



BOLLARD---PULL---

United Towing & Salvage Society's Newsletter



NO.2 DECEMBER 2015



Editorial

Welcome to the second edition of 'Bollard Pull'. We hope that you will find that this issue is an improvement on the presentation of the first but that you will also find the contents equally as interesting.

The Society has been running now for nine months and we have been surprised at the progress we have made in such a short time. We have established links with the Maritime Museum and the History Centre in Hull and have an exhibition planned for 2016. We are actively pursuing the funding for a website to meet the needs of the Society now and in the future.

I hope you all will now have received the 'Galley Radio' newsletter that we hope will now be produced every couple of months to keep you up to date with what is planned and what we have achieved.

Our Constitution says we should 'seek to record and preserve photographs, artefacts and personal accounts related to the company United Towing and Salvage and of towing generally in the Humber region, and by sharing these with the general public and future generations.' We can't do that without the active participation of members and others interested in these matters. We look forward to sharing any thoughts you may have as to how we can best achieve these goals, but please think about submitting stories, yarns, or anecdotes about life in the Company, ashore, at sea or as a relative of somebody connected with the Company. We would love to see any photographs or items you may have that may be of interest to the Society and share them with others. Ultimately the 'Bollard Pull' is a vehicle for us to preserve information for the future and as such we have been asked to deposit a copy of every issue with the History Centre, The Carnegie Centre Library and the Maritime Museum in Hull for reference and to place in their archives.

It is good to note that through the little publicity we have had we have gained new faces, and new yarns, at the fortnightly socials held at the Kingston Hotel on Trinity Square in Hull. We would love to see you all there on Wednesday 23rd of December. What better way to get out of the last minute Christmas Shopping. The first of next year's meetings will be 6th and 20th January, 3rd and 17th February and 2nd, 16th and 30th March.

If you know anybody that has been connected with United Towing in any way or is interested in maritime Hull, or just nosey, please pass on our details as we would love to hear from them. The committee can be contacted at utandss@gmail.com and can be called on 01482 898717. I look forward to meeting you, or at least hearing from you in the next year.

Health, wealth and happiness to you and yours for 2016.

Tony Porter,
Chair, United Towing and Salvage Society.



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FROM GALLEY BOY TO TUG MASTER

Captain C.H. Noble. M.B.E.

STEAM TUG “MERMAN” AUGUST 1945

This was my very first tug, I'd left school at the age of fourteen unsure of what I wanted to do regarding employment, I always had a feeling that I would like to go to sea. I think because my grandfather was a Master in the Merchant Navy during the first world war. I never knew him because his ship called S/S Tummel was torpedoed off Yarmouth. One day I wandered down to Hull Corporation pier which I often did just to watch ships come and go, also to look at the ferry boat that sailed back and forth to New Holland with cars and passengers. Then one day whilst visiting Corporation pier I noticed a small tug boat called Merman moored alongside the jetty end so, being interested, I strolled over for a closer look. The crew were sat on the engine room casing, all had large mugs of something, must have been tea or coffee, however they must have noticed me looking at them, then a voice boomed out in a Scottish accent, “are you alright son and are you interested in the boat?” I then replied “yes.” He then invited me aboard for a look round, they gave me one of those large mugs full of tea, I had to hold it with both hands. I was then asked “how old are you then? I replied “fourteen.” The skipper, called James Cowie, then asked “would you like a job aboard? I said “I'd love to,” thinking he was kidding me, but he wasn't kidding, then I really didn't know what I was getting into. The skipper then said come with me. We both walked across the road and into a large office, written across the door of the office was a large sign saying United Towing Ltd. I then met the marine super and that's how I got my first job on tugs, what's more I had to start straight away. So along with Captain Cowie the tug skipper we returned back to the tug “Merman” - no sooner had we returned aboard, we got underway. I never had a clue where we was heading for, when I asked, they told me that we were going to

Alexandra dock jetty to take on coal. My first thought was that a coal lorry would come and put sacks of coal aboard like they did at home. I soon found out how, after mooring alongside the coaling jetty, a large steel chute was lowered into the tug hatches then the coal came with a roar into the bunker hatch. To me being green to the job it seemed tons upon tons came, but to me I'd never seen so much coal in one go. There was coal dust all over the tug including me when the hatches were full, some coal spilled out onto the deck, in fact quite a lot of it. However, the mate, a comic called Jackson shouted "what are you gawping at, grab a shovel," and myself and the rest of the crew started shovelling the coal that had spilled onto the deck into the tug bunkers. We shovelled the coal for about an hour, hell I was as black as a Kentucky minstrel and more, I said to the mate "can we have a rest?" he answered "not until the hook is clear," I thought to myself what the hell is he talking about the hook? It was then explained that the hook was where the tow rope went onto. However when the towing hook was cleared, the decks were washed down and we then proceeded towards Alexandra Dock. Whilst entering the lock pits a chap wearing an old trilby shouted down to our skipper some orders, apparently he was the tugs broker called Harold, can't remember his second name. He shouted next tide skipper, the time now was six o'clock pm I thought that we would be coming back to work next day, but I was in for quite a shock - apparently the next tide was three o'clock am the next morning. After entering the dock and mooring the "Merman" alongside, all hands aboard started going home. I was left standing on the tugs deck, then a voice shouted "pass our bikes up to us son" so one by one I passed the bikes ashore, five altogether. I then asked "what do I do now? the mate answered "get yourself home and be back onboard at two o'clock sharp." I said "you mean early morning?" they all laughed and said "oh yes because you have to come aboard one hour before the rest of the crew to trim the navigation lights and light them plus light the galley fire." Also the second engineer had to come early to raise steam. So there I was filthy and hungry, I had no money and wasn't quite sure where I was. However I got my bearings and headed

