



Conference report 2016

This year's Annual General Meeting and Conference was held at the UK Chamber of Shipping, 30 Park Street, London SE1 9EQ on Thursday 28 April. The Annual Dinner was held afterwards at the Naval Club, Mayfair W1J 5NS. Over 30 delegates were present and represented member companies and guests. The Conference was again kindly sponsored by Damen Shipyards Gorinchem.

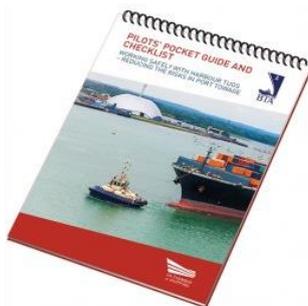
Annual General Meeting



At the AGM, Phil Dulson, Svitzer Marine Ltd, who had stepped up as acting Chairman at the end of January, following the early departure of his predecessor, was duly confirmed as Chairman. Nick Dorman of Targe Towing Ltd was elected as Vice-Chairman. An amendment to the Constitution concerning the creation of a new category of Associate Member, to include those with an interest in harbour towage, but who were not owners or operators, was passed by the membership. This will allow the Association to benefit from the broader input of legal firms, P&I clubs, class societies, consultancies and others, as well as gain income from additional fees. On that note, the Secretariat was pleased to be able to inform the meeting that the fee per tug had reduced from that called last year.

The Conference

The Chairman opened the conference welcoming members and guests stating he was looking forward to working closely with all to promote and progress the interests of towage as an essential, and sometimes undervalued part of the marine industry, during difficult economic times. He mentioned the success of the newly invigorated Harbour Towage Panel and encouraged continued



support of this valuable policy making forum. Regarding tug safety, he said that it was in the best interests of everyone to work together to share best practice and improve. Collection of industry wide statistics remains an important means of identifying problem areas, but that we have shifted emphasis from merely gathering accident data to including near misses. Having come up with the concept of a pocket guide to towage for pilots a little over a year ago, he announced that the final product is in print and available from Witherby Publishing, with much thanks due to Jason Woodward for leading on this very promising aide memoire.

Despite best efforts, the period has seen two serious accidents; a fatal incident, which occurred whilst Svitzer Moira was berthing alongside at Royal Portbury Dock on 29 December, and the capsizing of Tug Asterix in March 2015, in Southampton Water. The latter saw Chris Macdonald of Solent Towage awarded the **Merchant Navy Medal** for his immense bravery when he rescued the tug's Coxswain.



Regarding training, the long awaited route to certification for small vessels engineers, is nearing completion. The EU Ports Regulation moves on. The BTA's concern has been that it may work against the successful commercial model in place in many UK ports and may lead to a race to the bottom, reducing the standards of safety in towage. The BTA's position has been to work with the UK ports associations and European Tugowners Association to reject the legislation. On the subject of membership, the Chairman said he was delighted that SMS have completed a full year and are engaged with BTA and chamber activity. Smit have combined with Kotug to form KotugSmit Towage and TP Towage in Gibraltar are now part of the Resolve Marine Group. He concluded by thanking Damen Shipyards for again agreeing to support the conference.

The Chairman was followed by Guy Platten, CEO of the UK Chamber, who gave an upbeat and positive report on the chamber's position and improving profile. A key issue for the new President, Grahaeme Henderson of Shell, was safety culture, which fitted well with the BTA's core work. The importance of being proactive on environmental issues and lobbying for skills were also high on the agenda.

Simon Barham, the UK Ship Register's new (and indeed first) Director enlightened the audience on the refreshed approach to business. He mentioned that the new role came out of the Maritime Growth Study and was to provide a more commercialised customer focused approach to business. He then highlighted the importance to the register of smaller vessels, with tugs (over 100GT) for example making up 19% of the total UK fleet. Simon Swallow, Shipowners' P&I Chief Executive, gave a lively presentation on the insurance market. Whilst the low volume of claims was good in terms of accidents and indeed depressed premiums for owners, it was not good for the market itself. Richard Morris of Thomas Cooper Law outlined some of the impressive opportunities to be had through salvage - a useful means of increasing income although of course the operation had to be successful.

Finally, Andre de Bie, for conference sponsor Damen, talked about their state-of-the-art design RSD 2513. He described its excellent seakeeping and manoeuvrability and the tug's outstanding towing characteristics.



The Dinner



The annual dinner was held in the Naval Club and provided a further opportunity to network and catch up with colleagues. The Chairman presided and proceedings include the award of the BTA's **'Tug Personality of the Year'** to Martijn Smit, the retiring European Sales manager for Damen following his many years of support to towage operators.

Adrian J MUNDIN MVO
Secretary for Chairman
British Tugowners Association

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