

## THE LINERS



**I suppose the odd Cruise Liner will call into Liverpool in this day and age, it's sad really when you think of the halcyon days of, "Seaport Liverpool" almost everyday there was a Trans Atlantic Liner alongside the Princess Landing Stage; it wasn't uncommon to see two big ships at the Stage.**

**These ships were massive floating hotels, self contained, small isolated communities with a heart and soul, ploughing the oceans, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian. They carried millions around the world long before the Cattle Class air liners, with their cramped conditions, became the cheap way to travel.**

**The servants of these goliaths of the sea were the seamen, deck crew, engine room staff and catering crew. These people kept the ships running and cared for the passengers; it was a pure bureaucracy, ruled from the top by the Captain with inline management.**

**They were like townships with small shopping areas where passengers could visit the Barber shop or Hairdressing Salon; they could buy toiletries and even designer clothes, there was also a printing shop where they printed menus etc., even a Ships Newspaper ... to this young sixteen year old the passenger ship was a thing of excitement and wonderment.**

**I was only ever on one passenger ship, the Empress of Scotland ... it was my very first trip to sea and I was signed on Ships Articles as a Deck Boy, I served as a "Peggy" in the P.O's messroom.**

**My duties were washing dishes (Pearl diving), scrubbing the deck and generally keeping the messroom clean, I was the "Gofer", if one of the Petty Officers wanted something I had to go for it.**

**At meal times I would go to the crew Galley and collect the meals for each Petty Officer ... there were three Bosun's Mates, Deck Store Keeper, Lamp Trimmer and Chippy (Carpenter)**

**My first duty in the morning was to go down to the Working Alleyway (Broadway), a wide passageway that went about two thirds the length of the ship and was in the bowels of the vessel, to collect the dry stores for the day.**

**This was to me the most exciting part of the ship; here was the butcher's shop, the bakers (I loved those fresh baked dinner rolls), dry store and all sorts of little service areas. When I got there in the early morning it would be a hive of activity with stewards and cooks assistants running everywhere with little trolleys collecting stores ... I loved the atmosphere, the hustle & bustle; it really was a place to behold.**

**The stewards had a system for allocating bloods (passengers) to tables in the Dining Saloons, perhaps one of the ex stewards can explain it properly but as far as I understood it a winger (Steward) would pay the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Steward for the Passenger List from which he could pick the likely tippers for his area of responsibility (his tables). In those far off days the world was a much slower place and most people, including celebrities, traveled to the US by ship, so to have one of these people on your table would almost certainly guarantee a bit tip; a steward could make more in tips than they made in wages; a good steward could earn a fortune and many of them did.**

**That was my experience on a passenger ship and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.**

**Sadly the Trans-Atlantic liners have gone for ever, we will never see the likes again; fuel prices and wages can't compete with cheap airfares ... sure they have cruise ships but they are nothing like those passenger ships of long ago ... they had a romantic charm and sophistication that only the very rich can afford today ... the stewards, wingers and waiters were a class act ... a long way from cafeteria service.**