INTERVIEW

Andrew Clifton, General Manager & Chief Executive of SIGTTO

“Safety is our licence to operate as an industry”

Gibraltar Shipping

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Andrew Clifton is the General Manager and Chief Executive of SIGTTO (The Society of International Gas Tanker & Terminal Operators Ltd), and has over 30 years’ experience in the liquefied gas shipping industry. Andrew is passionate about the industry and he tells us more about his role and the invaluable experiences gained over his extensive career.

What are your main functions as General Manager and Chief Executive of SIGTTO?
The Society is a non-profit making organisation and the international body established for the exchange of technical information and experience, between members of the industry, to enhance the safety and operational reliability of gas tankers and terminals.

As General Manager I am responsible for the management of the Society and as the Chief Executive, can set the policies and instructions that are laid down by the Board of Directors. I represent the Society, and in effect, the industry, at a senior level at meetings with other professional bodies, members and trade associations such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and major conferences.

How has your 30 years’ experience in the liquefied gas industry prepared you for your role?
It has been invaluable, the liquefied gas industry and especially the LNG shipping industry, is very different to the rest of the shipping industry. LNG vessels are very complex, capital intensive vessels with a high degree of sophistication built into them. There are also different types of LNG vessels, fully refrigerated, semi pressurised and I was fortunate to serve on them all in a senior capacity and also served from cadet to master on gas vessels. To successfully fulfil this position, it is fundamental that the industry, at a senior level at meetings with other industry bodies, governmental and intergovernmental agencies, including the IMO, to better promote the safety and interests of LNG shipping and storage schemes.

The Society continues to expand and introduce new technologies. Ships with new types of propulsion systems are now in service and the fleet continues to grow space. FSRU’s and FLENG vessels are now also part of the industry. All these changes ensure that there are many challenges in the liquefied gas shipping and terminal industry today.

Not least of these challenges is the supply of ship crews, shore support staff and trainers to provide the required number of trained and competent staff needed in an era of unprecedented growth.

In respect of training the SIGTTO competency standards for crew onboard both LNG and LPG vessels have become the industry best practice recommendation. The standards provide operators with guidance as to the specific competencies each individual should possess before vang in that rank. These standards are above and beyond the minimum requirements of IMO’s Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention.

How do members benefit from SIGTTO?
Benefits of SIGTTO are substantial, and are not just limited to credibility in the industry. Much of SIGTTO’s work is publicly available but the most important part is not.

Members’ benefit by:

- Access to information that is exclusive to members, such as casualty and industry statistics and lessons learned.
- Access to the Technical Advisers in the London Liaison Office who can give advice and obtain advice, on behalf of a member, from within the Society.
- Access to the very comprehensive technical library maintained in that London Office.
- Submitting proposals for industry projects and studies to the General Purposes Committee.
- Participating in discussion forums, regional forums, panel meetings with other members held regularly throughout the year on topics of particular and mutual interest.
- The opportunity to regularly network with members of SIGTTO, over 95% of the LNG shipping and terminal industry and over 50% of the LPG industry are members.
- On becoming a member a copy of all publications, free of charge, produced by SIGTTO
- Regular updates on matters affecting the industry such as legislation, IMO, either new or pending, technical or operational developments.

LNG is described as the “fuel of the future”. Do you share this view?
LNG is one of the three choices available to ship owners (crude oils and distilled being the other) to meet the requirements of the emission control area. There is no doubt it is a future fuel for conventional shipping but it is unlikely to happen as fast as some parties are making out. At present, unless your vessel trades exclusively within an ECA, the only reason to change is price, bunker should be carried, in principle, with the same designs, procedures, training, control measures and best practic...