home walking. So from Alexandra Dock to home which was then North Hull Estate, I think, looking back took me about an hour and a half to walk. As I entered our house the first greeting was “where the hell have you been all day?” “ And just look at the state you’re in.” That was my mother, my brother Tom started laughing, I was still black from the coal dust, my father just sat there grinning. I blurted out “I’ve got a job on a tug boat.” Dad then said “shall you be getting paid?” However just after midnight next morning I set off walking back to Alexandra Dock, I was very tired, but I intended to carry on to my first job another hour and a half walk. I finally climbed aboard the “Merman,” I couldn’t see anybody, everything was pitch black. Then a head popped up from the engine room hatch, it was the second engineer called Bert Cooper, nice chap, his father was a tug skipper. However Bert, second engineer, took me under his wing, he said “never expected to see you again!” He then told me what I had to do, first rake out the ash from the galley fire grate, then get a handful of cotton waste, then soak the waste in paraffin, drop the soaked waste into the grate then put some chunks of coal onto the waste, then stand back and throw a match onto it, which I did and with a large whoosh away it went, galley fire lit. Next job fill a large kettle from a hand pump inside the galley, I then said to Bert “what next, is that it?” he laughed and said “no way, you now have to trim and light the navigation lights, consisting of two masthead lights, one port light, one starboard light, plus a stern light, fill them with paraffin and light them.” I remember it very well because to light them I used a roll of newspaper sticking one end into the galley fire then trying to be quick light each and every one, burning my finger ends. Three o’clock came and the rest of the crew came aboard. Their first words were, “have you mashed up yet?” I said “the kettles boiling.” I was then shown a large tea kettle, it was huge, it held seven pints of water. I put four large tablespoons of tea into the kettle and made the tea. So that was another job I had to do. Then another crew member explained that I hadn’t lit the cabin fire, but Bert the second told them to do it themselves. I think the crew were breaking me in gently, so that was my first twenty four hours on tugs. I

must say those early days were very rough indeed, but then again to me, at fourteen, it was a great adventure, (that was to last the next fifty years). Whilst being on the “Merman” we amused ourselves by raiding barges that were moored inside the dock, mind you we only did this between tides when the rest of the crew went home, and what I mean by the word us meant other deck boys from other tugs. To us it wasn’t worth going home because in those days we had to work every tide, during daylight hours we used to swim in the dock, then under dark hours we used to borrow small boats called coggie boats from barges then go from barge to barge lifting the hatch covers for a look see. These barges were loaded with practically everything, mostly food such as tinned fruit, cases of dried eggs, corned beef. After storing our loot on board the tug, we took the coggie boat back to the barge that we had borrowed it from, we lived a life of luxury, the only food we bought was bread. I remember my first pay packet which was the grand total of £1.50 of today’s money per week, a seven day week and almost twelve to fourteen hours a day, but we never grumbled we just got on with it.



Merman

Photo Charlie Hill collection

A month in the life of a tugman (part 1)

During the years Pete Elsom was employed as a mate by United Towing he used to keep a diary. Some extracts of this diary are published here. We will now enter life on board an oceangoing salvage tug in the year 1969, on board the "Englishman" to be more precise.

At 1100 hrs on 21 October, 1968, the Swedish tanker *Sitakund* was beached a mile from the foot of Beachy Head, near

Eastbourne promenade. Whilst on a ballast voyage from Wilhelmshafen to Libya, *Sitakund* was ripped by three explosions in the English Channel on 20 October.

Three crewmembers were lost and 31 inhospital with burns. *Sitakund* was taken in tow by the tug *Meeching* (British Rail), but ran aground. Two months later, in a gale, she broke in two just aft of the midship accommodation. The after part sank. The fore part was refloated on 30 December 1968 and towed to Falmouth by the tug *Englishman* (United Towing). Gas-freed in Falmouth, she was later towed to Spain for scrap. The aft part was raised on 16 June 1969 and also towed to Spain for scrap.

