Director’s Overview

Friday the 13th is seen as an inauspicious date by some. However, for the seafarers of the *Fluvius Tamar*, which sank off the Kent coast on January 13th 2017, it was a day of relatively good fortune. All were reported to have been rescued without suffering major injury. On other days, in other seas, workers have been less fortunate.

Those of us connected to the shipping industry in our roles as researchers, employers, employees, and chaplains, are all too aware of the dangers at sea and the potential for negative outcomes when things go wrong. 2016 saw the accident investigation report into the loss of the *Cemfjord* published. It made sobering reading. On the 2nd of January 2015, a small ship (the *Cemfjord*) carrying cement from Denmark to Runcorn overturned in the Pentland Firth, off the north coast of Scotland, killing the whole crew of eight. Twenty five hours after the ship capsized a southbound ferry sighted her hull and the authorities were notified. The vessel had drifted all the way out of the Pentland Firth and back into the North Sea before either the operating company, or the Shetland Coastguard, were alerted to its plight. In the ensuing search no survivors were recovered. In 2014, reports to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) indicated that 351 seafarers working on cargo vessels were killed or lost at sea, and in 2015 the figure was 423.¹

In general such losses go unpublicised; unnoticed by those not directly connected to the events that underpin them.

Seafarers often feel that they are a hidden and taken-for-granted workforce. It is certainly the case that as an institutionalised and largely casualised group of workers their lives, and the jobs they do, are relatively unexposed to the public gaze. At SIRC (the Seafarers International Research Centre at Cardiff University), we have a different perspective.

¹NB Under-reporting is a significant issue in this area.
Since 1995, we have been concerned to make the lives of seafarers more visible by conducting research into: the conditions of life and work at sea; the regulation of the industry; and related areas such as training and health.

Recently we completed a piece of research that is particularly pertinent to the case of Cemfjord. It related to mandatory equipment at sea and covered issues to do with the design and utility of emergency response equipment such as liferafts and lifeboats. To our dismay we found that many seafarers did not consider that, in the case of an emergency, they would be able to board a liferaft unassisted. We discovered that seafarers did not regard the practice of storing survival suits in a closed box on deck as adequate, and that many seafarers were fearful of the performance of lifeboats with some stating that they would prefer not to use them even in an emergency. In the case of the Cemfjord survival suits were stored, beyond immediate reach, on the open deck.

Furthermore the ‘flag state’ had given permission for exemptions to international regulation, thereby allowing the ship to sail despite one of its lifeboats being inoperable. Both of these issues could have compromised sail survival but, in the event, the accident investigation report indicated that the vessel turned over so rapidly that the crew never stood a chance. In other accidents, such as the case of a bulk carrier (Swanland) which was lost off the north Wales coast in 2011 (resulting in six deaths), deficiencies in regulation by flag states and design issues relating to life saving equipment were judged to have had more direct consequences.

For many onlookers, watching the broadcast images of the bulbous bow of the Cemfjord poking just above the waves before she finally sank, the question was ‘how could it be that nobody had noticed her fate?’ Indeed the question is particularly relevant given that the coastguard had informed the ship that her progress would be tracked through the, notoriously dangerous, Firth, and that the vessel operator would ordinarily have expected to receive at least two communications from her in the period that elapsed between her capsise and later identification.

2This research was jointly funded by Lloyds Register Foundation*, The TK Foundation and Cardiff University.
*Lloyd’s Register Foundation helps to protect life and property by supporting engineering-related education, public engagement and the application of research.
Other questions arise for those with a more detailed knowledge of the circumstances and the main one posed in the accident investigation report related to why the Captain chose to take the vessel through the Firth when conditions were at their most dangerous - with gales from the west opposing a strong tidal stream (race) at its peak and creating very dangerous waves. Had she waited, as little as an hour, the worst of the conditions would have abated as the strongest races subsided with the changing tide.

To answer these kinds of questions it is necessary to have an understanding of the cyclical nature of the shipping industry, the commercial pressures which characterise it, the precarious nature of work for a seafarer who is generally employed on a ‘per voyage’ basis, and the kinds of interaction which characterise ship-shore relationships between seagoing personnel and their shore-based managers. These are all issues that SIRC has done work on. Significantly our published findings indicate that seafarers perceive companies as wanting them to take risks to ‘get the job done’ within the allotted time period just so long as the risks ‘pay off’. They describe being under ferocious commercial pressure from charterers and from their own operational staff. This appears to have been a major factor in the case of Cem fjord and it has been a key factor in other avoidable ‘accidents’ at sea. In an era of ‘turbo’ capitalism and globalisation the challenge is to identify ways of better protecting workers at the sharp end of such competitive pressure so that such incidents no longer occur. At SIRC we hope to make such a contribution through our ongoing work in 2017 and beyond.

