

Ship Watching - Capt. Geoff

Or should it be Ship spotting? With its great views of the primary North South channel of the Inside Passage, Campbell River gets to see lots of ships. Some are one time visitors from around the world, but a large number are from several dozen companies and organizations that transit the passage consistently. How can you tell which companies or organization the ship belongs to?

Many companies and organizations paint their ships in distinctive colours. The Canadian Coast Guard is one good example. Ship Watchers should be aware that the US Coast Guard uses a very similar paint scheme for their icebreakers (Their Buoy Tenders have a black hull and white superstructure, and their Offshore Patrol Cutters have white hull and white superstructure; both also sport a red stripe.)



CCGC Point Race

Some shipping companies don't use a distinctive colour scheme for their ships, but may instead use logos or colour schemes on their funnels. An example of this are some of the cruise ship lines. Norwegian Cruise Lines, Princess, Carnival and others use mostly white for their hulls and superstructure, but Princess has what I believe is a woman's head (a princess?) with long hair streaming out from it, while Norwegian often has a blue funnel with a crest on it. Holland America uses a white superstructure with a blue hull, much like the Alaskan State ferries use.



Seaspan Victor

Tug companies also use their own colour scheme. With their low freeboard and generous fendering, usually the hull is fairly nondescript, but the accommodation is often painted in company colours. Probably the most well known on the West Coast is Seaspan, with their white over red accommodation.

There are several large US tug companies, who's tugs are routinely seen towing barges to and from Alaska. Western Towboats have white over yellow accommodation with blue funnels and trim. Foss tugs usually have a green hull with white and green superstructure. Dunlap is

similar to Seaspan's white over red, but rather than a black and red funnel, theirs is white with a black D.

Among our local tug companies are Jarl towing with white over brown accommodation, and Gowlland towing with all white accommodation.

Ship watchers used to have to listen to the Marine channels, particularly the traffic channels if they couldn't get close enough to see the Ship's name. Even if you could determine the company from the colour scheme, there was no easy way to figure out which ship you were looking at, leaving us to leaf through old copies of West Coast Mariner and the like for clues.

Now we have many tools at our disposal via the internet. Most companies have websites with galleries of photos, so if you can determine the company from the colour scheme, you can usually figure out which ship you are looking at. Using AIS (Automated Identification System) receivers or websites allows you to see icons, representing ships, superimposed over a chart or map in real time. Depending on the site, clicking on or mousing over the ship icon will pop up the name and destination. There is a link to one AIS site that you can view for free in the Ripple Rock website link pages.

Happy ship watching!

More Ship Watching - Capt. Geoff

In the last article, I mentioned tug and tows. For many marine communities and worksites, tug and barges are equivalent to freight trucks. Tug and tow combinations transport almost everything from groceries to construction machinery to small communities, logging shows and fish farms. Many barges have an open, flat deck, allowing them to carry pallets, containers, vehicles, logs, etc.



Sometimes flat barges will have a ramp at one end that they can lower onto a beach, so vehicles can



drive on and off while the barge is held close to shore by the tug. At sea, the ramps will be hauled up almost vertically. These "ramp

barges" are quite recognizable once you know what to look for.



There are a number of variations on the basic flat barge. The Side Barge, has bulwarks to hold in loose cargo, such as coal



Higher sides are used by chip barges. There used to be at least a couple a day heading to Duncan Bay to feed the mill.



The final variation is this is the covered barge. Cargos, such as finished paper, fish food and other cargos that can't get wet from rain or spray are carried in this type of barge



While flat barges can carry containers, large specialized barges have been constructed for carrying containers. They have specialized connections on deck to secure the containers for open ocean passages.

It is hard to comprehend how big these barges are when you see them from a distance. They look like blocks of various coloured legos. You will often see small, odd shaped objects stacked on top of the containers. Often it takes a pair of binoculars to realize that these are buses, excavators, yachts, etc.



One of the bigger container barges that passes by Campbell River is also a rail barge. The Wittier Provider has a main deck with rail tracks on it, to carry specialty oils and other liquids in railway cars, while the upper deck carries containers.



There are also other specialty barges, such as fuel barges. They can be recognized by having a deck that appears cluttered with pipes. The interior of the barge is divided into a number of tanks, so they can carry different types of liquid cargo, diesel, gasoline, oil, etc. at the same time. The pipes are needed to pump to or from the various tanks. The barge below is a fuel barge.



The tug and tow above, as well as the one below are a little different in that they are pushing, rather than pulling their barges. Pushing has a number of advantages, better manoeuvrability, ability to put



someone on the barge to check the cargo easier, etc. However, most combinations can't withstand much weather, as the barge and the tug flex against each other which can cause damage. The tug also needs to have the wheelhouse high enough to see over the barge.

Occasionally, you will see barges that have fishing lodges built on them (they get towed to the North Coast for the summer, and back south in the fall). Then there are barges who's use you can only speculate on.



A different approach to get good manoeuvrability is the use of what are sometimes called landing craft. One of Campbell River's best examples is the Aurora Explorer, which does deliveries to many of the small logging shows and communities in the area. She has some passenger cabins, so you can book a trip aboard. I understand the food is great.

Happy shipwatching.

