

# HOMeward BOUND – A LIVERPOOL-WEST AFRICA MARITIME HERITAGE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Alan Dean

Interviewer: Nick White

Date: 21/07/2016

File Name: ADHB001/ADHB002

## TRACK ONE – ADHB001

[01:00] Career – attended Birkenhead School, left July 1953; started role in post room on 10<sup>th</sup> August '53; description of sorting mail and delivering mail; the 'Dock note'; [04:20] The 'Dock Run'; [05:25] Shipping magazines sparked interest; [05:41] Promoted to Accounts on same floor as the pursers; eventually moved to Pursers Dept.; May '54 sailed on the *Zungon*; [06:48] reference to Paddy Hendersons; ship-building programme at ED; description of maiden voyage with all Scottish crew; [08:20] sailed under Jimmy Whitehead as master on voyage to West Africa; [08:40] initial two years on Paddy Hendersons ships; 9 months on *Aureol*; 1 voyage on *Ebanj*; 3 voyages on *Cochrane*; 5 years as Assistant Purser, promoted to full Purser for remainder of career; [09:50] description of role of Purser, responsibilities for cargo, ships' manifests, tally clerks, also broken and pilfered cargo; [11:44] responsible for accounts for crew on board, up to 45 men; all cash transactions on board; [13:10] aware of ED at school as a career path; no seafaring background; [14:00] left ED, end of 1980s; containerisation as a means to control pilferage; [15:30] Pay and conditions - £16 per month starting; description of uniform stripes denoting seniority; [16:30] first job as Purser on *Accra*; then sailed on *Apapa*; [17:30] Leave arrangements – approx. 4 days per month; [18:10] Training – not much training, clerk travelled with Assistant Purser; differing approaches to job; [19:05] first trip in charge was on *Cochrane*, still learning on the job; [20:00] description of tallying cargo for homeward bound journey; process of making cargo plan; pressures to complete cargo plan before departure; [21:40] most challenging job – the accounts; 45 column portage bill with 40 or 50 crew; dealing with wages books, log books, discharge books; [23:08] Family life while at sea – married in '62, wife from seafaring family; wife worked in cable dept. of EDL in Liverpool; sailed on nine month charter before wedding, had to travel back quickly to make wedding; [25:11] Communication - anecdote re: cable sent by wife to port with instructions to change ships from *Aureol* to *Winneba* to replace assistant purser taken ill; [26:00] happy memories of being at sea, hard graft but got to know everybody; [27:00] interactions with passengers – changing cash, dealing with complaints; passengers mostly workmen going to jobs in WA; [28:00] voyage with stops in London – Madeira – Freetown – Takoradi – Lagos; [29:00] no problem with sealegs; bad weather in Bay of Biscay [30:40] sailed on *Winneba* from '58-'60; wanted to go on American service; 'S' class ships usually sailed, did 2 or 3 ships at once; sailed on *Salaga* for 6 months; only single header journeys, 5 or 6 months; other voyages could last up to 12 months; [32:40] no choice over voyages; [33:40] relations with Masters – good, everyone got on in respective roles; [34:30] experiences of West Africa - first impressions of a new country; [35:00] description of tropical uniform from firms called 'Bakers' and Miller, Raynor and Hayson in Liverpool; tailor in Lagos for the 'whites' uniform on each voyage; discussion of tailoring and prices in Lagos and Liverpool; [37:40] no favourite WA country; voyages down the coast; [39:30] 6 years on *Fian*, 29 voyages; 12 voyages on *Deido*; 8 voyages on *Aureol*; 12 on *Freetown*; [40:30] comparison of British with Portuguese colonies – clean; [41:30] Race relations on board – description of crew ethnicities; mostly Freetown crew on deck; approx. 75 'Kroo boys' for deck work; Nigerian greasers and stewards; [43:20] no problems with African crew; [43:30] changes with Nigerian independence; Nigeria became 'uppity'; changes to names after independence ; list of port names; [44:55] surf boats, description of crew and process on

