

One to One Interview



CAPTAIN RICHARD BROUGH

» What is your professional background?

I have worked in many areas of the industry on both the wet and dry sides for 48 years. In 1969 I started work as a cadet with BP Tanker Company, and then progressed through various ranks and companies within the British Merchant Navy until I became a captain. After 20 years at sea, I came ashore in 1989, and worked as a stevedoring manager, progressing through the ranks in port and stevedoring management until I became managing director of my own stevedoring company. Prior to that, I held roles ranging from port captain and port ship container planner to ship agent and ship broker.

A while ago I started a new company supplying skilled labour to the port industry, but I sold my interest in that about five years ago. After that, I took up my current role as technical adviser at ICHCA International [the International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association]. This was an opportunity to give back to the industry some of the experience I had collected over many years working on its many sides. However, I am still learning – we all learn every day. If you are not learning, you may as well pack up and go home.

» Were you always interested in shipping and ports, or did you start in the industry by chance?

I guess that my interest came from my father, who was in the Royal Navy. Initially, I wanted to pursue a career in the Navy myself but, as my family's business went bankrupt, I had to leave school a little early. I was not able to complete my education and become an officer in the Royal Navy, so I joined the Merchant Navy instead. However, I did join

Captain Richard Brough, technical adviser to ICHCA International and director of Brough Marine Ltd, tells **Federica Ragonese** about his passion for developing people's potential

the Royal Navy in the end, as I spent eight years as an officer in their reserves. I had the best of both worlds really.

» As part of your role at ICHCA, you advise and raise awareness on safety. Have you always been interested in this topic or did you develop an interest later in your career?

It has always been an interest because I have always had to pay attention to safety, working in a particularly dangerous industry, starting from being a cadet on oil tankers. I have been responsible for health and safety for many of the organisations I have worked for or had responsibility for. Safety is not an isolated subject, however. I think people struggle with occupational health and safety when it is used as a tool for its own end, while in fact safety is part of operations as well as the commercial and governance structure of any company that is properly run.

You might have heard the phrase "if it is a safe company, it is a profitable company". Safety is also tied in with skills: you cannot have safety without developing people's skills properly, because the two are intertwined. I was a board member of British Ports Industry Training many years ago; a separate organisation was also involved, namely the Port Skills Organisation, which later became Port Skills and Safety. I was the founder member who brought the skills agenda into the safety organisation to make sure that the two were interlinked.

» You have had a long career. Are there any goals you have yet to achieve?

I have already achieved some of my objectives in my career: I was promoted to captain while in the Merchant Navy and I got to be manager of my own company. My two main goals in life were to be successful in business and to be married to a lovely woman, and I have been married now for 44 years.

The third thing, the thread that runs through my whole career, is developing people and getting them to realise their potential; and if they do not achieve it the first

time around, giving them a second chance. By exchanging information and talking to people in the right way, you unlock the knowledge that is latent inside them. That is what I got my OBE for: developing people in the industry to become more respected in their own right, but also assisting others to achieve their ambitions [Brough was appointed Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to learning and skills in the Humber region in HM The Queen's New Year's Honours List in 2011].

» What do you like to do in your spare time?

My hobbies are theatre, art, culture and good food, when I get a chance. I spend a lot of time with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, which provides a golden opportunity to take in a lot of cultural events, shows and gourmet dining. Every time my wife and I go down to London, we make time to do something cultural. I was actually involved in amateur dramatics when I was at school; I've had very little time for that over the past 40-plus years, but I will get back to it when I finally retire. I love the job I do and the industry, but you need something else in life for counterbalance, where you can forget all about it for a few hours and absorb yourself in something completely different. And culture is where I become absorbed.

Despite having to do a lot of travelling internationally over the past 48 years, I also still love travelling. I like the experience of meeting different people, being in different places and discovering different cultures. I'm not one of those people who want to go abroad and have the all-day English breakfast; my wife and I like to engage with the atmosphere we are in. Working in the international supply chain you meet so many people from many international backgrounds; you realise that when it boils down to it we all face the same challenges, but tend not to share the solutions as we have to learn for ourselves. That's one of humanity's failings, but also one of its blessings: if people were all the same, it would be a disaster.