LEVEL

solution (Issue 1 2021)

5	1	9	6	2	3	7	4	8
3	8	4	7	9	1	2	5	6
2	6	7	4	5	8	1	9	3
6	7	2	1	4	9	3	8	5
4	9	1	8	3	5	6	2	7
8	3	5	2	7	6	4	1	9
1	4	8	5	6	7	9	3	2
9	5	6	3	1	2	8	7	4
7	2	3	9	8	4	5	6	1

FIENDISH LEVEL

solution (Issue 1 2021)

8	5	4	3	6	2	1	7	9
3	6	1	8	7	9	5	2	4
9	7	2	1	4	5	8	6	3
2	1	7	4	3	6	9	5	8
5	8	3	2	9	7	4	1	6
6	4	9	5	8	1	7	3	2
1	9	8	7	2	3	6	4	5
4	2	5	6	1	8	3	9	7
7	3	6	9	5	4	2	8	1

Jumble

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to thesea@missiontoseafarers.org by October 30, 2021. All correct answers will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a Mission to Seafarers' Goodie Bag, containing a pen set, mug and handmade woolly hat. Please include your answers, name, the vessel you are working on, your nationality and finish this sentence: "I like The Mission to Seafarers because..."

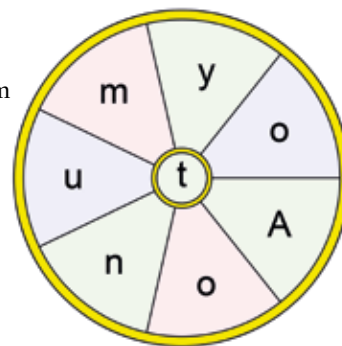
1) Becry 2) Ginshihp 3) Aherkc 4) Alarmwe

Issue 1, 2021 solutions:

1) Radar 2) Charts 3) Satellite 4) Radio

Word wheel

This word wheel is made from an eight-letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter T.



Answer for Issue 1, 2021:

24 possible words, seven-letter word was Vaccine

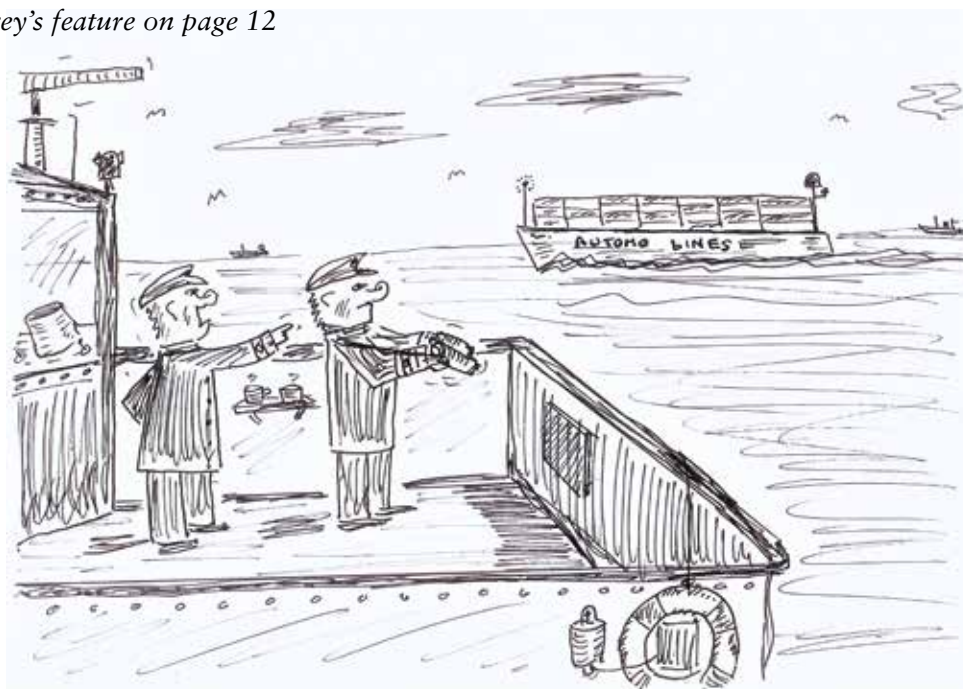
Flag code

Can you tell us what word these flags are communicating? Answer in the next issue.

