



Protecting the Barrier Reef



Photo by Dr Paul Marshall, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

THE value of a proactive approach when seeking to mitigate damages following a casualty was demonstrated in a recent incident involving a member's vessel which ran aground on Sudbury Reef, east of Cairns, Australia, towards the end of last year.

As a result of the grounding, the coral reef sustained physical damage to its topography, as well as chemical damage resulting from the release of tributyltin (TBT) anti-fouling paint, which was scraped from the vessel's hull and spread over a large area. In view of the remedial work that the Barrier Reef

Authority required to be carried out, the initiative was taken on behalf of the owners to oversee and co-operate closely with the seeking of tenders for, and the performance of, the necessary reef repair measures.

Working in harness with the authorities, a clean-up programme involving the removal of substantial coral boulders for temporary storage on a barge, followed by a process of vacuuming over a wide area to reduce the TBT concentration to acceptable levels, was agreed and adopted.

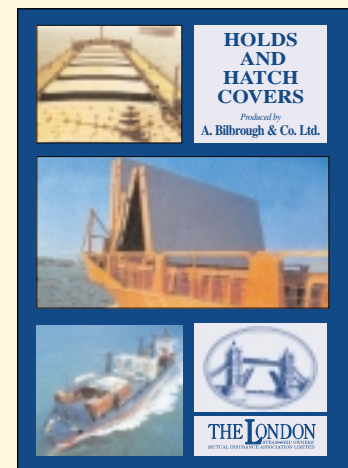
Although the operation was partly hampered by the tropical cyclone season, the authorities and the owners' approach meant that an effective clean-up was concluded in 50 days. The coral boulders were replaced once vacuuming was completed, and subsequent testing showed that the vacuuming had achieved the required reduction of toxicity levels in the area. The exercise was deemed a success by the authorities, who will continue to monitor the reef with a view to demonstrating the value of the removal of the TBT, over the longer term.

In this issue...

- Innovative wreck removal
- Thefts in Antwerp
- Point of lashing

Holds and hatchcovers

BILBROUGHS has published a guide to the safe operation and maintenance of holds and hatchcovers. Using straightforward illustrations, the book highlights some common causes of damage, loss and personal injury.



The book is also designed to help shipboard staff identify good and bad practices. The generous use of photographs and sketches, together with a simplified text, is intended to help those whose first language is not English.

The book has been favourably received by members and by the maritime press. For details of availability, email pam.wright@a-bilbrough.co.uk

Innovative wreck removal pays off

A RECENT incident involving the loss of a member's vessel in Spain resulted in an unusual wreck removal operation. (see photo below).

The vessel was carrying a cargo of woodchips, sawdust and logs for discharge in Portugal and Spain. It arrived off Viana do Castelo and anchored off the port's main breakwater.

But during the course of the following evening, in worsening weather conditions, the vessel dragged its anchor and grounded on the rocky seabed off the breakwater and was subsequently

declared a CTL. Following removal of the deck and underdeck cargo, the wreck was removed using an innovative system of linear chain pullers which moved the wreck on its side, in two sections, onto the breakwater, where it was cut up for disposal.

The wreck has now been removed successfully from what is an environmentally sensitive area.

This is a very good example of the members and the Club working in harmony with the local authorities to achieve a satisfactory outcome to a potentially difficult problem.

USCG tightens up PSC

THE US Coast Guard has stepped up port state inspections under MARPOL at Los Angeles and Long Beach. Specifically, it has increased scrutiny of oil record books, oily water separators (OWS) and bilge piping, and has demanded the dismantling of pipes on the discharge side of the OWS, and the taking of water samples for analysis. If the Coast Guard believes there is evidence of oil inside the OWS discharge pipe, or evidence of an OWS bypass hose or pipe, it has on a number of occasions demanded that owners provide divers to externally plug the overboard discharge, so that the ship's side valve can be removed and inspected, and samples taken.

In extreme cases, vessels have been subject to criminal search warrants and their crews ordered to appear in federal court. It is understood that similar inspections have taken place in other US ports, and members are urged to ensure they are in full compliance with MARPOL requirements prior to arrival in the United States.



