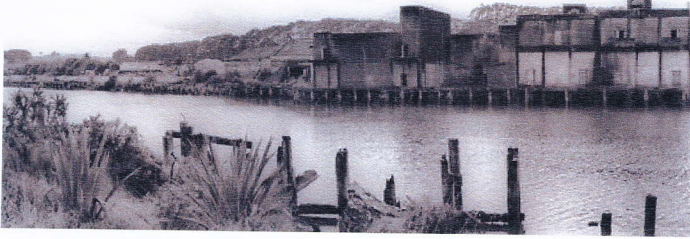


1988



The old dilapidating harbour infrastructure from across the river by the Cattle Wharf *Malcolm Law*

2005



Modern view of a freight train passing the lower reaches of the Patea river immediately below the old wharves. No sign left of any marine navigation marks in the river. *TranzRail*

2013



High-capacity and highly efficient milk tanker train passes directly upriver from the old Patea wharves. This train, one of several each day going to Whareroa, near Hawera, (the world's largest dairy factory) is carrying on the time-honoured, but modernised practice, of turning milk into dairy produce that has left the port of Patea's facilities as a last century historical relic. *Photographer unknown.*

FIRE AT SEA 50 YEARS AGO



The twin screw motor ship *Lakonia* was a Greek owned cruise-liner which caught fire and sank 160 nm north of Madeira on December 22, 1963 with the loss of 128 lives.

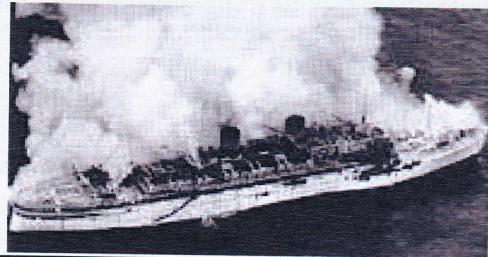
The Dutch-built vessel had earlier seen service as the *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*, sailing regularly between Amsterdam and the East Indies. She would later be re-commissioned as an allied troopship, and then as a pleasure cruiser. Nine months before her sinking, she was sold to the General Steam Navigation Company of Greece.

Under her new name *Lakonia*, she completed a successful cruise from Southampton to the Canary Islands in April 1963, planned as the first of a long series. On December 19, she departed Southampton for an 11-day Christmas cruise with 646 passengers and 376 crew under Captain Mathios Zabis.

On the fourth evening of the voyage, a steward found the ship's hair salon ablaze, with flames spreading quickly toward the passenger cabins. Alarms sounded too softly to be heard by most people on board.

Evacuation was hampered by the overcrowding of lifeboats and the loss of several boats to fire. Some passengers were able to reach the water via the gangways and rope ladders. Two ships alerted by distress signals managed to save most of the survivors.

A Board of Inquiry traced the fire to faulty electrical wiring, but strongly criticised the maintenance of equipment, thoroughness of boat drills, and the standard of supervision. Eight of the ship's officers were charged with negligence.



Royal Carribbean's new 158,000 ton 4,100 passenger *Quantum of the Seas* due for commissioning in November this year. followed in 2015 by sister *Anthem of the Seas*,



Upper recreation decks showing Central Park in the well.



**MEMOIRS OF SAILING IN THE *ECHO*.
ARGUABLY WELLINGTON'S BEST KNOWN SMALL COOK STRAIT COASTER.
CAPTAIN RONALD PALMER**



Back row standing from left to right is the Cook Gill ?? , the Chief Engineer Jack Sellars who also ended up as Engineer with the Wellington Harbour Board Pilot Service after the *Echo* finished up in 1966. Next to him was Jack Childerhouse, Asst. Engineer. *Echo* was the only ship he had ever sailed on and even though he was there for some 8 years he never ever fitted in as a seafarer. Always behaved like some yokel out of a machine shop and continuously irritated the captain and sometimes me. Got the job through his son-in-law who was Mate in 1958. He was a South African by the name of Alex Rose; next to me is Luke and Captain Jock Dalziel. Front row is Jimmy Quigg AB, He's still alive and lives in Paraparaumu, Alex Faudermer AB and an ex rigger from the WHB. Then Gavin Dobie OS, he is still alive and lives in Avalon. Gavin was the nephew of H. H. Dobie, Managing Director of USSCo. Sitting on the bottom right by the mast is the Mate, Jack Dutch who also finished up as a Pilot Launchmaster with the WHB. Photo and caption, Ronald Palmer

The above photo of the crew of the *Echo* would have been taken in mid-1961. I was an able-seaman on the *Echo* at the time and later appointed boatswain. In 1962 I came ashore to sit for my Mates certificate. Three of us in the photo are still alive.