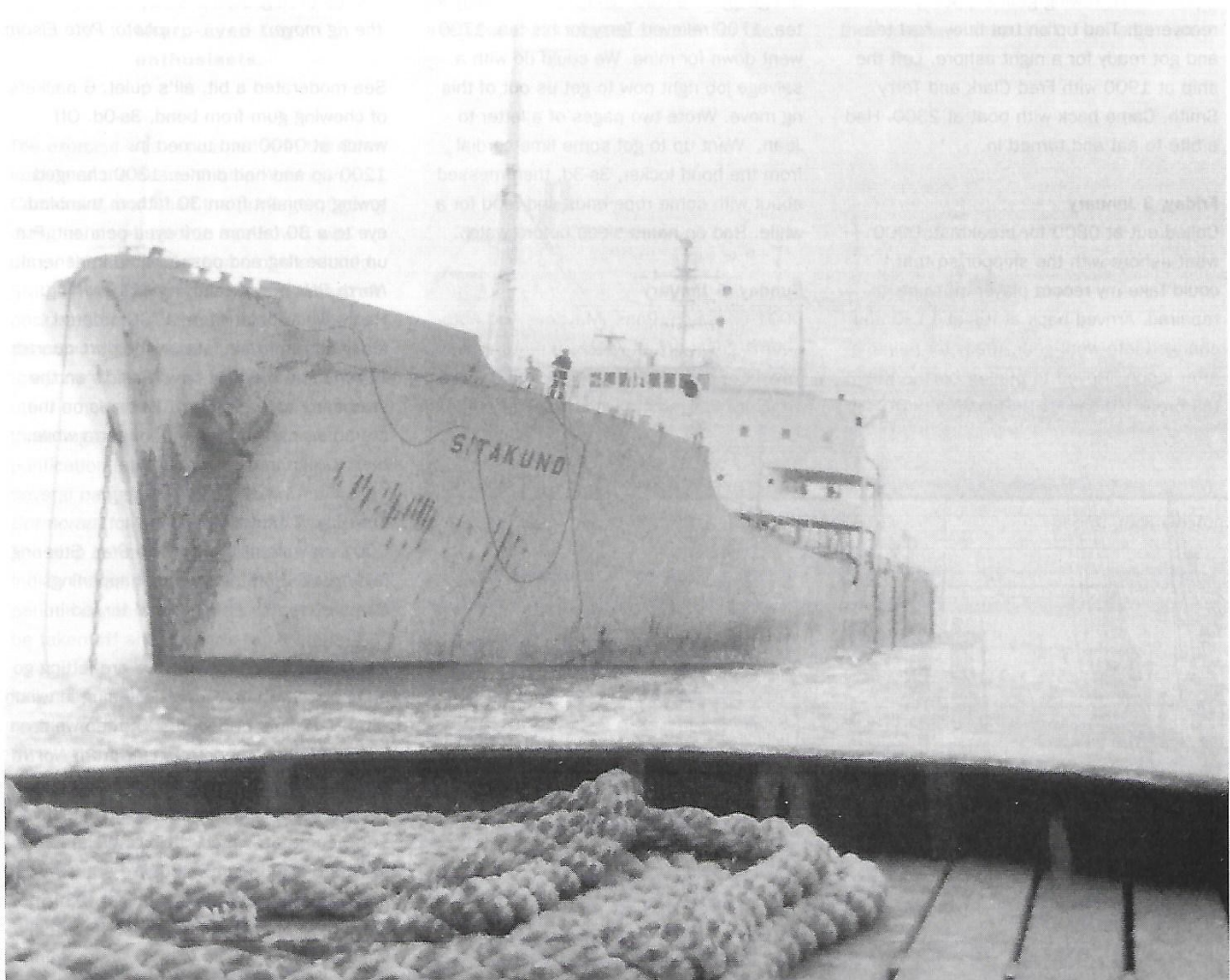
Wednesday, 1 January, 1969

0001 hrs. Came on watch. Position 6 miles south of the Isle of Wight, towing the fore-part of the Swedish oil tanker *Sitakund* to Falmouth. Came off watch 0430 and turned in. 1115 up again to do some dhobying, had dinner, and back on watch again.

1200 hrs. On watch, position at 1300 just south of Portland Bill. Nothing much exciting happening, steady progress. Came off watch at 1600 and had a glass of sherry. Completed dhobying from this morning, then relieved Terry Smith for his tea at 1700, before having mine. Wrote two letters after tea. Received a call from our office to advise that we may have to take *Sitakund* to Spain. Confirmation at 0900 in the morning.

Thursday, 2 January

On watch 0001. Steady watch, nothing out of the ordinary. Position at 0400 abeam of



Rigging the tow on board the SITAKUND, seen from ENGLISHMAN

Photo Pete Elsom.

Eddystone Lighthouse. Came off watch 0400, turned in 0420. Arrived Falmouth 1000. Called out to shorten in the towing gear. Dodging outside Falmouth until Harbour Master comes out to inspect *Sitakund* for oil leakage.



SITAKUND minus her aft part

photo: Pete Elsom.

On watch 1200 still dodging outside. Local tugs come out to assist us take tanker into repair berth. Towing gear slipped and recovered. Tied up on trot buoy, had tea and got ready for a night ashore. Left the ship at 1900 with Fred Clark and Terry Smith. Came back with boat at 2300. Had a bite to eat and turned in.

Friday, 3 January

Called out at 0800 for breakfast. 0900 went ashore with the skipper so that I could take my record player in, to be repaired. Arrived back at tug at 1130 and changed into work gear, ready for painting after lunch. Moved to bunker berth. After tea break we carried on painting until



ENGLISHMAN

Photo: Pete Elsom

bunkering was complete. Then we went back to moor on the buoy. 1700. Had tea, just after the agent came out to us and told the skipper that we had to proceed to the drilling rig *North Star*, off the northern coast of the Netherlands. Had a shower, read my book for an hour, then turned in for a while before watch. Hope we go back to Falmouth, which we might, to tow *Sitakund* to Spain for scrap, after she's been emptied, because my record player is still ashore there.

Saturday, 4 January

0001 on watch. Weather nice and calm, full moon last night so it is a lovely bright night. 0130 abeam of Portland Bill steaming easterly. Good weather forecast. Off watch at 0400 and turned in.

1145 called out for dinner. Got up, had a wash and went for dinner. 1230 on watch, weather good, forecast not. Abeam of Dungeness. 1400 abeam of Dover, speed 15 knots. 1500 eased down to half speed. 1600 came off watch. It is now 1620 and I am going for a wash and a shave, ready for tea. 1700 relieved Terry for his tea. 1730 went down for mine. We could do with a salvage job right now to get us out of this rig move. Wrote two pages of a letter to Jean. Went up to get some lime cordial from the bond locker, 3s-3d, then messed about with some rope ends and read for a while. Had an hours sleep before watch.

Sunday, 5 January

0001 on watch. Pans, Maydays and Auto-alarms going off all watch, but nothing anywhere near us. Steering is a little difficult this watch, but not to worry. Abeam

Texel Light Vessel 0315. Came off watch at 0400 and turned in until dinner. Arrived *North Star's* location 0700 and anchored. 1145 Keith called me out for dinner. Had a wash and went for it. Saw the skipper for a 2 pound sub. 1230 came on watch, drawing and passing time in general. 1540 made a pot of tea for my relief. Came off watch, had a shower and a shave, then tea. Wrote a couple of pages to Jean. Tugs *Irishman* and *Scaldis* arrived on location. Nothing much to do, feeling bored.

Monday, 6 January

0001 Nothing much happened on watch.



The Union tug SCALDIS came to assist with the rig move *photo: Pete Elsom.*

Sea moderated a bit, all's quiet. 6 packets of chewing gum from bond, 3s-0d. Off watch at 0400 and turned in.

1200 up and had dinner. 1300 changed towing pennant from 30 fathom thimble eye to a 30 fathom soft-eyed pennant. Put up house flag and passed time in general. *North Star* may be moving this evening. Had a wash before tea. 1700 ordered alongside to make fast on the port quarter. *Irishman* on the port bow, *Scaldis* on the starboard bow and *Gerrit Wessels* on the starboard quarter. Read book for a while, then turned in until watch time.

Tuesday, 7 January

0001 on watch towing *North Star*. Steering fairly good. Nothing exciting happening. Came off watch at 0400 and turned in.

1130 Fred called me out, we are letting go at 1200. 1150 on deck shortening in winch wire. Had dinner about 1300, then went on watch. We have been released from *North Star* and are now on passage to the rig *Sedneth 2* which is on the Leman Field. 1600 came off watch. 11lb of Welshes sweets out of bond, 3s-6d. We should arrive location just after midnight. 2345 Keith called me for watch. Wind has really freshened now. We have a tow rope going over the side and four 45-gallon drums

A month in the life of a tugman (part 2)

During the years Pete Elsom was employed as a mate by United Towing he used to keep a diary. Some extracts of this diary are published here.

Wednesday, 8 January 1969

On board tug *Englishman*, on passage to the Leman Oil Field, to collect the rig *Sedneth 2*. 0001 on watch. On deck, trying to recover the tow rope that went over the side earlier. 0030 rope recovered and stowed. Every one soaked to the skin. 0100 on watch, steering. 0200 port engine fuel pump sheered off. Going half speed on one engine: what time did I say we were due on location? We are now heading for shelter off Cromer, along with *Irishman*. 0400 off watch and turned in.