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surf boats – 10 Ghanaian crew rowing by hand ; [46:00] Anecdote re: surf boats discharging cargo; [47:30] Never visited surf ports; [48:30] French territories – more cultured; knowledge of French from school, useful in WA; [50:20] French ports less haphazard than English ports; [50:45] relations with tally clerks, all Africans, part of 75 ‘Kroo boys’ taken onboard; tally clerks had cabins, 5 per cabin; engine boys slept in engine room; washroom clerks slept in washroom; the other ‘Kroo boys’ slept in tents on deck, primitive set-up; [52:30] some visits to ports – Monrovia, American influence; Port Harcourt, experienced bars on natives in certain places; [53:30] fortnight spent in Freetown – travelled up country; stayed with African lady named Lucy Bishop; [55:00] Cargo – outward, general cargo – steel, vehicles, cement; homeward bound – palm kernels, groundnuts for Levers in Bromborough; [57:25] groundnut and palm oil; anecdote re: broken down heating coil in tank; [58:15] Latex to USA from Liberia; [58:40] no particularly difficult cargo – homeward bound, lots of small bags; [59:30] Ingots up to 3 feet long; [1:00:00] carried gold once, accompanied by armed guard; also tin ore from Nigeria’s tin mines; coastal ships bringing cargo down the coast; [1:02:25] USA ports – Montreal, highly civilised and clean; also visited Boston, Baltimore, Savannah, Georgetown, Norfolk, Philadelphia, New York, Halifax; [1:04:00] wooden port deck in Savannah, Georgia; [1:04:50] New York – spent a week in port; visited Radio City Music Hall; [1:06:30] Visited some continental ports, particularly liked Denmark; Anecdote re: ferries from Wallasey sent to Zeebrugge, damaged in war; [1:08:55] bunkering at Las Palmas; picked up cork and wine in Madeira; customs limitations; [1:10:40] description of personal items purchased – embroidery from Las Palmas and madeira; elephant tables from West Africa; [1:12:00] woman named Maggie Duncan in Takoradi, could source items for seafarers; her niece married a white cadet who became a Crew Manager in Takoradi; [1:13:30] Social life – fishing, football teams, table tennis tables, bingo, horseracing, the ‘daily run’ (bets on distance travelled per day); [1:16:50] End of EDs – moved to United Arab Shipping; job in Kuwait lined up then took job in Jeddah as money and leave were better; worked in Saudi Arabia for six years; [1:19:40] Wife accompanied on some ED voyages; also to Saudi for one month at a time; good living facilities in Saudi Arabia; [1:21:41] Working conditions and responsibilities in Jeddah – port had more than 50 berths; responsible for costings; relaxed, 8 hour days, 5 day weeks; [1:22:20] recollection of large shopping complexes, company cars and company buses to take family members shopping; wages tied to US dollar, earnings more than 5 times than at EDs; [1:24:20] awareness of decline of ED; involvement of Blue Funnel; [1:26:20] Anecdote re: Doctor Glanville from Bournemouth – drug addiction in aftermath of serious accident; [1:27:40] End of Elders; began collecting ‘Sea Magazine’ while sitting next to Michael Smye in the office; Smye also a collector; [1:33:30] Keep up with former colleagues; huge collection of memorabilia, concern about what will happen to the collection; [1:34:10] Abiding positive memories of a good company; [1:35:10] brief discussion with wife re: trips taken; description of segregation; [1:36:11] reference to online ‘con’ re: descendent of Nigerian Royal Family; distrust of Nigerian people; friendliness of Ghanaians.

END OF TRACK ONE

TRACK TWO - ADHB002

[00:05] Recollection of first two Africans (Willie Agboh, from Accra and Nelsom Oyesiku) trained as management in Elders; anecdote re: snowfall during their first winter; [01: 35] became managers in Accra and Lagos; [03:00 – end] brief discussion of collection of model buses and other memorabilia relating to EDs and shipping in general. END OF INTERVIEW