



Andrew Clifton GENERAL MANAGER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE 

« Safety is our licence to operate as an industry »

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, carry out 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's 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 LPG carriers, fully refrigerated, semi-pressurised and fully 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 General Manager has extensive experience in the liquefied gas shipping industry

SIGTTO is known for promoting best practices across the gas shipping and terminal industries. How is this achieved and what are the main challenges when implementing such practices?

The Society publishes studies, and produces information papers and works of reference, for the guidance of industry members. It maintains working relationships with other industry bodies, governmental and intergovernmental agencies, including the IMO, to better promote the safety and integrity of gas transportation and storage schemes.

The LNG industry continues to expand and introduce new technologies. Larger ships with new types of pro-

pulsion systems are now in service and the fleet continues to grow apace. FSRUs and FLNG vessels are now also part of the industry. All these advances 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 crews 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 serving 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 learnt
- ◆ 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 the 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

◆ Free access to the LNG webinfo portal for updated LNG information as required to conduct compatibility studies. This information is restricted to members of SIGTTO and GIIGNL only

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 (scrubbers and distillates being the others) to meet the requirements of the emission control areas. 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 practices as has been used in the half century of successful LNG vessel operation.

A major incident on a LNG-fuelled vessel, especially one involving passengers, would impact the LNG shipping industry but also have the potential for port and flag states to impose severe restrictions, or even prohibit entry within their jurisdictions, for LNG-fuelled conventional vessels.

The Nuclear powered ship "Savannah" probably has the best emissions record of all time amongst commercial



prices have also fallen and the high capital cost of conversion to LNG has put off a lot of shipowners, plus there is no real infrastructure in operation today to support deep sea vessels bunkering with LNG. This may all change if the IMO go ahead with the global emissions cap in 2020, the decision will be taken in 2018 – watch this space!

SIGTTO has no doubt that LNG can be safely used as ship's bunkers however we believe that LNG as fuel

vessels; however it never fully gained the confidence of port and flag states. To avoid supplying potential modern day successors to the "Savannah" (now a museum ship), it is imperative that the shipping industry embraces the use of LNG as a fuel in the same manner that the LNG shipping industry has.

The Society for Gas as a Marine Fuel (SGMF), which SIGTTO formed in 2013, is the new industry body to oversee the use of LNG as a marine fuel.

Generally, "Safety" in the liquefied gas industry is a subject of discussion. What is your position?

Safety is our licence to operate as an industry. In the 50 years since they loaded their first commercial shipment, LNG carriers have safely delivered over 80,000 cargoes. These consignments all reached their destination with no breach of a cargo containment system and with no onboard fatalities directly attributable to the cargo. This is a very impressive, in fact unprecedented, safety record for the carriage of liquid hydrocarbons by sea in bulk.

This exemplary safety record is due to several reasons. These include, but are not limited to, a strong, overarching safety philosophy; robust equipment and systems design; good operational and maintenance procedures; operating in excess of the minimum requirements and according to best practice guidelines; and high standards of training coupled with competency verification. Educating the public is extremely important for liquefied gas shipping and the public needs to be made aware that gas carriers are not the "floating bombs" that some scare-mongers portray them to be. Public perception is often that an incident on a gas carrier will result in a huge explosion that may harm people and property in the vicinity. The public needs to learn that these vessels are robust ships, soundly designed and constructed and well equipped with safety and emergency systems. The public also needs to be aware that catastrophic events caused by hydrocarbon gases in the liquid phase are few. As an example, in a fire accident scenario refrigerated liquefied gas tanks can burn until fuel is consumed but they are highly unlikely to explode.

How important is the International Gas Carrier (IGC) Code to the industry?

Amongst other factors that have contributed to LNG shipping's remarkable safety record is the fact that the IGC Code was developed based on actual experiences in the early days of LNG transport and our industry's ability to share lessons learnt and to develop universally accepted best practices.

Credit also needs to be given to the pioneers who contributed first to the development of design standards and operating procedures during the early days of liquefied gas shipping and then to the development of the IGC Code, with its safety margins and safe design provisions. They played a key role in laying the foundation stones on which the industry's excellent safety performance has been built.

SIGTTO was heavily involved in the recent revision of the IGC Code and facilitated the revision on behalf of the IMO. The Revised Code was Adopted at MSC 93 (May 2014) and entered into force on 1st January 2016. The Implementation date is 1st July 2016. It is not retroactively applied and only applies to vessels contracted/keel laid after 1st July 2016.

What has been the most exciting period of your career?

I have been lucky enough to have many enjoyable and rewarding periods of my career, I think my seven years as chief officer onboard a first generation 1960s built LPG tonnage was amongst the most challenging but also rewarding, looking back it was invaluable experience although I probably didn't appreciate it at the time! Being the LNG shipping manager for a major LNG project (BP Tangguh in Indonesia) was also very rewarding. I oversaw the whole shipping operation from steel cutting through to delivery, commissioning and the first dry docks for seven large time chartered LNG vessels. But the greatest honour and privilege I have been asked to do is being the General Manager of SIGTTO, an organisation I have been involved with for many years.

What is your favourite ship and your most memorable shipping experience?

I think probably the "Excel", built in 1967 one of the first LPG vessels in the world and a challenge to operate when I was chief officer and master on her in the 1990s. Just keeping the vessel safely and efficiently trading with the help of excellent support from ashore was a great example of teamwork and achievement. I do remember the USCG asking where the cargo control room was – there wasn't one as it was a 100% manual vessel with all operations carried out locally and manually! Those were the days...

More information about SIGTTO can be found via the website www.sigtto.org and Twitter @SIGTTO.

Paul González-Morgan
Editor

E-mail: shippinggib@gmail.com
Twitter: @ShippingGib
Web: www.gibraltar-shipping.com



Note: The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by interviewees. Interviews are pre-approved by the interviewee before public release.