1245 called out for watch. 1300 on deck straightening towing gear out and relashing, again. We are now at anchor off Cromer. 1600 came off watch and had a wash, ready for tea. Had tea, then read a book for a while. Had a drink and a sandwich before turning in for an hour before watch.

Thursday, 9 January

0001 on watch. Swell dropped away quite a



MASTERMAN

photo: J.K. Byass.

lot now. *Sedneth 2* wants us back on location for 1600 hrs. 0300 weighed anchor and on passage to the Leman Field. 0400 turned in. 1145 called out for watch. We are anchored at *Sedneth 2*'s location.

1230 went on deck, painting right around port side of the bridge. Link call from our office, we are to return to hull for repairs to the winch and then there is a possibility that we are to tow a 'Magnus' crane barge to South America. May be moving *Sedneth 2* at 2100 hrs. 1600 finished on deck, washed up for tea. Finished reading my book and turned in.

Friday, 10 January

0001 on watch. Captain Hopper, our tow master, arrived at *Sedneth 2* on *Lady Fiona*. May move at 0700, after the shipping forecast, if it's a good one. 0400 turned in for a couple of hours.

Woke up at 1130 when engines were started. Got up to see what's happening. . Apparently we are going back to Cromer for shelter. 1300 put 75 fathoms of wire back down the towing hold in case we return to Hull. Nothing else happened all watch and we are now anchored again off Cromer. Messed about in general all night, didn't turn in before watch. Have a sore throat and eyes.

Saturday, 11 January

0001 on watch, at anchor off Cromer. 0130 *Sedneth 2* called us up and told us to come back out to the location, possible move as the weather has moderated. 0200 under way again. 0400 came off watch and turned in. Due on location at around 0500.

1000 hrs called out to make fast to *Sedneth 2*. 1015 all fast and holding. 1100 streaming winch wire out. 1130 received orders to proceed to the rig *Constellation* as soon as we are finished here.



Lady Fiona brought out the towmaster. Photo coll. J. van Eijk.

To be continued



INVESTMENT: The ASD Merchantman is the newest addition to the SMS Towage fleet.

New vessel bolsters firm's port presence

TRANSPORT: 82ft tug takes total spend to £9m

HESSLE shipping firm SMS Towage has invested in a new tug for its Belfast operation, bringing its total spend at the Northern Irish port to £9m.

The 82ft ASD Merchantman is the newest addition to its 14-strong fleet.

It is a sister ship to the ASD Masterman, which started operating in the city in 2013.

SMS has seen steady growth since launching its operations at the port.

Director Gareth Escreet said: "This is a significant level of investment, and shows our commitment and confidence in the growing level of activity we are experiencing in Belfast."

His firm was first attracted to the city by a new offshore wind logistics facility and cruise terminal.

Last year, a record 112,000 passengers passed through the port.

It also handles bulk carriers and container vessels shipping animal feed, coal and paper products.

SMS Towage also deals with regular vessel work for Dolphin

By **James Burton**

Business Editor
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Drilling and Harland and Wolff, which are both part of the Norwegian Fred Olsen Group.

Mr Escreet said: "When we went in there, the major users of tugs within Belfast Harbour wanted a focus on quality, with modern, new-built, reliable tugs and the minimum of potential technical problems.

"The port is doing what we expected it to do, in terms of the level of trade and the reliability of our tugs."

SMS Towage has a 25 per cent stake in Belfast Towage, where it employs five skippers and five crew.

There are four other vessels in its fleet with the same specification as the Merchantman, which will operate until about 2040.

Mr Escreet said it made crews more familiar with his vessels.

He said: "This allows us to leverage the fleet advantages of com-

Craft's vital statistics

BUILT in Turkey by Sanmar, SMS Towage's new craft has a length of 82ft.

The ASD Merchantman was designed by Canadian naval architect Robert Allan.

It has a top speed of 13 knots and bollard pull of 50 tonnes.

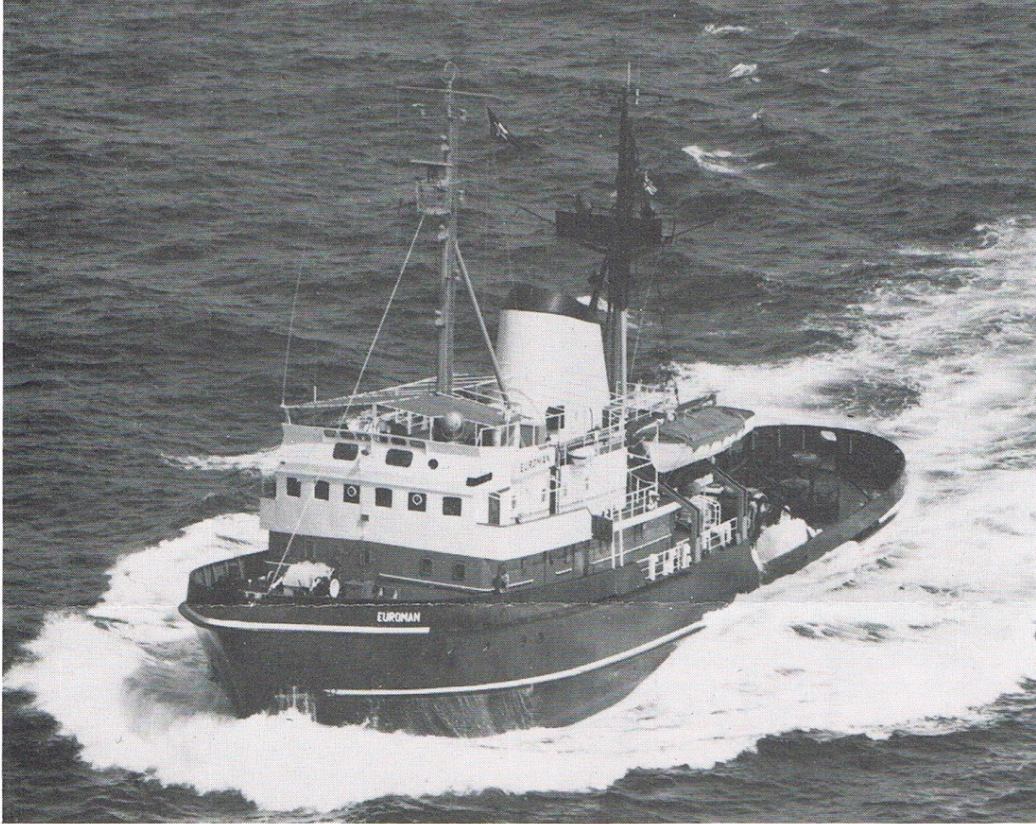
The vessel's main engines were made by Caterpillar, with Rolls-Royce stern drive units and Perkins auxiliary engines.

