

A history of the Athel Line fleet

ATHEL LINE will always be associated with the United Molasses Company and that conglomerate of international repute and household name Tate & Lyle. The company did not enter into ship-owning until 1921 and their fleet of tankers existed for just fifty-nine years. Yet, in the eyes of many professional seafarers and informed enthusiasts, Athel rapidly acquired a sound reputation for managing reliable and versatile ships. To hundreds of merchant seamen they will be remembered as comfortable tankers owned and operated by generally considerate superintendents who held concern for and interest in the seafarers they employed.

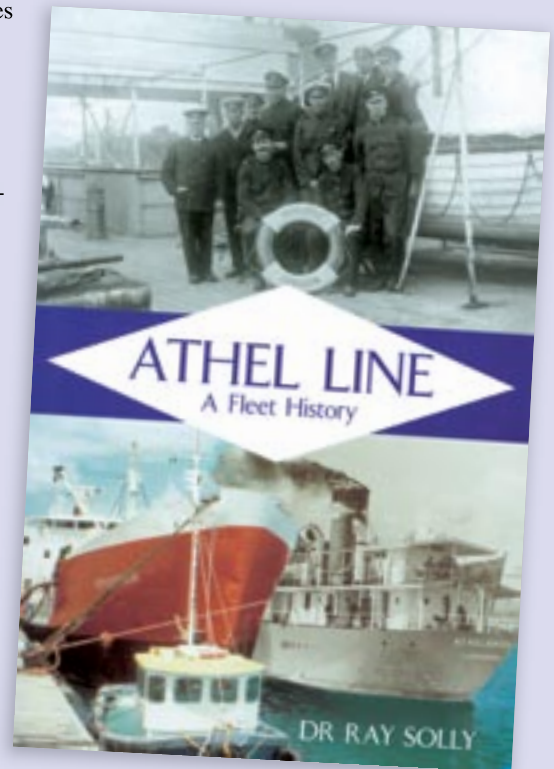
Indeed in the words of one of their senior officers “they were a damned good company to work for”, while another satisfied mariner referred to them as a “Rolls-Royce Company”, unsolicited accolades that speak volumes for the affection with which Athel Line was held by many, but of course not all, associated with this concern.

The Athel Line fleet was originally designed to carry molasses, but was sufficiently versatile to handle crude oil and various product cargoes as well. This volume is set to become a major reference source on tanker development, of importance to maritime researchers and enthusiasts world-

wide. It is another in a series of volumes written by Dr Ray Solly who served as a navigating officer in the merchant navy on board supertankers and cargo ships and who later became an historical and technical maritime researcher and author and has had six books published. This book is a comprehensive illustrated record of the Athel Line’s tanker fleet, outlining the history of tanker development through the story of this shipping company. Presenting the specifications and history of every ship run by this major independent operator, this book uses a mixture of photographs, ship plans and certificates to illustrate the development of these vessels across the years.

Chapters in part one of the book cover ‘Modest beginnings 1907-24’, ‘Rapid expansion 1925-39’, ‘Decimation of War 1939-45’, ‘The Road to Recovery 1945-56’, ‘Winds of Change 1957-64’, ‘Athel-Anco Amalgamation 1965-73’ and ‘The Ending of the Line 1973-1976’. The second part covers the ships owned or managed by Athel Line, Sugar Line, Anco Fleet and Tankers Ltd plus other managed vessels. **F**

Phil Simons



Athel Line: A Fleet History by Dr Ray Solly is published by The History Press www.historypress.co.uk, £20

Going bump in the night

SHIP COLLISIONS are a daily occurrence and are almost always caused by human error. Anxious to raise awareness among watchkeepers of the risks involved in not keeping strictly to the rules, P&I club Steamship Mutual has commissioned a DVD entitled *Collision Course*.

The film explains that there is an increasing lack of experience in the shipping industry, mainly caused by a shortage of officers. In its report last year, Drewry Shipping Consultants drew our attention to the fact that there was already a shortage of 33,000 ship's officers and this would increase to 87,000 by 2012. The upshot of this is that officers are promoted to their certificate status much sooner than previously. So the holder of what used to be called a Second Mates Certificate will much sooner sail as Second Officer – the same with mates and masters. Therefore the pool of experience is getting ever shallower.

The film identifies the four main deficiencies spawned by such lack of experience – failure to keep a proper lookout, not proceeding at a safe speed, failure to assess risk properly and not reacting

early enough or with sufficient boldness. It also draws attention to watchkeepers relying too much on electronic aids – what this reviewer would call radar and AIS-assisted collisions are highlighted.

The DVD will not only be useful to less experienced seafarers, but also to ship managers and owners who might have spent little time at sea themselves. It will help give them an understanding of happenings at sea and underline the dangers of complacency, passing too close and not using bridge equipment correctly.

Callisto Productions has made an excellent job of the production and editing and an endorsement by the Nautical Institute adds weight to the message. As usual with Steamship Mutual DVDs, the disc contains reference documents, casualty investigation reports and judgments, as well as relevant weblinks. **F**

Andrew Lansdale

Collision Course is available from Steamship Insurance Management Services, email: enquiries@simsl.com