Answer for Issue 1, 2021: Cruising



See Michael Grey's feature on page 12



It could be autonomous, or the builders might just have forgotten the accommodation!

Help for seafarers around the world

Are you one of the 1.5 million people around the world working at sea, or a loved one of someone who is?

The Mission to Seafarers is a great source of support for anyone working in the industry, and we've been helping people like you since the 19th century.

We work in over 200 ports in 50 countries and are available 365 days a year. We can provide help and support, no matter your nationality, gender or faith. Our network of chaplains, staff and volunteers can help with any problem – whether it's emotional, practical or spiritual help that you need.

Our services include:

- **Ship visits** – we carry out approximately 70,000 ship visits a year, welcoming crews to ports, providing access to communication facilities and offering assistance and advice on mental health and wellbeing.
- **Transport** – Our teams can arrange free transportation to the local town, shopping mall, doctor, dentist or a place of worship.
- **Seafarers' Centres** – We operate over 120 Flying Angel centres around the world, offering visiting seafarers a safe space to relax between voyages, purchase supplies, seek support for any problems they might have and stay in touch with their families.
- **Emergency support** – Our teams are trained in pastoral support, mental health first aid and critical incident stress counselling. We can also provide advocacy support.
- **Family networks** – We operate these networks in the Philippines and India where seafarers' families can meet, share information and access support.

Our mission is to care for the shipping industry's most important asset: its people.

To find out where we work, visit www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports. Here you can find information about all our centres, including contact details, facilities and opening times.



CREW HELP CONTACTS

SeafarerHelp

Free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, provided by ISWAN.

Direct dial: +44 20 7323 2737

Email: help@seafarerhelp.org

Chat to a Chaplain

You can now connect instantly with a chaplain via our new 24hr chat service. Whatever you want to talk about, simply go to our website and click 'Chat' in the bottom right corner of the screen:

www.missiontoseafarers.org/

CrewHelp

The Mission to Seafarers can provide help and support if you have a welfare or justice issue.


Please get in touch with us at crewhelp@mtsmail.org


Get in touch!


Have you got news or views that you'd like to share with The Sea? Please get in touch with the Editor, Carly Fields at thesea@missiontoseafarers.org.

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DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS:


Power of food to the soul

Finding a solution for a rice emergency meant more than a simple addition to the menu


I had an emergency message sent to me on Facebook Messenger last week. A cook on one of our regular vessels, who I have known for several years, was in crisis. He had taken a stock check and had assumed the large sacks of bulgur wheat were rice. He was going to run out of rice before the next bunkering of the ship. "Please could you bring a 20 kg bag of rice on board," his message read.

As readers will know, every cook on a Filipino crewed vessel serves rice with each meal. There is a saying in the Philippines, 'no rice no power'. Rice is part of life on board and is an almost sacred part of Philippine culture. When you are working long hours, often in hard, cold and wet conditions, the thing you look forward to most is your next meal. One thing was certain, if the cook did not have rice for the next meal, he would not be looking forward to it.

My local supermarket was the nearest place to get rice. My heart sank when initially all I could find was one-pound bags. However, on the bottom shelf were ten kilo bags. So, I took two 10 kg bags to the ship on my visit. The cook was very grateful. I had the feeling that things may not have gone so smoothly if the rice had not been delivered.



Food played a major part in Jesus' ministry. He regularly met with people over food and drink, he fed the 5,000 with bread and fish, he cooked breakfast on the beach, and he shared bread and wine at the Last Supper. He knew how important food was to people. He knew that love and care was often best shown through hospitality. Sharing food and eating together is a God-given gift

and should be appreciated, valued and protected. He also made clear, however, that we need to look after our spiritual lives as well as our physical bodies. Prayer and reflection are equally important. After all, we 'cannot live by bread alone'.  The Revd Tim Tunley is The Mission to Seafarers chaplain in Scotland and can be contacted on +44 (0)7581 625941.

A prayer for seafarers

Father God, you gave us in your son a perfect example of self-giving endless love. We ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may give ourselves in love and service to one another. Help us to remember that all service is sacred to you. Remind us constantly that you are concerned for all parts of our lives. Support us all in generous living. Amen.

Please support us on
Sea Sunday, 11 July 2021

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For more information or to order a pack visit seasunday@missiontoseafarers.org or call 020 7246 2939