SMS Towage was established in 2003 and now employs 130 people.

Its headquarters is in Livingstone Road, Hessele.

monality of training and vessel familiarisation, and means it is justifiable cost-wise to maintain a large stock of critical spare parts for engines, generators and thrusters on the shelf."

Euroman Leaves the United Towing Fleet



Euroman at speed flying the United Towing flag

Following, as it does, close on the heels of *Irishman's* farewell voyage, the *Euroman* sale is naturally causing some comment and speculation among United Towing personnel. Her departure has undoubtedly diminished the impressive proportions of our ocean tug fleet, but there were several good reasons for the sale that ought to be clearly understood.

One simple truth is that *Euroman* was no longer acceptable to the changing offshore market. Since her busy spell as a fishery protection vessel during the last 'Cod War', we have not been able to find suitable employment for the tug. A slow-down in North Sea activity has further aggravated the situation and, on receipt of a fair offer for *Euroman*, the Board took the decision to sell.

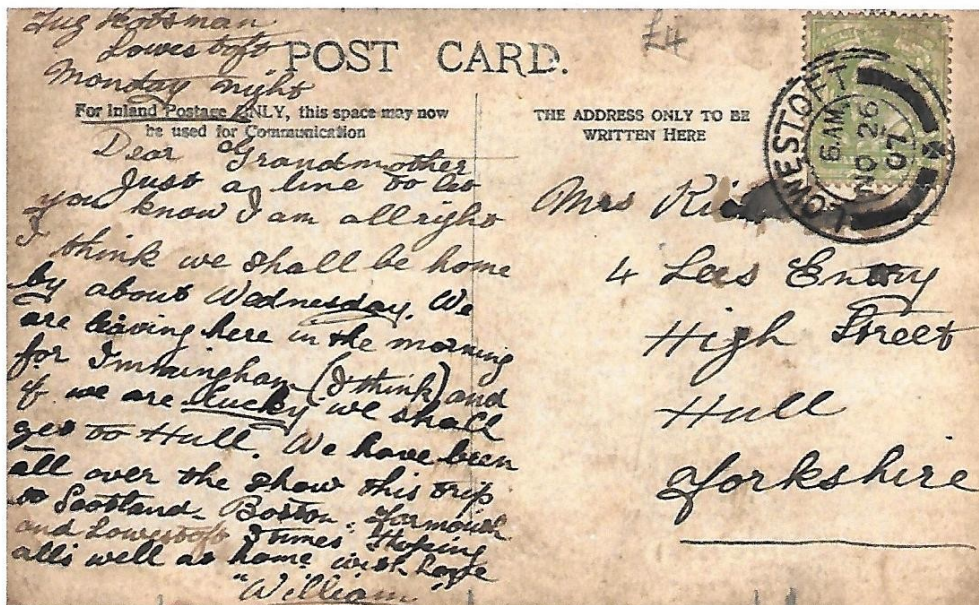
necessary to man *Euroman* affected the total cost situation to a degree that made it impossible to justify her retention. By comparison, the two new ocean-going tugs which are to be built at the Cochrane yard will be equal to *Euroman's* performance while remaining much smaller and more efficient to run.

Redundancies

The sale of two vessels in such a short space of time has inevitably led to a surplus labour situation. All possible solutions to this problem were explored but, regrettably, the company could find no alternative to declaring some 60 men redundant. Explanatory letters have already been sent to the men concerned.

Lack of performance

A further major difficulty was that *Euroman's* performance was insufficient to justify the vessel's size and high level of upkeep. The large crew



Postcard to Grandmother

Postcard from Lowestoft dated 26th November 1907

Name & Address: Mrs (could be) Richardson. 4 Lees Entry, High Street, Hull Yorkshire.

Postcard reads --- Tug Scotsman Lowestoft Monday night.

Dear Grandmother Just a line to let you know I am all right. I think we shall be home by about Wednesday. We are leaving here in the morning for Immingham (I think) and if we are lucky we shall get to Hull. We have been all over the show this trip to Scotland Boston Falmouth and Lowestoft 3 times. Hoping all's well at home. With love William



Front of Postcard shows the paddle tug “United” towing a fishing boat into Gorleston Harbour. “United” was built by James Jackson , South Shields in 1873 and had several owners. From 1905 to 1911 “United” was in the ownership of Robert W. Wheeldon and Thomas Commander, (trading as the City Steam Towing Company Hull) which in 1921 was incorporated with other Hull tug owners into the United towing Company Ltd.

Three die as tug

1962

sinks in dock

THREE crewmen, one a deckboy of under 16, were lost when the 79-ton Hull tug Tollman capsized and sank in Alexandra Dock, Hull, just before midnight on Wednesday May 23, 40 years ago.

The master and mate were saved by Tollman's sister tug Marksman, and were recovering the next day in hospital.

Tragedy struck as the two tugs were towing the 1,403-ton Finnish cargo ship Inio from her berth into the lockpit at Alexandra Dock.

After the incident, the Tollman was partly blocking the western entrance to the lockpit.

Her owners, United Towing Co of Hull, said the cause of the tragedy was a mystery.

Divers took part in a search which went on throughout the night for the missing crewmen.

Tollman was steadying the stern of the Inio as the Marksman guided her into the lockpit.

Dock gateman Leslie Leedham, who was handling one of the Inio's headropes, heard Tollman sound her siren.

"I turned round and by then the Tollman was keeling over and going under. She just simply sank" he said.

Another dock gateman, Mr J H Rhodes, said the Tollman was pulled under as the Inio was entering the lock.