Fowl play in New Orleans loading development

ATTEMPTS to make the process of loading frozen chickens on board vessels at the US port of New Orleans faster and less labour-intensive have resulted in the introduction of specially equipped forklift vehicles.

This in turn has led to reports of damage to these cargoes.

Reports from New Orleans indicate that, under the stevedoring system now in use, the pallets of frozen chickens in boxes are delivered to the wharf apron adjacent to the vessel. The contents of two pallets are then pushed onto a steel tray by specially equipped forklifts fitted with a hydraulic ram-type device.

The steel tray is then hoisted to the vessel's cargo hold using the ship's gear.

Two more of the specialist forklifts are positioned in

each hold to remove both stacks of boxes and to push the stacks into their final stowed position.

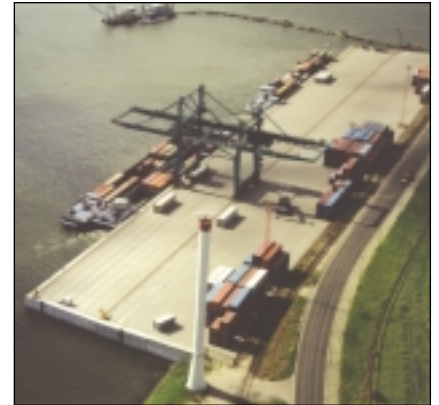
The lower boxes of almost every pallet may be torn while being transferred in this way to and from the steel tray, resulting in the frozen cargo becoming exposed.

And, in some cases, the damage is exacerbated where the bottom boxes are partially frozen to the wooden pallets.

In one loading operation, it was reported that about three per cent of the cargo - a total of almost 7,900 boxes - had sustained damage during stevedore handling.

Members are advised to take all necessary steps to protect their interests with regard to damage of this nature.

This would include carrying out the proper pre-loading examinations, maintaining an accurate tally of all damaged boxes, and suitably clausuring the relevant mate's receipts.



Antwerp thefts

THE harbour area at the port of Antwerp is currently being monitored at regular nightly intervals by port and police officials following reports of a recent spate of alleged robberies. Although the authorities stress that the level of reported thefts has been greatly exaggerated, masters and crew are urged to be particularly vigilant while in the port, and not to unwittingly provide opportunities to would-be thieves.

There have been about fifteen prosecutions for theft on board ships at Antwerp in the past twelve months. In order to be able to initiate legal proceedings, it is essential that the authorities are provided with sufficient proof against the culprits. To this end, it is vital that masters always report any theft to the authorities immediately it is ascertained.

Point of lashing

LASHING and securing of cargoes is an essential part of good seamanship. An appraisal of the strength and condition of lashings is also considered by good seamen, but lashing points themselves, although part of the ship's structure, may frequently be overlooked.

Prior to use, and taking into account the weight of cargo to be secured, lashing points should be assessed for design strength and purpose, as well as for damage and any corrosion weakness. Ship's staff should have knowledge of lashing point strengths and of any restriction in the manner in which lashing points are used. Most lashing points are designed to withstand being pulled in predetermined directions, but, when pulled

from the wrong direction, shearing forces can lead to them failing.

Classification societies should approve the attachment of lashing points such as plates, lugs, pad-eyes or D-rings to watertight bulkheads or other structures, ensuring that the points are not so strong as to compromise the ship's structure or plating.

The ship's securing manual should contain details of all lashing points, their design strengths and guidelines for their use. It is also wise to colour-code lashings and lashing points to indicate safe working loads.

Members should ensure that the personnel responsible for securing cargoes are fully familiar with all applicable regulations and requirements of IMO, flag states and classification societies.



Proper training will help avoid failure of lashing points

Italy in stowaway crackdown

REPORTS from Italy indicate that organised gangs in Genoa and Leghorn are using container stuffing stations as a base to put stowaways in containers, principally consigned for the US and Canada.

In the past year, at least seventy Romanian stowaways have been discovered in Genoa. But, most recently, the problem seems to be more acute at Leghorn.

A number of initiatives have been introduced, with limited success, to crack down on illegal activities involving stowaways. These include the use of a carbon monoxide detector.

But another, new, initiative currently being employed is reportedly meeting with more success. Infra-red cameras have been used to detect the presence of stowaways inside containers.

Members are urged to maintain a strict watch for stowaways at all times.

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