Professor Helen Sampson
The beginning of the year was relatively quiet as we collectively engaged in a protracted period of data analysis, and writing-up, culminating in the online publication of two reports relating to our studies of mandatory equipment and ship-shore interaction (funded jointly by Lloyd’s Register Foundation, The TK Foundation and Cardiff University).

In March, Professor Helen Sampson took a moment from her writing in order to attend a one-day conference in Oxford which was focused on the transformation of work as a result of digital innovations. She also had the pleasure of working with colleagues from other Universities to shortlist candidates for the 2016 BSA/BBC Ethnography award. The shortlist was announced on the BBC Radio Four Thinking Allowed programme in April when Helen and her fellow judges described some of the strengths of the main contenders.

In April Dr Nelson Turgo travelled to Chennai in India to speak at an international conference organised by AMET University called ‘Future manpower to shipping – emerging challenges and solutions’. Nelson was asked to address the audience on the ways in which ‘shipping is indispensable to the world’. The trip increased the ties between AMET and SIRC in building upon the connections established at its inauguration in 2010.

Both Professor Helen Sampson and Dr Nelson Turgo attended the CrewConnect conference in Copenhagen in May. This regular event provides SIRC with invaluable opportunities to talk with industry practitioners and to develop a deeper understanding of the shipping world. On this occasion Professor Sampson had been asked to give a presentation on multinational crewing which is a long standing interest at SIRC. The talk titled ‘Connecting on Board? Modern Multinational Crews’ generated good feedback and lively questions.

Within a very short time Helen was back in Copenhagen once again. This time she had been invited to Copenhagen Business School to attend a special workshop on Corporate Social Responsibility in the shipping industry. The workshop was designed to facilitate the production of a special issue of the Journal of Sustainable Transport which was published in December 2016 incorporating a contribution from Helen.
In June Helen was involved in judging one of the awards for ‘excellence in the provision of welfare services and facilities to seafarers’ conferred by the International Seafarers’ Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN). These were announced in Manila at a ceremony preceding a celebration of the IMO “Day of the Seafarer”, which Helen unfortunately had to miss. By way of compensation, perhaps, Manila came to Cardiff in the form of Dr Ma Theresa Payongayong (University of the Philippines). Dr Payongayong joined SIRC-Nippon Foundation students and alumni at their regular residential workshop which is designed to facilitate continued collaborative work and the development of a strong maritime research network. Aside from the formal sessions and papers (including a fascinating account of feminist ethics from Dr Payongayong) there were also excursions to: Barmouth; the National Library of Wales; and the tourist attractions at Devil’s Bridge.

In the first half of the year, the staff and students at SIRC were very preoccupied with preparations for the summer symposium which celebrated the 21st anniversary of the Centre. Finally the opening day was upon us and we were joined for the introductory address by an active seafarer from Ukraine in the shape of Chief Engineer Yevgeniy Ovcharuk. Yevgeniy reflected on the surprise he felt when he first met Helen (on his ship)
and learnt about SIRC and the work that is done by the Centre on the life and work of seafarers. It was fitting to have an active seafarer opening the symposium, which attracted an international audience of over 100 members of the maritime industry. Delegates had travelled from as far afield as Australia and we were rewarded with vibrant discussion sessions and a lively conference dinner. The feedback we received, both during and after the event, was very encouraging. It has already produced new collaborations with regard to the generation of impact from the completed studies we described, as well as new offers of help with studies that we are just beginning.

There was little opportunity for us to put our feet up after the symposium and enjoy some rest and relaxation as most of the staff and students at SIRC had a busy July. Professor Sampson convened a session for the Sociology of Work group at the International Sociological Association conference in Vienna where she was also selected to deliver a ‘commons session’ (keynote) address on the future of work. Dr Lijun Tang attended a workshop in Southampton on marine information and communication technology and Dr Nelson Turgo gave a presentation at the University of the Philippines (Diliman) on the ‘Goals and possibilities of seafaring: research in the maritime industry’.