As Tollman slid beneath the water, the Marksman cast off her tow and turned to go to the rescue. She snatched the master Frank Barley (51) of Braemar Avenue, Endike Lane, Hull, and the mate Joseph Barker (20) of Hemswell Avenue, Greatfield Estate, Hull, from the water, but there was no sign of the two engineers Thomas Knight (60) of Caledon Close, Bilton Grange, Hull, and Saif Messin (36) of Reed Street, Wright Street, Hull, or the stores boy, fifteen-and-a-half-year-old Bryan Webb of Shannon Road, Longhill Estate, Hull.

It was believed that they were trapped in the tug which finished upright in 30 feet of water with only the top few feet of its red-flagged mast showing.



May 25, 1962: Michael Etches and John Walmsley were named as the two modest heroes who fought to rescue two survivors from the tragedy-hit tug Tollman.



1976

South American Way for Superman

Ocean tug *Superman* left Teeside in November at start of a 6,510 – mile journey to Montevideo in Uruguay. In tow was Land and Marine's work barge *Odin*, bound for a pipe laying assignment in South American waters. *Superman's* course takes her via Las Palmas, the Cape Verde Islands and Rio de Janeiro.

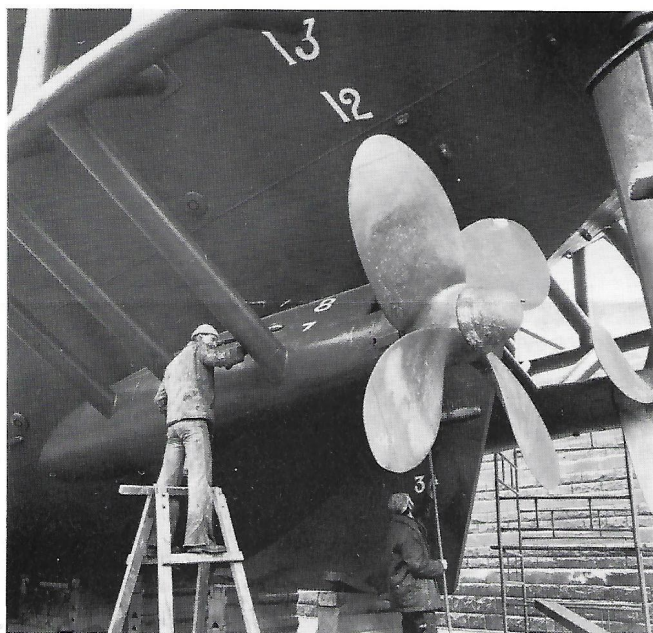
On delivering *Odin* to her charterers off the coast of Uruguay, *Superman* will be retained and work alongside the barge for nine months at least, with options on an extension.

With 3,750 horsepower to call upon, *Superman* is one of the smallest vessels now operated by United Towing (Ocean Tugs) Ltd. To make sure she was properly prepared for such a long journey the tug was in dry dock during November for a thorough overhaul. One unusual aspect of the work was the fitting of tropical doors and porthole covers to keep out unwelcome winged visitors such as mosquitoes. This job was undertaken by Cochrane Shipbuilders of Selby.

Superman can make an anticipated average speed of 5 knots, it is expected that the journey will last about 54 days.

Historical note

Interesting to note that United Towing's first venture into long-range ocean towing (back in 1925) covered much the same route. The vessel concerned was *Seaman*, and she made company history when she left Boston, Lincs. During May with two converted gun boats for Rio in tow.



The view generally reserved for the fishes as *Superman* is made ready in dry dock for her long tow to South America

Tough First Leg

Superman has had rather more than her fair share of bad weather during her passage to Uruguay. She was hampered by very rough conditions in the Channel and across the Bay of Biscay at the start of the voyage, although hopefully she has now got the worst leg behind her.

She has already taken on fuel and fresh water at St. Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands and from now on she ought to be sailing into warmer and calmer seas. Weather notwithstanding, *Superman* has made an average speed of 5 knots – a very creditable performance for a comparatively small tug with a big barge in tow.



Superman Delayed

Calling at Rio de Janeiro for bunkers on passage to Montevideo, *Superman* was delayed for a short while recently following an accident involving third engineer, David Hubbert. Mr. Hubbert suffered a fall on the boat deck and was immediately admitted to an emergency hospital with broken ribs and a suspected skull fracture.

Happily, the skull fracture turned out to be nothing worse than a bad concussion, and Mr. Hubbert has since been transferred to the Casa de Saude Beneficiencia where he will convalesce for at least a week before being flown home.

Following an investigation into the cause of the accident, *Superman* is underway again with *Odin* in tow. She is expected to arrive in Montevideo on 10th February.

Praise for ‘Supermen’s’ teamwork

It’s easy to feel that your efforts are not fully appreciated when you are working far away from home. That’s why ‘Man to Man’ reproduces the following here, specially for the benefit of the crew of *Superman* over in Uruguay. The contents are taken from an internal memo written by Mr. D.C. Thompson of Land & Marine to a colleague in the same organisation, Mr. P.I. Morgan.

“Dear Phil,

I would like to pass on, through you, my appreciation to United Towing, with respect the Master and crew of *Superman*.

Capt. Keith Boulton and his crew worked with the *Odin* from 25th Nov. up to their relief at Punta del Este on 11th March.

At all times the barge received the finest co-operation from *Superman*, and the progress and minimal damage incurred have resulted from the teamwork of Capt. Boulton and his crew.

Yours faithfully,

Signed D.C. Thompson.”



Man to Man nos 31-32 1976

MARRIED AT SEA - DIPLOMAT.

Romance surrounded a wedding which took place on the Hull tug Diplomat while on the high seas on Monday.

The bride and bridegroom were Norwegian subjects, the latter being captain of a Danish steamer now at Hull. Strict secrecy was maintained and only a few friends witnessed the ceremony.

The Diplomat, commanded by its owner, Captain Spink, was ordered to be at the Pier where the bride and bridegroom boarded, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Peterson, pastor of the Lutheran Church. The tug proceeded down the river and when beyond Spurn and three miles off the coast, the requisite limit, the marriage ceremony was performed according to the Danish rites and the Norwegian flag was hoisted. Fine weather favoured the event and after the ceremony the tug returned to Hull where the couple - whom we understand are young - returned to the vessel of which the bridegroom is captain.

The bridegroom was unable to stay at Hull for 21 days - the time required for the notice of a marriage in England - and thus arranged for the ;above romantic wedding in order that he might leave the port in his vessel without delay.

