



Features

Paul Wright (62-65)

Plymouth University

I was asked by the Editor of *The Cadet* to share something of my life with you. It is an appropriate time as 2012 celebrates fifty years of my association with ships and the sea. And yes, I am still at work!

A formative time of my life was spent on Merseyside, an area which in the 1950s, was exciting and romantic. Growth created by the need to rebuild a world following the devastation of WWII led to a boom in world trade with consequent work for the docks and the shipping industry. An occasional highlight of my early life was to travel on Liverpool's overhead railway, and see the mysterious world behind the high dock walls.

A family move from Merseyside took me to Buxton in Derbyshire, almost as far inland in the UK as one can be. Still interested in ships and the sea, aged 13 I joined Conway, on the three-year entry scheme. I later undertook an apprenticeship with Alfred Holt & Co and worked with them for 13 years, initially on the traditional 'Blueys' and later on what were then the revolutionary ships of Overseas Containers Limited.

Having married in 1976, I, like many, 'swallowed the anchor' and looked for a position ashore. Maritime education and training seemed to be the ideal area in which to work. In 1979, I transferred ashore to train young people for the sea at the School of Maritime Studies at Plymouth. I intended staying for five years but 33 years on, I am still here. There have been difficult times. The 1980s recession and following decade were particularly hard. The slashing of company training budgets and flagging out to offshore countries by the UK shipping industry saw the total number of UK cadets recruited to less than 140 per year during the final half of the mid 1980s.

At Plymouth, the School of Maritime Studies was embedded in Plymouth Polytechnic, one of the first educational institutions to develop an undergraduate degree programme in Nautical Studies. The strategic focus of Plymouth Polytechnic Directorate was to gain University status. Despite the recession, development of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and research continued. The School struggled to keep its training commitments; cadet training ceased in 1989, with closure of higher professional deck officer certification courses in 1992. Plymouth gained university status in 1992 and as a 'new' university, concentrated on further development of its marine and maritime degree programmes and research. More than a decade elapsed where training for the sea was not undertaken at Plymouth. I joined the Maritime Business section of the University, which led to a position as Head of the International Shipping and Logistics Group between 2000 and 2006.

When John Prescott became Deputy Prime Minister in 1997, reappraisal of the UK's need for a shipping industry was positive, resulting in new maritime policies described in