As the summer began to fade into autumn Hanne Borgersen visited SIRC from the Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen, Norway where she is studying for a PhD. She gave a lively seminar paper to SIRC staff and students which was titled ‘Leadership scripts in the shipping industry: How do context and culture combine to influence high operational performance on board?’. In October Dr Turgo was on the move again as he travelled to Manila once more to take part in an ICMA AHOY Training Course. As part of this event he delivered a talk about ‘Health and self-medication practices of Filipino seafarers’. Whilst there he also took the opportunity to give lectures at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and the University of the Philippines Diliman.
Dr Iris Acejo was also travelling in October but to rather cooler climes. She visited Southeast Norway to lead a session on multinational crewing at a workshop hosted by the University College of Southeast Norway in Svendborg. Iris commented on the warm and welcoming hospitality she received at the event! Equally warm and welcoming, were the members of Nautilus who greeted Professor Helen Sampson when she joined them at their Cardiff-based conference in October. Helen was invited to speak about the future prospects for British seafarers and to sign the charter that was launched at the event. She also stayed in Cardiff while taking part in a seminar at the World Maritime University (Sweden) by ‘videocon’. This event was focussed on corruption in ports and Helen gave a talk titled ‘Material exchanges between ship staff and port personnel’. The event was also attended by representatives from shipping companies concerned to increase the focus on corruption and the difficulties faced in eradicating improper practices.

As the thoughts of many Cardiff residents turned to Christmas, Professor Helen Sampson and Dr Nelson Turgo attended the CrewConnect conference in Manila. Helen was interviewed by a couple of journalists working for different media outlets in the Philippines and the conference provided the opportunity for both to catch up with key contacts in the industry. Before leaving Manila, Helen and Nelson travelled to the University of the Philippines (Diliman) to meet with staff and students and discuss the potential for advancing ideas for research collaborations. Following this memorable visit they went their separate ways as Nelson returned to Cardiff and Helen travelled to Singapore. Whilst in Singapore she met with Associate Professor Lam Siu Lee at Nanyang Technological University, visited various shipping companies, and attended the Gordon Hodge memorial lecture hosted by Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology (IMarEST) at the Tanglin Club.

Meanwhile, Dr Tang travelled to London to assist Videotel as a steering group member in the development of a training film on Lifeboat On-load Release Mechanisms while Dr Acejo presented a paper at the joint International Association of Maritime Institutions (IAMi)/IMarEST event titled ‘Human Factor Training – Is It Working?’.
Teaching

The following contributions to teaching in the school and university were made in 2016:

Carolyn Graham: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Developmental and Social Psychology; Sociology, Society and Social Change (undergraduate). Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate Induction Workshop, Thinking as a Social Scientist; State of the Campus 2016 – Undergraduate Research Methods Workshop, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences.

Neil Ellis: Interviews and Focus Groups seminar (undergraduate), Cardiff University School of Social Sciences.

Professor Helen Sampson: Researcher Safety (PhD students) Cardiff University Graduate School.

Desai Shan: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Key Ideas in Social Sciences and Sociology, Society and Social Change (first year undergraduates); Graduate Teaching Assistant/Guest Lecturer, Inequality and the Division of Labour (second year undergraduates) Cardiff University School of Social Sciences; Guest Lecturer, Maritime Policy and Shipping Management, Cardiff University Business School.

Dr Lijun Tang: Media, Text and Document Analysis (third year undergraduate dissertation workshop); Guest lectures, Digital Society (third year undergraduates) Cardiff University School of Social Sciences.

Project Progress

In 2016 we completed two major studies that had begun in 2012. These were jointly funded by Lloyds Register Foundation, The TK Foundation, and Cardiff University. They considered the relationships between shore-side and shipboard personnel, and the design and use of shipboard mandatory equipment. The first project reports were published online in April 2016 and the findings were additionally presented at the SIRC symposium. The studies received widespread coverage in the maritime press and further articles will be produced in the coming years.

The collaboration between Professor Helen Sampson and Stord Haugesund University College (SHUC) continued in 2016 and has now been extended until 2017.
We have updated our data collection relating to seafarers’ health and self-medication. In 2016 we gathered interviewer administered questionnaires in: USA, China, Hong Kong, Bremerhaven, Felixstowe, Glasgow, Tyneside, Bristol, Southampton, Blackpool and Tilbury. We will use these data to publish an update on the original study later in 2017.

The Nippon Foundation continue to fund the SIRC-Nippon Foundation Postgraduate Fellowship Scheme.

Future Plans

Professor Helen Sampson will continue collaborating with colleagues in Norway on a major study of Risk in Offshore and Maritime Operations.

We will continue to support the SIRC-Nippon Foundation fellows who are working towards their postgraduate qualifications.

We will publish an updated report on seafarers’ health and self-medication.

Professor Helen Sampson and Mr Neil Ellis will begin a two-year study funded by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). The project is designed to contribute to a better understanding of the factors which affect the mental health and wellbeing of seafarers.