Shortly after that photo was taken *Echo* grounded on the Bar and was washed onto the beach. It took us 14 days to get her off. Life was pretty rugged while we were stranded and the cook in the above photo was taken ashore bound up in a strait jacket and whisked away for psychological assessment at Nelson Hospital by the police. The guy standing on my right in the photo was a German by the name of Luke and at the time the

cook went off his marbles Adolf Eichmann, a top line in the Nazi SS during World War 2 was being tried by the Jews in Jerusalem for atrocities to the Jews and others. It was mid 1961 and the trial was well reported and followed in New Zealand as well as most of the world. I would think, so it was a regular topic of discussion in the mess-room of *Echo*. Most people thought Eichmann was a terrible creature but Luke would always say there was nothing wrong with Eichmann - 'he was only carrying out orders'. Obviously this must have riled the cook over time and eventually he sprang out of the galley and landed on Luke's back while he was sitting in the mess-room.

eating dinner. The cook was screaming 'you Nazi bastard I'm going to send you where Eichmann should be going.'

Luke was no match for the insane cook and the fight spilled out on to the deck. One of the other crew came around aft calling for me to come and get the cook off Luke. By the time I got there the cook, still screaming in an unintelligible garble, had Luke pinned down on the deck. I moved in and pulled the cook off Luke and wrestled him to the deck with a couple of good thumps and was calling for assistance to help me hold him down. Luke was completely free and standing back at a respectful distance. Instead of giving me assistance Luke, who had recently become a passionate photographer, responded in his broken English and said "Holdz heem like zat Rons and I will geet zee camera."

The Captain, Jock Dalziel, who is on the far right in the photo was peeping around the corner giving me words of encouragement like "hit him again Ron" and "hold the lunatic down." Eventually someone came to my assistance and after the cook received a couple of more solid blows we were able to wrestle his partly conscious body into his cabin, which was fortuitous as it was the only space on the ship that had a solid door and could be locked.

The Captain had a regular radio schedule arranged with the owner of the *Echo*, Captain Tom Eckford, at 1800 hours. Tom reported it to the police and three of them came down in the Paddy Wagon and we wrestled the cook into a strait-jacket and got him onto the beach and into the police wagon. I believe he was taken straight to the mental asylum at Nelson and I never ever heard of him again.

What happened to Luke - Luke was unmarried and bought a house at Pukerua Bay which he was always making improvement to. He had long left the *Echo* and one of the improvements was a sauna room. Luke was a fitful drunk and he apparently flaked out drunk in his sauna room under a high heat. It was too much for his heart and he was not found for some months. It was reported that he was well and truly overcooked and even baked onto the bench - not a pretty sight.

I really enjoyed my six years on the *Echo* and incidents like the above were treated as 'just another day at the office'.

Jack Dutch left the *Echo* soon after the heading photo and was appointed to the Wellington Harbour Board as one of the three Pilot Boat Launch Masters.

I think he replaced Pedlar Palmer. The other Launch Master was an ex USSCo. Mate by the name of Williamson. He lived in Tawa and many of you may be able to remember the third Launch Master Johnny Johnson.

A later addition to the *Echo's* crew was the well known Brian Pickering who became the Marine Department's Launch Master for their lighthouse tender *Endeavour* based in Picton. He joined *Echo* for a few months to get time in for his Master's and after retiring from the Department became Master with Strait Shipping. he is a mighty good sailor, one of the best and still alive living in Picton.

Those were the days when we had real sailors!

