



Captain Derric G. Webster
21.12.1930 – 27.02.2019

Born in Bradford Yorkshire in 1930, his interest in the sea was sparked when, in 1940, he was evacuated to Australia, as part of the Children's Overseas Reception Board scheme, aboard the Polish liner "Batory" for what would become a 10½-week voyage to Melbourne, via Freetown, Cape Town, Bombay, Colombo, Singapore and Fremantle.

Derric wrote in his, sadly unfinished, memoirs on being sent to Australia;

'Parents were assured that no effort would be spared to ensure the safety of the children on their voyages abroad, and what do they do?? Put 477 of us, plus escorts, on to a troopship – a legitimate target for U-boats, bombers, surface raiders, or anything else the Germans could throw at us!!!'

November 1945 saw the end his time in Australia, and the return home aboard the "Stirling Castle". It was this voyage that cemented Derric's career choice: he determined to go to Sea in the Merchant Service.

At the age of 16, in 1946, and after a year at Bradford Grammar School, he was indentured to the British Tanker Company (later to become BP) as Apprentice, and joined his first ship – the "British Zeal" – in February 1947 in Glasgow.

His Apprenticeship was terminated by mutual agreement 2½ years later when he actually got to "Sign-On Articles" as Third Mate (Uncertificated) aboard the "British Bugler" in Falmouth.

He remained as 3rd Mate with British Tankers until 1952, and the gaining of his 2nd Mate's Certificate, whereupon he joined the Union Castle Line, working his way up from 4th to 2nd Mate on their fleet of Royal Mail passenger & cargo liners running from the UK to South and South East Africa. Coincidentally, his first appointment was as Dock Staff on the "Stirling Castle".

In 1955 he left the Union Castle Line to join the General Steamship Navigation Company who owned a fleet of small, general cargo coasters trading around NW Europe and the Mediterranean. Derric joined as 2nd Mate on the "Petrel", and in 1957, he was promoted to Chief Officer on the "Lapwing". The year after that he obtained his Foreign-Going Master's Certificate of Competency following a period of study at the Sir John Cass College on the East India Dock Road.

In 1965 Derric was promoted to Master with General Steam, and then in 1967 he was seconded from GSN to North Sea Ferries and appointment as Chief Officer / Relief Master aboard the "Norwave."

He had now reached the pinnacle of his sea-going career; in 1969 the opportunity to get in at the beginning of the new cargo transport revolution – containerisation – arose, so he hung up his uniform, bought a house in Chandler's Ford and dropped anchor to take a desk job as Assistant Marine Operations Manager at Atlantic Container Line Services in Southampton – planning the stowage of numerous "boxes" on these big, new trans-Atlantic cargo liners, and ensuring the ships themselves remained safe and stable.

He continued in this role for a number of years before his knowledge and experience of general cargo operations made him uniquely qualified to take on the Management of the Company's "Special Projects" – those awkward pieces of large and heavy cargo that wouldn't fit inside a standard-sized box, and required (as it said on the tin) special considerations on the ro-ro decks! He loved the challenge of getting railway engines, generators, earthmovers, aeroplane parts and numerous other huge lumps of machinery from one side of the Atlantic to the other without damage to ship, crew or cargo.

A series of narrow-boat holidays during the seventies kindled a new interest in canals, and their importance to the transport history of the country. He became deeply involved through the eighties and nineties in the Inland Shipping Group of the British Waterways Board (eventually becoming Chairman;) an organisation dedicated to promoting the carriage of cargo on the inland waterways of Europe, in an attempt to alleviate the increasing HGV road traffic.

In the early 90's Derric retired, but he didn't stop: he continued his involvement in the Inland Waterways Association and the Watercress Steam Railway (further testament to his dedication to all things "transport"); and enjoyed an active social life catching up with his seafaring colleagues at the Southampton Master Mariners Club – the Cachalots, which he joined in 2005 – and ex-ACLS colleagues at the various re-unions they held.

Derric went aloft on 27th February following a short battle with cancer. He leaves behind 3 sons, 6 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren and is now reunited with his wife of 58 years, Marylyn. RIP.

JMW 18.03.19