Hull Daily Mail 17th Sept. 1912



Diplomat sank off Yarmouth with the loss of her crew in 1915 but that's another story. T.C. Spink became the first Managing director of the newly formed United Towing Company in 1921.

Photo U.T.S.S. archive collection.

HER 4,000-TON TOW Hull Tug's Voyage to Danzig

The towage of the ex-British steamer Stuart Prince (4,129 tons) from Hull to Danzig has just been completed by the Hull tug Superman.

This steamer was previously owned by the Rio Cape Line, Ltd., and managed by Messrs Furness, Withy, and Co., Ltd., of London. She was sold for demolition to shipbreakers at Danzig, where the vessel will be broken up.

After leaving Hull on December 20 last, the tug, with the heavy tow, made a favourable run across the North Sea; but heavy weather and then fog were encountered in the Sound and its approaches, where three days' delay was occasioned. As the weather improved good progress was again made, and although the vessels again ran into further fog when nearing the destination, the steamer was eventually safely delivered to the shipbreakers at Danzig on New Year's Eve.

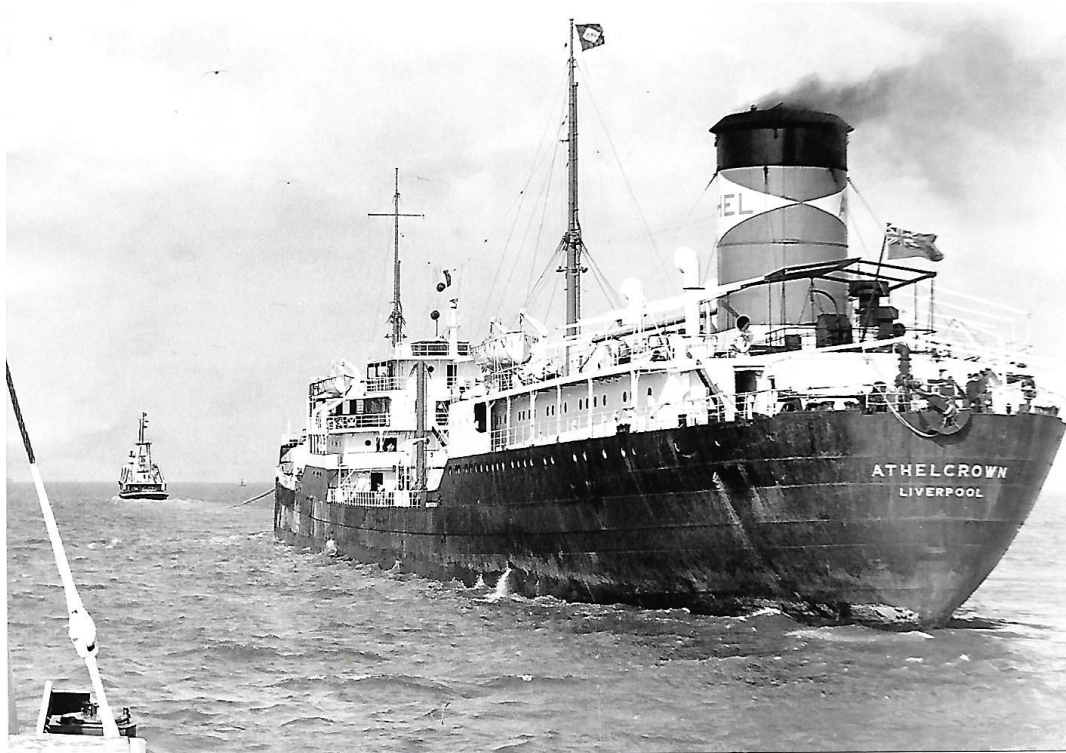
The Superman is owned by the United Towing Co., Ltd., Hull. The local agents for the Stuart Prince were Houlder Bros. and Co., Ltd., of Hull.



Superman leaving Hull towing the Stuart Prince to the shipbreakers at Danzig

Photo U.T.S.S. Archives

1965 Englishman tows Athelcrown from Cuba to Hull & Newcastle.



The Hull tug Englishman, which, at the time, was the most powerful vessel of her kind, built for British owners since the war, turns into the mouth of the Humber at the end of her first transatlantic voyage on August 31st, 1965.

The Englishman had towed the disabled tanker, Athelcrown from Cuba. She had started her 4,000-mile journey on July 28th and the crew had not seen land for more than four weeks.

After the Athelcrown had discharged her cargo of 15,000 tons of molasses in Hull, the Englishman towed the tanker to Newcastle for engine repairs.



Photos H.D.M.

From Boston to Buenos Aires

1925 Seaman tows Stepdance & Quadrille

A graphic story of the great feat of the Hull tug Seaman, whose return was announced in Friday's 'Mail' was told by member of her crew.

The Seaman, a tug of the most modern and powerful build, left Boston, Lincolnshire, with two ex-minesweepers in tow for Buenos Aires. It was one of the largest piece of towage ever undertaken. All was well the member of the crew related, until the tug and her heavy convoy reached the Bay of Biscay.

SUSPENDED BY CABLE.

There, storms were encountered and in one spell of terrible weather, the towing rope broke between the tug and the two hulks. One of them, the Stepdance, sank. The submerged ex-warship, however, remained fastened to the other ship, the Quadrille. The Quadrille was obviously in imminent danger of being dragged down.

To save the second of the tows, three member of the Seaman's crew volunteered for the risky job of venturing on the heavy seas in a boat and cutting the connecting cable. This they succeeded in doing, by perilous labour, and the suspended ship went to the sea bed.

SEVEN DAYS' DRIFT.

To get a new towing cable on board the Quadrille, however, was an even greater task. For seven days the Seaman drifted, keeping the Quadrille in sight, before it was possible to pick her up and proceed on the journey. For much of the time it

was impossible to keep the engine fires going owing to the amount of water shipped. For two days the crew were practically confined to the galley. Frequently, during that period, the Seaman sent out wireless calls for help, and a French passenger liner stood by for a time and endeavoured to render aid by making use of her more powerful apparatus about the Seaman's plight.

The eventual re-securing of the Quadrille was an immense relief to the men. She was now leaking badly and a good deal of work had to be put in at the pumps to keep her afloat. Curiously the crew could not discover where the leak was. Captain Spence put in to Gijon, where repairs were effected to the Quadrille. After various calls en route, Buenos Aires was reached and the Quadrille delivered.