THE SAILING SCOW *ECHO*.

In 2005 Gavin Dobie acknowledged 100 years of the *Echo* by writing an article published in Vol. 53 No. 3 of the NZ Marine News. Gavin was a nephew of the late H. H. Dobie, a past Managing Director of Union Steam Ship Company Ltd during the era when the Managing Director had his own elevator to his top floor office suite and his personal secretary was always an up and coming male employee.

Gavin's recollections of some of the every day happenings aboard during her remarkable service on the Wellington-Blenheim trade have certainly not faded with time. Obviously that stout little ship left a lasting impression on many of those who must now consider themselves privileged and fortunate to have served aboard her.

I say privileged as during the six happy, exciting and eventful years in *Echo* I learnt more sailorising, sail handling, cargo handling, ship handling, ship salvage and overall seamanship than I learnt in the rest of my fifty plus years at sea.

Gavin Dobie was absolutely correct to state that during the working life of the *Echo* living and working conditions changed little from those that existed when she was built in 1905. Such conditions were character building but not suitable for all. Apart from a solid nucleus of crew there was a turnover of the odd individual. The sea going imposters, poseurs, sea-going lawyers, the weak and the mild found they could not hack the hard work or primitive living conditions and usually signed off after a trip or two. If they didn't, the Mate quickly dispensed with their services and saw the sea lawyers and imposters on their way.

The solid core of sailors usually supported the Mate's arbitrary action, as there was no place for a person

who wouldn't or couldn't do his job. Managing heavy sail gear on a black night with cold Cook Strait seas sweeping across the decks was fraught with danger. It called for co-ordination and a discipline of procedure. It was not a place for the faint of heart, drunks, bludgers or other types of imposters.

Eckford and Co had an unofficial motto for the crew of *Echo* which was; 'Feed them well, pay them well and work them bloody hard' and this they did – utilising a single swinging derrick, a diesel driven winch with a friction clutch and other antiquated cargo-handling equipment that required every single piece of cargo to be manhandled. An overall cargo-handling rate of 30 tons per hour was regularly achieved at Blenheim where the ship's crew and Eckford's permanent staff discharged and loaded *Echo* during all hours of the day and night.

Waterside workers at NZ ports during the 1960s averaged a general cargo-handling rate of 8 tons per hour and this was with a larger number of men and more modern cargo handling equipment. The best rate achieved during my six years on the *Echo* was 45 tons per hour. The incentive that achieved this rate was a determined effort to catch the high tide at the Wairau Bar and thus enable the *Echo* to return to Wellington for Christmas Eve.

It was an unthinkable act for the winch driver (Bosun) to even contemplate stopping the winch and holding up cargo operations during working hours. One particular afternoon when loading was in full flight and all hands including the ship's two engineers, Tom Eckford; and even the company's bookkeeper, were all involved in cargo operations, the bosun called to the wharf for a relief to go to the toilet. There was not a spare hand on the ship but there were a couple of guys capable of driving the winch working on the wharf.

Tom looked down from the wharf and acknowledged the Bosun's request by saying he would find him a relief very shortly. A few minutes passed by and the Bosun in a rather frantic voice called "Hurry up with that relief Tom, I'm just about shitting myself". Again Tom looked over the wharf at the Bosun and replied, "Shit yourself Bosun and I'll pay you dirt rates"

I'm not sure what happened with the Bosun's toiletries that afternoon. He certainly didn't stop the winch and he would not have got to the toilet until smoko time. This was some hour and a half away. The Bosun was a Londoner born in Bethnal Green and if house training had been part of his curriculum in his formative years he had long since forgotten. The

forgetfulness was obviously assisted by the fact that he had done most of his sea service with Bank Line (Andrew Weir and Co.) during the days when they had the old tramp steamers with Lascar crews. These were the ships where the crew lived aft and water for washing and showers was rationed. Also, it had to be hand pumped up to a tank to allow the shower to be gravity fed.

The result of all this was that the Bosun obviously became accustomed to using water sparingly and very infrequently. Not only for bodily washing but also for the washing of his clothes. Thus he never ever smelled of roses.

