

Mersey Maritime Face to Face meeting 1st June 2021

This month's meeting commenced on schedule at 08:00. This meeting was a hybrid one with seventeen members online with six, socially distanced, in the Mersey Maritime office. The plan for forthcoming meetings is to try have more members attending the office, all following the Government guidelines in force at the time.

This month's presentation was given by Anders Ivarsson Managing Director of Atlantic Container Lines, ACL.

ACL is specialist carrier operating a fleet of five modern Ro-Ro vessels. The company was founded in 1967 by consortium of five shipping companies, Brostroms, Transatlantic, Wallenius, Holland America Line and Cunard. During its history there have been several owners and today it is the Italian company Grimaldi.

ACL operate a weekly service from Liverpool, Antwerp and Hamburg to Halifax and the US east coast.

The fleet of five of the Generation 4 ships, G4s, the 'oldest' was launched in 2015 and the remaining 4 in 2016. They each have capacity of 3,800 TEUs and 33,800 square meters of ro-ro cargo. A deadweight 45,000 tonnes and a summer draught of 11.5 meters. The latest ships have 65% reduced emissions with the installation of exhaust gas 'scrubbers'. A particular design feature is the on-deck cell guides for the deck stowed containers, which have given ACL the enviable position amongst container ship operators of NEVER having lost a container overboard whilst on voyage.

Their Liverpool office at 90 Duke Street employs 165 personnel, the largest office throughout the organisation even exceeding their global headquarters in Westfield New Jersey. From the Liverpool office they plan and stow each ship wherever they are in the rotation, this requires the planners to work a shift system to cover the different time zones.

Sadly, Ander's ended on a sad note by stating a dark cloud was hanging over Liverpool. From what used to be the 'jewel' in ACL crown and held up as a shining example to other ports as to how to operate a port. Today's tug, portainer and labour shortages are causing huge operational pressures on his organisation. The G4 vessels are 'Gladstone Lock max', which only allows 40 centimetres clearance on each side of the ship once in the lock. To maintain a safe operation without damage they require four tugs on each docking which apparently are not always available. To compound these problems the schedule turnaround requires three portainers to load and discharge the containers and again they cannot always be provided.

What a sad day for our port if these supply issues cannot be resolved and ACL left Merseyside!

Anders concluded the presentation by taking several questions from the floor.

The next Face to Face meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 6th July 2021.

Captain Ian Mathison