

## Escort towage steps up a gear in Southampton

*My plea for something a bit more “contemporary” has elicited this contribution from my friend and ex-colleague, John Mileusnic. John has been a Southampton Pilot for 17 years and a “choice” Pilot for Esso for the past 12.*

A new arrival to be based at the Fawley Marine Terminal is the purpose built escort tug *TENAX*. Operated by Solent Towage, a wholly owned subsidiary of Østensjø Rederi AS, the *Tenax* will work alongside the tug *Thrax* under the overall management of Captain Nick Jeffery. She has a crew of six, comprising Master, Mate, Chief Engineer and three Seamen. Two of the Seamen are also assigned duties on Solent Towage’s smaller tugs, purpose built to handle coastal traffic and run moorings at Fawley.

Since the early nineties active escorting through the Solent has been compulsory for loaded tankers greater than 60,000 tonnes dead-weight bound to and from Fawley. Inward vessels are now met 4 miles south of the Nab tower and the tug is secured aft as soon as is practicable for the 25 mile passage to the berth.

Outward bound in ballast condition the tankers are escorted until they have completed the West Bramble turn and are clear of Cowes, some 5 miles from the berth.

Powered by two Rolls Royce Bergen type C25 diesel engines driving Voith propulsion units the *Tenax* has a standard bollard pull of 70 tons, but is able to apply a steering force and braking force at 10 knots of 150 tons. The escort line is 80mm Steelite with a breaking strain of 500t and in addition the tug is also equipped with a 57mm wire tow line with a breaking strain of 233t.

As well as escorting and ship handling at Fawley the

*Tenax* has two 1500m<sup>3</sup>/hour fire pumps powering a water monitor and a water/foam monitor. Should the need arise the oil spill response capabilities of the vessel has been enhanced by the Norlense 600S oil boom and a Desmi Oil Skimmer linked to three recovered oil tanks with a capacity of 146.5 m<sup>3</sup>. The navigation equipment is extensive allowing the *Tenax* to operate off shore if required with a communications suite that includes UHF and air band radio. This high standard of equipment coupled with a ships office that can be rapidly converted gives the

*Tenax* the flexibility of operating as an on scene emergency command post. One unique feature of all Ostensjo tugs, designed by a tug skipper following an incident in Norwegian waters, is a wire basket with a buoy at each corner attached to the crane, which can be rapidly lowered over the side to recover a man overboard.



The crew live onboard for two weeks at a time and as a consequence the accommodation has been fitted out to the highest standard with six individual cabins all with en-suite facilities, messroom/dayroom, galley, changing room and separate laundry. Below decks there are numerous storerooms and a dedicated fitness/exercise room.

Following extensive trials and crew training the *Tenax* is now a regular sight at Fawley and throughout the Solent when operating in the escort mode. A program of joint training with the tug masters and pilots on simulators and in open waters is on-going enabling the *Tenax* to be used by all to its designed capabilities.