The Mate had the duty of approving the sailor's overtime etc. and the Bosun did book dirt rates for that afternoon. Even though the Mate was very conscientious as well as parsimonious when it came to approving overtime and special rates etc, he was not prepared to ask for evidence to justify that claim for dirt rates. Judging by the Bosun's usual aroma, it was suspected that he could produce a soiled pair of dungarees at any given time.

Gavin Dobie's dissertation certainly brought back fond memories of my years in the *Echo*. Many modern day mariners would not have the sailoring skills required for the varied day to day chores, not only in the *Echo* but on most merchant ships of bygone times. I use the term mariner as sailors' are a rare commodity now-a-days. If cargo can't be lashed with bottle screws and chains or ratchet tie downs (nylon straps with hooks at each end with a ratchet attached for tightening - used mainly by truckies) chances are the cargo won't be efficiently or securely lashed if it was necessary to be secured with rope lashings.

Most modern day mariners don't know what a Spanish windless is or a frapping for tightening up rope lashings and, worse still, are unlikely to be able to tie a rolling hitch or some other useful knot. He still may wear a knife, but its not for cutting dog ends off a rope after it has been spliced or after a quick whipping has been applied. Its use has now mutated for perhaps cutting away the granny knots that his ship mate has tied. Enough said, sailors are a rapidly dying breed.

Those things that seem to be important are a pocket for his mobile phone, wearing high visibility clothing, hard hats and safety harnesses before venturing two metres off the deck. Signs advising that the ship may roll at sea. Signs advising of the dangers of leaning over the ship's side. All this is understandable for passenger ships but these signs are applicable to the crew and are displayed in crew's and even the Master's cabin. Such signs are insulting to the intelligence of the non-

ice sailor let alone the officers and the Masters.

Never mind that, many of today's sailors could not secure a dangerous piece of loose cargo with rope lashings when it has broken adrift at sea. As long as they know how to don their high visibility vest, their hard hat and their life vest, so that they can all then stand at a respectable distance and let the loose cargo endanger the safety of the ship.

Much of the responsibility for this must rest with the ill-informed but fervent advocates of political correctness. They have invaded the maritime industry to a detrimental level. Wrap people in cotton wool so that they lose the ability of thinking and the disciplines of protecting themselves and their shipmates. Space will not permit the full coverage of this subject and the dangerous incompetence that has crept into the maritime industry. Many of my old shipmates would be spinning in their graves if they knew of the modern scarcity of good common seamanship.

Ronald Palmer

Past Mate and relieving Master of the *Echo*



A handsome, fully rigged and detailed model of the *Echo* owned by Captain Ronald Palmer.

GOOD NEWS FOR SINNERS

While most of us who were required to study at least one philosophy paper during our tertiary studies are familiar with the works of Thomas Aquinas 1225-1274, the father of modern philosophy who wrote the *Summa Theologica* consisting of over 3000 pages arguably defining the principles of Christianity as applied to human behaviour and endeavour within society in the modern world and who famously stated; 'To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.' One wonders within those 3000 pages if he ever considered the possibility that hell is not forever?

The student's dissertation below is certainly inventive if being just as arguable as some of the tenants proposed by Aquinas. One feels old Thomas would have liked to meet with him!

The following is supposedly an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid-term. The answer by one student was so 'profound' that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the internet, which is, of course, why we now have the

pleasure of enjoying it as well.

Bonus Question:

Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's law (gas cools off when it expands and heats up when it is compressed), or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate that souls are moving into Hell and the rate they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul goes to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell.

With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand as souls are added.

This provides two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.

2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, "it will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number 2 must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct... leaving only Heaven thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting "Oh my God."

SOUNDS APPROPRIATE ANYWAY

An Emergency Call Centre worker in London has been dismissed from her job, much to the dismay of colleagues who are reportedly unhappy with her treatment.

It seems a male caller dialled 999 from a mobile phone stating, "I am depressed and lying here on a railway track. I am waiting for the train to come so I can finally meet my maker."

Apparently "remain calm and stay on the line" was not considered to be an appropriate or correct response...