



To Sea Once More - Capt Sandy Kinghorn (49-51)

After a working lifetime at sea, I retired in 1997 and, after five months, was well settled into what seemed like a long, perfectly happy 'leave'. Then a telephone call from Glasgow asked if I'd be interested in taking a new tug from Singapore, where she had been built, to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, where she would become another harbour/rescue tug. Replying I'd no experience of tug-command, I was asked how long I had been in command of deep-sea ships. When I said: 'Twenty six years,' the Glasgow voice said 'Then there's no worry. You won't have to do any towing. You can join in Singapore on Tuesday. I'll send your ticket.' A fixed remuneration sum was mentioned and I would, I was told, sail in company with a twin-sister tug. When I asked how he got my name, he said, 'Donald Campbell told me.' Donald was an old shipmate from Blue Star, a brother of the intended master who was unable to come now. Donald's wife suggested that 'Sandy's' wife will need a break now, after five months of having him at home.' I also found that this voyage would be a second attempt, the first having had to return from Colombo when both tugs were experiencing serious engine trouble.



At Singapore, I met my three shipmates. Donald I knew of old. The only engineer was from Scotland - he was not only an excellent engineer but a good shipmate. The owner of the delivery firm employing us was also there, took us out to the shipyard at Jurong and pitched in to store our wee vessel for our 18-day voyage. In this storing, he worked harder than anybody and that evening, took us all out for a few drinks.

Our twin-funnelled, orange-coloured tug *Jeddah 25*, (*above*), of 408 gross tons, was propelled by two big Caterpillar engines with Schottel control - no steering wheel - and the bridge console was a mass of dials, lights and buttons, rather different from my previous ships! The shipyard pilot who took us out on trials explained the workings to me while telling me confidentially that, in his opinion, she was overpowered and thus difficult to manoeuvre in tight places. However, I thought, with plenty of open sea, crossing the Bay of Bengal, I'd soon get the hang of it, wouldn't I? We had radar and satnav but I calculated all courses and distances-to-run the old-fashioned way, just to make sure, and, in company with our sister tug *Jeddah 24*, off we went. The mate and I worked six hours on, six off bridge watches and of course, as Master, I was around most of the time off watch when not sleeping. The heavy work of storing ship had almost crippled me but Donald proved he was not only a splendid seaman and cook but an expert masseur as well. He soon had me pain-free. Rather surprisingly, we were signed on British Articles. I soon learned that the Mate had no navigational or seamanlike knowledge, had been a long-distance yachtsman with RN experience, who seemed to think at first that he was in command, with me as a sort of sailing master. Showing him the Articles of Agreement,