Professor Helen Sampson, Dr Nelson Turgo, Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray (School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University), Dr Wendy Cadge (Brandeis University, USA), and Dr Graeme Smith (Theology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies, University of Chichester) will begin a three and a half year study of religion in the multi-ethnic context of ships and ports. The study is funded by the ESRC and will commence in June 2017.
Aditi Kataria was awarded the following: PhD for An Ethnographic Exploration of Ship-Shore Communication (supervisors Nick Bailey and William Housley).

Sanley Abila also had a successful *viva voce* examination resulting in the following award: PhD for The Occupational Socialization of Merchant Marine Cadets in the Philippines (supervisors David Walters and Sara MacBride-Stewart).

Work is progressing on the following postgraduate studies (all of which are financially supported by The Nippon Foundation):

- Amewu Attah - The Impact of Oil Exploitation on a Ghanaian Fishing Community
- Polina Baum-Talmor - The Notion of ‘Career’ in Globalised Industries: The Case of Seafarers
- Ralph Buiser - Unionised Seafarers and Maritime Trade Unions in the Philippines
- Jabeth Dacanay - Regulating Occupational Health and Safety in the Maritime Industry: A Case Study of the Philippines
- Helen Devereux (née Douglass) - Black Times in the Seafaring Industry: Does a Relationship Exist between Time into Tour and Occupational Accidents
- Mark Llangco - Workviews of Filipino Cruise Seafarers
- Shahriar Mazhari - Certification and Competence in the Global Shipping Labour Market: Employers’ and Employees’ Perception of ‘Fitness for Purpose’
- Isaac Mensah - The Dynamics of Poverty, Inequality and Coping Strategies Among Small-Scale Fishers in Ghana
- Rogenen Pepito - Understanding the Crewing Crisis in the Context of Agency Employment: Perspectives from Seafarers, Crewing Agents and Ship Managers
- Jean Pia - Labour Supply Arrangements in the Philippine Seafaring Industry
Amaha Senu - The Intended and Unintended Consequences of State Border Regulation, Policing and Policies on Undocumented Migration: The Case of Seafarers and Maritime Stowaways

Desai Shan - Seafarers’ Casualty Compensation System and Suggestions for Reform in the Chinese Context


**Career Success of SIRC-Nippon Foundation Fellows and Alumni**

Capt Mohab Abou-Elkawam PhD, Senior Lecturer in Nautical Studies, Liverpool Maritime Academy, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool

Dr Iris Acejo, Research Associate, SIRC, Cardiff University

Dr Nippin Anand, Senior Surveyor/Consultant, Offshore Verification and Classification, DNV (Det Norske Veritas) GL – Maritime, Aberdeen, Scotland

Ms Jessica Bernfeld, Deputy State Public Defender, Colorado State, Colorado, USA

Dr Syamantak Bhattacharya, Director, School of Maritime Science & Engineering, Southampton Solent University

Ms Jabeth Dacanay, Dacanay Magracia Law Offices, Philippines

Dr Manasi Dutt, Management Trainee, Bernhard Schulte Holdings Pte Ltd, Singapore

Dr Roderick Galam, Research Associate, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Department of Social and Political Sciences, Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany

Dr Victor Gekara, Assistant Professor, School of Business Information Technology and Logistics, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Dr Aditi Kataria, Teacher, The Lawrence School Lovedale, India
Dr Momoko Kitada, Assistant Professor, World Maritime University and Secretary of the WMU Women's Association, Malmö, Sweden

Dr Lin Li, Translator, Dalian Ocean Shipping Company, China

Dr Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III, Associate Professor of Public Health, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, China

Ms Jean Pia, Director II, Maritime Industry Authority, Philippines

Dr Lijun Tang, Research Associate, SIRC, Cardiff University

Dr Nelson Turgo, Research Associate, SIRC, Cardiff University

Dr Conghua Xue, Associate Professor, Nantong Shipping College, Jiangsu, China

Dr Peidong Yang, Postdoctoral Fellow, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Dr Zhiwei Zhao, Director, Seafarers Development International Research Centre, Dalian Maritime University, China

People at SIRC

Academic Staff at 31 December 2016

Prof Helen Sampson Director
Prof David Walters Associate Director
Dr Iris Acejo Research Associate
Mr Neil Ellis Research Associate
Dr Lijun Tang Research Associate
Dr Nelson Turgo Research Associate

Administrative Staff

Ms Louise Deeley Executive Officer
Ms Maria Goldoni Administrator
Ms Kate Whittaker Clerical Officer
## Associate Fellows

- Dr Sanley Abila
- Dr Mohab Abou-Elkawam
- Dr Ngwatung Akamangwa
- Prof Maragtas Amante
- Dr Nippin Anand
- Dr Syamantak Bhattacharya
- Dr Manasi Dutt
- Dr Victor Gekara
- Dr Momoko Kitada
- Dr Priscilla Leong
- Dr Lin Lin
- Dr Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III
- Dr Conghua Xue
- Dr Conghua Xue
- Dr Peidong Yang

## Visiting Scholars

- Dr Jonathan Preminger, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel
  Associate Professor, Mr Chen Gang, Navigation School, Wuhan University of Technology, China - left September.

