

Martin Southwood served his deck apprenticeship on the *Chantala*, and the following is an unedited extract from the journal that he was required to keep for the first 2 years of his apprenticeship. For those unfamiliar with the place names, Mtwara is a major deep-water port in southern Tanzania (at that time Tanganyika), and Lindi is a much smaller river-based port, also in Tanzania, approximately 35 nautical miles by sea to the North West of Mtwara.

**TRANSCRIPT OF A WHALER TRIP FROM LINDI TO MTWARA IN 1957**  
**BY**  
**MARTIN SOUTHWOOD**

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July**

We set off on our whaler trip to Mtwara this morning at 0730. We had a good land breeze on our quarter and made a good run down the river to the lighthouse. Here, the land breeze left us and we were just about becalmed for half an hour until the sea breeze sprang up. After that, we sailed along quite leisurely, making alternate tacks in towards the reefs and then out to sea.

Soon after midday, or about then as we had no accurate way of telling the time, (HRS<sup>1</sup> has inserted "1315" in the margin), the *Chantala* passed us well out to sea. She looked very dumpy as she was almost light by now.

The afternoon passed by with alternate cloud and sunshine. Two or three showers appeared but these just missed us each time. By about 1700, we noticed that somehow we had got inside a reef and we tried to carry on inside it and get round the headland into what we thought was the bay outside Mtwara. However, it got very shallow indeed and when the centreboard started jumping, we decided to go through the reef. We dropped the sails and rowed hard, just getting over. The bottom was just scraping. Once we got to the other side, our troubles weren't over. The waves were very high for a short distance and we pounded very badly indeed. A couple of waves washed themselves around the foredeck but we didn't get much in the boat. We got the sails up and that seemed to ease her a bit and we soon got in easier water.

By now it was getting dark and we still weren't sure exactly where to head for but soon after it was dark, we thankfully picked up the light off Mtwara. By now it was quite dark but the moon was up, (HRS<sup>1</sup> has put in "Irish?" as a comment), so we had quite a bit of light. As the wind was dropping off, we shook out the reef that we had in the mainsail. I believe we...

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July**

.....made some long tacks out to sea about midnight but I didn't notice much because I was able to snatch a little sleep now by lying across a thwart using my lifejacket as a pillow. About 0200, the wind had dropped

considerably but we could see the lights of Mtwara so we concluded from their bearing that we must be in the bay but we saw later how large it was. We really felt we were getting in when we passed a black conical buoy and soon we picked up what we thought were leading lights but the outer one was hardly lit at all.

Soon we lowered sail and rowed into the river, (HRS<sup>1</sup> "harbour"). The moon set as we entered. We came round the spit and happily saw the *Chantala* at the quay. We got all the gear out of the whaler and made her fast alongside No. 4 hatch. We wearily climbed on board and cooked ourselves a darned good meal of bacon and eggs that had been left out for our "supper". We finished this at about 0545 and turned in, getting up for breakfast and turning in again afterwards. We got up and turned to at 1100.

**Note:**

<sup>1</sup> *"HRS" – Harold Richard Smith – was our Captain at the time, although he was universally known then, and even now, as "Lifeboat" Smith as he had a great affection for lifeboats and was always re-rigging them to (im)prove their sailing qualities. We always knew him as Harry Smith, but it is only in recent years that others have said that he preferred "Dick" from his second name.*

*Looking back at this journal entry now, I can only think that it must have given our Captain, Dick "Lifeboat" Smith, kittens when he read it!!!*

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