

There is so little fairplay in the world. If our own efforts succeed, we shall have taken the first steps towards promoting the habit of calling things by their right name and looking at them through uncoloured spectacles...

Founder: **Thomas Hope Robinson**, Fairplay, 18 May 1883



> 2 January 2014

lookout

> Issue: 6768 > Volume: 379 **Richard Clayton:** Chief Maritime Analyst

Welcome to the future

> **Sir Michael Bibby**, managing director of Bibby Line Group, the last great deepsea owner headquartered in Liverpool, spoke last month to the Shipping Professional Network (SPNL) in London.

He was invited to address the issue of whether office location still matters in a high-tech world, and although he appears not to have given a definitive answer, his advice is absolutely key to next-generation thinking: stay relevant. There's a subtle change overtaking the shipping industry as

need to take critical decisions. Recently I was sent, admittedly by email rather than carrier pigeon, a statistics brief from the OECD's International Transport Forum outlining global transport trends.

In spite of the December 2013 dateline, this brief brought me up to date on maritime, air, rail, road, and inland waterway freight volumes as at 31 December 2011, with preliminary data for 2012. In an age of Big Data, this OECD information is no longer relevant.

Rotterdam to meet their needs. Similarly, my discussions last month on unmanned ships with Rolls-Royce Marine's Oskar Levander touched on new designs for ferries. "In many cases, we are coming up with things our customers didn't know they needed," he explained.

That way of thinking, missing out a stage in the chain, will be aided by Big Data, but goes beyond an ability to accumulate information. Relevance in this context is about driving the discussion, and staying ahead of the competition, rather than making sure your company is one of the top-10 businesses your customers use.

'My concern is that the attractions of Big Data seem to run contrary to the traditional values that hold shipping together: relationships'

we move effortlessly from one year to the next. For most of Sir Michael's SPNL audience, early-1960s Liverpool was unimaginable. Black-and-white images of streets that had seen better times, old-fashioned clothes and hairstyles.

The best thing to come out of this cultural melting pot was the music. What Liverpool represented 50 years ago is no longer relevant. In fact, Liverpool or London or Dubai, Singapore or Shanghai five years ago is no longer relevant. The subtle change is a transfer of focus from the past to the future.

For young shipping professionals in maritime hubs across the world, what matters is what will happen next year, not what happened last year. This is seen most clearly in the way we gather the data we

Another brief provided limited data for EU27 and US exports and imports between June 2008 and September 2013, but this is still historical, and fails to pass the Bibby relevance test.

We all have ideas about what is relevant for shipping in the second decade of the third millennium.

I once read an interview in a Port of Rotterdam magazine in which CEO Hans Smits discussed his recent visit to German manufacturers to hear about their logistics needs; he was meeting his customers' customers, and working out how he should invest in

Confidence survey

However, my concern is that the attractions of Big Data – which promotes volume of data stored, velocity at which data is collected, and the variety of data computers can track – seem to run contrary to the traditional values that hold shipping together: relationships. It would be a mistake to consider that everything that's new is relevant, and everything that's old is irrelevant.

In a telling response to Moore Stephens' confidence survey (see P8), one contributor warned of the difficulty of finding a supply of qualified crew in certain niche markets due, he said, "to the greying of the supply pool". Greying, the ageing of seafaring experience with fewer replacements of similar experience climbing the ladder, is a relevance issue just as much as data capture. 



Tweet of the week

Really heartened to read of the enthusiasm for environmental protection shown by Junior @HELMEPA members. 20th anniversary last Friday > Follow Richard Clayton: @rjbclynton

 richard.clayton@ihs.com