## Awards & Nominations


- Abou-Elkawam, M. Liverpool John Moores University Student’s Union: Amazing Teaching Award (ATA) 2016 – Nominated.

- Graham, C.A.E. School of Social Sciences Postgraduate Café Conference – Overcoming Obstacles and Setbacks in the PhD. Cardiff University, 5 May. Joint first place winner, Poster Presentation.

Publications

Academic Journal Articles


Short Works and Reports


Professional/Industry Papers


Books


Book Reviews


Contribution to Edited Works


Keynote Addresses

**Sampson, H.** (2016) ‘Seafarers International Research Centre’, University of the Philippines, 18 November.

**Sampson, H.** (2016) ‘Threat or opportunity? Will advances in technology on board lead to the ‘up-skilling’ or ‘de-skilling’ of our seafarers?’, CrewConnect Global 2016, Manila, 15-16 November.

**Sampson, H.** (2016) ‘Material exchanges between ship staff and port personnel’, multi-media presentation to World Maritime University, 21 October.


Refereed (Published) Conference Contributions


Unpublished Papers Presented: Conferences, Seminars, Workshops


Turgo, N. (2016) ‘Knowledge sits in places: The vernacularity and emplacement of fish markets’, Bulwagang Bonifacio, Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), Sta Mesa, Manila, 3 October.


Other Conferences Attended (paper not delivered)


Senu, A. (2016) ‘Knowing the Sea: The Prospects of Maritime Domain Awareness’ An Ideaslab at Cardiff University in conjunction with the European Maritime Day. Department of Politics and International Relations, School of Law & Politics, Cardiff University, 20 May.


**Online Publications**


**Theses (completed)**


**Other**


Media Engagement and Impact (where SIRC work or personnel have featured in the media)


‘Too frightened to be safe’, *IHS Safety at Sea*, November 2016, p18.


‘Industry leaders face up to domestic skills decline’, *Nautilus International Telegraph*, November 2016, p23.


'Filipino seafarers on board ships.' Sigaw ng Bayan (Voice of the People) Montreal, I. Acejo. CKUT 90.3 FM (https://ckut.ca/en/content/sigaw-ng-bayan), 14 October 2016.

'Counting the cost of not training’, Industry insight, IHS Fairplay, October 2016, p16-17.


'Do you trust the equipment on your vessel’?, Nautilus International Telegraph, July 2016, p2.


**Forthcoming Publications**


Akamangwa, N. ‘Regulatory influences to environmental protection: Why shipping companies comply and when they don’t’, Ocean Development & International Law, 48(2).


**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AMET: Academy of Maritime Education and Training  
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation  
BIMCO: Baltic and International Maritime Council  
BSA: British Sociological Association  
CERIC: Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change  
CIEHF: Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors  
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility  
CTOS: Container Terminal Operations Simulator  
DOI: Digital Object Identifier  
DMU: Dalian Maritime University  
ESI: Energy Studies Institute  
eds: Editors  
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council  
GEM: Gender, Empowerment and Multicultural Crews  
IAMU: International Association of Maritime Universities  
ICMA: International Christian Maritime Association  
ICS: International Chamber of Shipping  
ICT: Information and communication technology  
IOSH: Institution of Occupational Safety and Health  
INTEDE: International Technology, Education and Development Conference  
IMarEST: Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology  
IMO: International Maritime Organization  
ISSN: International Standard Serial Number  
ISWAN: International Seafarers’ Welfare and Assistance Network  
MARACAD: Maritime Academic  
MARTECH: Maritime Technology and Engineering  
MITAGS-PMI: Maritime Institute of Technology & Graduate Studies – Pacific Maritime Institute  
MLC: Maritime Labour Convention  
MSM: Maritim Sikkerhed Sundhed Og Miljø  
NCVER: National Center for Vocational Education Research  
PhD: Doctor of Philosophy  
PRC: People’s Republic of China  
PUP: Polytechnic University of the Philippines  
SHUC: Stord/Haugesund University College  
SIRC: Seafarers International Research Centre  
SOCSI: School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University  
SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats  
TK: Torben Karlshoje  
UP: University of the Philippines  
USA: United States of America  
UWE: University of West England  
WISERD: Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods

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