

Forty Years On

It was forty years ago this month, in June 1972, that the *Tokyo Bay* made her inaugural trip for OCL into Southampton Container Terminal. One of the 3rd generation 'Liverpool Bay Class' container ships, she was 290m in length and 32 m beam. Her Gross tonnage is variously quoted as 58889 or 56822 and her Dwt was 48544. She could carry 2961 boxes or TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent

Units) and was said at the time to replace 8 (9? -10?) conventional cargo ships.

Here she is backing up round a cable ship on 203 to the new container berths, 204 and 205.

The Alexandra Towing Co tug is the *Brockenhurst* which later sank alongside her berth in Liverpool in 1984. Her sister ship, the *Brocklebank*, is now a preserved museum tug, also in Liverpool. The Red Funnel tug is either the *Thorness* or the *Dunnose* and I suspect there is another tug on the stern, out of sight.

These tugs would have had bollard pulls in the region of 17 to 20 tons.

The photograph was taken by and reproduced here with the kind permission of Dr.Allan Ryszka-Onions who is now the secretary of the Solent Maritime Society.

Moving on 20 years, below is the *Tokyo Bay* again, now in P&O livery, on 205

berth. Two other regular visitors are there too, the *Hamburg Express* on 204, and the *S.A. Sederberg*, passing them and bound for the new 206 berth. The two Red Funnel tugs are the *Hamtun* and *Sir Bevois*, local historic names (as are the two lions that guard the Bargate) for a local tug company. They were built in 1985 and each had a bollard pull of 34 tons.

The after tug is ready to move round to the stern and apply the brakes and will then move back alongside to push up and pin the ship alongside the fenders while she is being secured.



Tucked under the stern of the *Tokyo Bay* you can see a mooring boat, waiting to run the lines for the *Sederberg*.

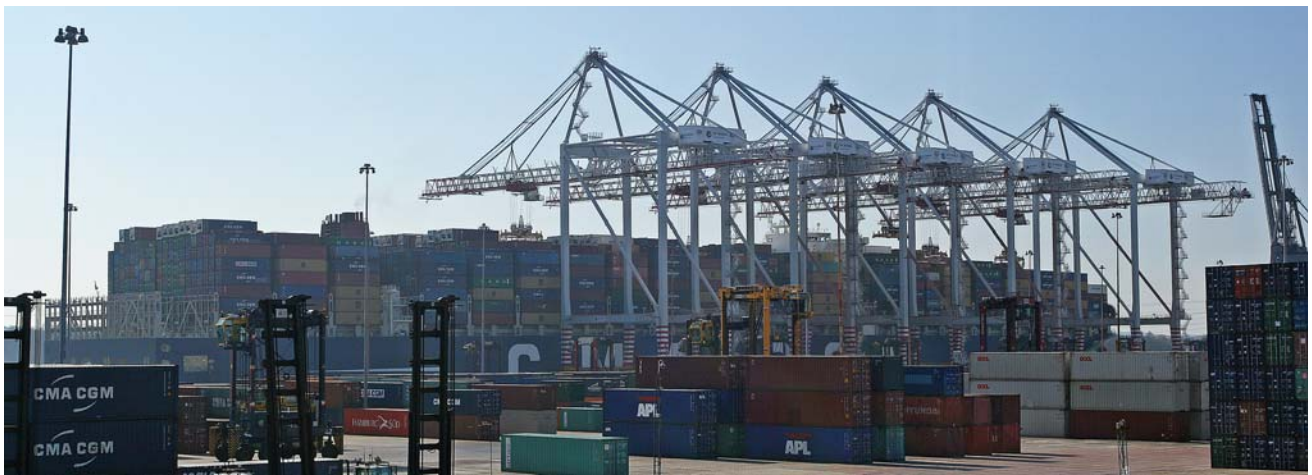
Things have moved on apace in the past few years. P&O CL merged with Nedlloyd in '97 and the *Tokyo Bay* went for scrap in '98. She wouldn't go quietly though and caught fire on the way to India, the crew being rescued by the *P&O Nedlloyd Barcelona*. She was towed first to Singapore and then on to the graveyard at Alang.

Nedlloyd bought out P&O's share in 2004 and was itself combined with Maersk- Sealand in 2005. As Sealand was the historic innovator of container shipping, the resulting Maersk Line now embodies the British, Dutch, American and Danish merchant marine legacy. (*Wikipedia*)

On the tug scene, Alexandra Towing was taken over by Howard Smith, an Australian company which, together with the Red Funnel tugs, was then taken over by Adsteam, another Australian outfit. They were then acquired by Svitzer, a Danish company who now operate all the big tugs in the port.

ABP itself has morphed from the nationalised British Transport Docks Board and is now privately owned by Admiral Acquisitions, a consortium of asset managers led by Goldman-Sachs. The container port is now operated by Dubai Ports World.

With the advent of yet bigger container ships, huge logistical problems have to be overcome, and not just those of length and depth on the berth. Taller and wider ships need taller and longer portainer cranes to service them. Cranes that do not come cheap, but cost multi-millions of pounds each. Compare the *Tokyo Bay*, with a deck load of 3 boxes high x 9 boxes wide, with the demented Rubik's



cube below, which has them 8 high and 20 wide! And three cranes per ship, as before, are no longer enough. Here we have five *super post-panamax* cranes and still room for more. And going are the conventional, adjustable pneumatic Yokohama fenders, which just put the far side of the ship another 3 metres or so away from the quayside. The new 207 berth had to be fitted with permanent fendering, at huge cost. I doubt that ABP was very pleased when, having built the berth to suit their favoured customer, Maersk Line upped and took their custom to Felixstowe!

The berth is also the furthest from the entrance to the port, some 30 miles from the pilot station. ABP now have the go ahead to re-develop the original container berths, 201-2, to suit these giants. At 550 metres, the combined length of the two berths will still only fit one such vessel as the one shown here: the French **CMA CGM Christophe Colomb**, seen here arriving in Southampton on 26th March 2012. The first of 8 Explorer class vessels, she is **365.5m** long, that's the same length as the now defunct No7 (King George V) dry dock. But at **41.2m** beam she is a full 10 metres wider than the dock and nearly 20m broader than the *Tokyo Bay*. Her gross tonnage is quoted at 153022 but what that actually represents now is beyond me. Dwt is 157092 but more apposite I think is her nominal box capacity of **13830 TEU**, that's more than 4½ times that of the *Tokyo Bay*. So one of these ships is the equivalent of 36 of the old time conventional ships. The ships I sailed on in the '60s had around 40 crew while these new ones can have as few as 13. Each man now has replaced around 100 of his predecessors. No wonder we struggle to recruit new club members! The tugs are the *Svitzer Surrey*, 42 tons bollard pull, for'd, and the *Svitzer Ferriby*, 70 tons b.p., aft.



This impressive photograph is from Andrew Sassoli-Walker again, now Control Supervisor, Marine Planning Dept., DP World.

This was not the first visit of the *Christophe*, she was here before in July '10. Her sister ship, *CMA CGM Magellan*, the second in the class, has also visited, in October '10 and again recently in April '12. Not only that, but the *Magellan* is registered in London, which means that we have had at least one British (flagged) container ship in the port in the past two years! Other sisters in the Explorer class have also visited: *Laperouse* on 2nd April, *Amerigo Vespucci* on 30th April and *Corte Real* on 14th May. TEC