The Seaman left Boston on May 16th and reached Buenos Aires on August 9th. She was commanded by Captain Spence but also carried Capt. Lamplugh who acted as navigation officer. She had a good passage home and now looks none the worse for her stirring and record trip. She towed the Quadrille a distance of 6,500 miles - the largest tow ever attempted from Hull - and in all she has covered 13,000 miles.

Hull Daily Mail, 1925.



“Seaman” leaving Boston towing “Stepdance” and “Quadrille”

Photo U.T.S.S. Archive collection

Overseas Towage & Salvage Co. Ltd. – London By Cyril G. Riches, Hull

With the Britonia having sold in December 1971, the end comes for a towing company, which was for quite some time, apart from United Towing Co. of Hull, the only ocean towing company in the United Kingdom.

Overseas Towing & Salvage Co, for the past years was a wholly-owned subsidiary of Smit's Towing of Rotterdam, resulting in the transfer of two Smit's tugs to Overseas. One of the best known tugs of Overseas in no doubt the Turmoil. Being a chartered Admiralty-tug she became famous in her effort to try and rescue the crippled freighter Flying Enterprise. Having worked as a bosun and seaman for Overseas, I would like to recall the tugs I have sailed on and the voyages they did. One of the first tugs I served on was the Marinia. At that time she was chartered by the Bermudian Government and at Bermuda she was occupied in docking, doing short tows and also on salvage station. My next tug was the Britonia. This tug at the time of her building, was the biggest tug built in Britain. Her building was started by the firm of P.K. Harris & Sons of Appledore, which, however, went bankrupt and she was left on the stocks as a rusting hulk. She was then towed by Marinia to the Appledore yard of the Appledore Shipbuilders and finished there in 1963. She had a Dutch design hull and the bridgework etc. was of British design. Her engines were Scotch Polar engines. During the time I sailed on her there were once in a while troubles with her reversing gear. At the oddest times this would stick so that she could not go full ahead or be brought to full astern. Once this happened at Smits home base, Maassluis, when she nearly sank a pilot-boat moored in front of her. She bounced off and hit the quay head on making an imprint of the quay in the bow. This happened several times including once when assisting an oil rig and also once in Formosa, when she went full astern all the way along anchored a Liberian cargo ship and she carried away accommodation ladders, paint work and shattered the rubbing board on the tug's waterline.



O.T.S. By Cyril G. Riches

The following is a list of a few trips I did on Britonia

- 4-4-1965 Sailed from Maassluis for Leith in ballast.
- 5-4-1965 Sailed from Leith for Amsterdam with a crane-barge.
- 7-4-1965 Sailed from Amsterdam for Ostende in ballast.
- 13-4-1965 Sailed from Ostende for Palermo with tug Ocean Bull in tow.
- 25-4-1965 Sailed in ballast from Palermo to Taranto.
- 8-5-1965 Sailed with 2 Micoperi-barges in tow from Taranto for Belayim.
- 19-5-1965 Rendez-vous in Red Sea with Smit's tug Tyne and handed over tow, after which we proceeded to Aden to take on bunkers, stores and water.
- 25-5-1965 Sailed from Aden to the Persian Gulf in order to assist drill-rigs in shifting their location.



Cyril crossed the bar last year, he sailed with both U.T.C. and O.T.S.

He served on Yorkshireman during the Falklands war and took part in the salvage of the Argentinian submarine Santa Fe in South Georgia.

HULL TUG DESTROYS GIANT BOMBER

How a salvage tug mate shot down one of Germany's biggest bombers, a Condor, is another thrilling tale to be added to the ever growing list of Hull heroes. The war has proved what tough material our sailors are made of and first mate Jimmy Ryan is no exception.

The Hull United Towing Company's tug, the Seaman, was three times attacked in the Atlantic by the Condor. Each time the bomber dived across her and machine-gunned her decks the Seaman replied with Lewis-gun fire. On the third attack Ryan held his fire and waited until the plane was directly overhead. Then he directed a full burst into the fuselage. He saw the bomber dive steeply and crash into the sea.

This feat has earned Ryan, now master of another tug, the George Medal. Lt. Comdr. Owen Jones, R.N.R., who is now commanding officer of the tug Samsonia, receives the O.B.E.

The crew were proud to pull in at a British port, signalling "Prepare to bring prisoners ashore" to the surprised dock officials, and handed over the three wounded Nazi airmen whom they had captured when they were climbing into a dinghy.

Seaman has done some magnificent work and will shortly complete her 100th convoy. She once towed a U.S.S.R. cargo ship from Iceland to Newcastle. Every day she flashed a message to the ship 'We're in this together Joe'.



James Ryan (centre) aboard "Seaman". "Superman" astern.

Photo U.T.S.S. Archives

UTC send senior company officers to the Falkland Islands to assess the possibility of the salvage and tow back to the UK of the "Great Britain".



CAPT. B. GARROD MR N. SPENCE MR J. GRUNDY

Hull men on long *October 1969* trip to wreck

THREE EXPERTS left Hull today on an 8,000-mile journey by train, air and sea to inspect a wreck.

They were bound for Port Stanley in the remote Falkland Islands, where for 80 years a famous British ship has lain unheeded and forgotten.

She is the historic Great Britain—the first big vessel to be made of iron and the first with a screw propeller to cross the Atlantic.

The once great ship established several other records when she was launched at Bristol 125 years ago, but she had little luck and after a few years she began to drop down the maritime scale.

LEFT TO ROT

She reached the lowest level 30 years ago when, after years of use as a hulk, she was beached and left to rot.

Now the three men from Hull are on a rescue mission to see whether the Great Britain can be patched up sufficiently to enable her to be towed 7,500 miles to Bristol.

An earlier survey for the

Bristol group who plan to save her was optimistic, but the two Hull companies who have offered to patch the ship up and tow her home at a cost price of £150,000 want to satisfy themselves.

That is why Mr John Grundy, managing director of Industrial Maritime Riggers, with two representatives of the United Towing Company — Capt. Bernard Garrod, marine superintendent, and Mr Norman Spence, superintendent engineer — caught an early train to London today.

LONG FLIGHT

They fly to Zurich tonight to catch a plane for Montevideo, Uruguay, from where they are booked to sail on Thursday in the Goole-built m.v. Darwin for Port Stanley.

The three expect to reach their destination on Monday and to return home towards the middle of next month.

