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North

Correspondents



View from the top

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Correspondents

Welcome to our sixth Correspondents Newsletter.

We hope that you are all well and staying safe as we enter our second year of Covid restrictions which obviously continues to shape our lives, and which is reflected in the articles.

However this is the last Newsletter before Nick retires and unfortunately the plans to visit Newcastle and to say goodbye in person will not be possible. Nick's message later in the Newsletter includes information how we can do this by video and allow as many of you as possible to join and, depending on your time zone or constitution, if you wish to raise a glass to say farewell, please feel free to do so!

Update your contact information



We remind correspondents to regularly check North's website to ensure that we are holding the correct contact details and to advise: Neil Watson: neil.watson@nepia.com of any changes, as we will no longer be sending an annual request for updates. Remember if this information is not correct then you may miss out on an instruction.



It feels like being at home!

In 2019 we carried out a survey of all of our correspondents, one of the questions was whether you would prefer to have a Video meeting if a physical meeting was not possible.



At the time I did not know how prophetic that question would be! 70% of your responses expressed that this would be something in which you would be interested; I suspect, however, that as we have all had to adapt to the new way of remote working, the remaining 30% are out of luck, as this is unfortunately going to be the way forward for the time being.

As I write this article, the infection levels in the UK are reducing, a large proportion of the population have been vaccinated and life is starting to return to some degree of normality. However, plans to return to the office remain uncertain and even with all things going well, we strongly suspect that it will be very unlikely that we will have any overseas visitors coming into the office for some time yet.

With this in mind, North has continued to keep in touch with our correspondents remotely by the use of Microsoft Teams, which is our preferred method of video conferencing. We can use Zoom if necessary, but this has to be arranged and hosted by you for the time being.

In 2020, we were able to carry out nearly 100 virtual meetings with our correspondents from all corners of the

world, which is roughly in line with a "normal" year of actual visits to the office. With the technology at our disposal, we are able to cover most of the topics we would include in a physical meeting, but sadly without a tour of the office and a nice meal!

Although we aim to ensure that any listed correspondent is provided with a tour of the office to meet the claims teams, even in the future when we have visitors to the office, a tour will be unlikely due to the issues of possible infection. Even if a tour is possible, it is anticipated that staff will have a greater level of flexibility to work from home and it is therefore unlikely.

Although we would always prefer to hold face to face meetings with correspondents when it is safe to do so, the stark reality at the moment is that this is some time away. We would encourage you where possible to plan for video meetings with North for the foreseeable future.

By Neil Watson
Deputy Director (Correspondents)

COVID-19 Updates

Whilst infection levels in the UK continue to decline (as I write this!), it is clear that this is not the case elsewhere in the world where COVID-19 still remains a deadly risk.

MyGlobeView

powered by Geollect

Over the last year the COVID-19 Tracking Tool on North's website via MyGlobeView and the portal on the IG website still remain a vital tool for all ship owners and operators around the world. This continued success is only possible with the continued assistance of you, our local correspondents and we would be grateful if you could please continue to send in any updates whether it is to say that restrictions have been lifted or further precautions have been imposed.

On behalf of our Members and Policy holders, as well as everyone at the Club, we wish to express our gratitude and appreciation for all the information provided to date.

By your North Correspondents Team

FOR MORE INFO
SCAN HERE:



North

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100 The Quayside,
Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 3DU UK
Telephone: +44 191 2325221
Email: neil.watson@nepia.com
www.nepia.com

HOW HAVE WE DONE?

Let us know what you think of the latest edition. Contact: neil.watson@nepia.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors: Nick Tonge and Neil Watson,

Photographs: Shutterstock

Thanks to: Fiona Mancas from Pandiman in Manila, Santiago Moreno from A&A Mulitprime in Colombia and Hedia Ben Alaoui from Budd Tunisie in Tunis, Tunisia.

INSIGHT ARTICLES AND BACK ISSUES

Current articles from the Correspondents Newsletter and back issues are available online at: www.nepia.com/latest/publications/newsletters

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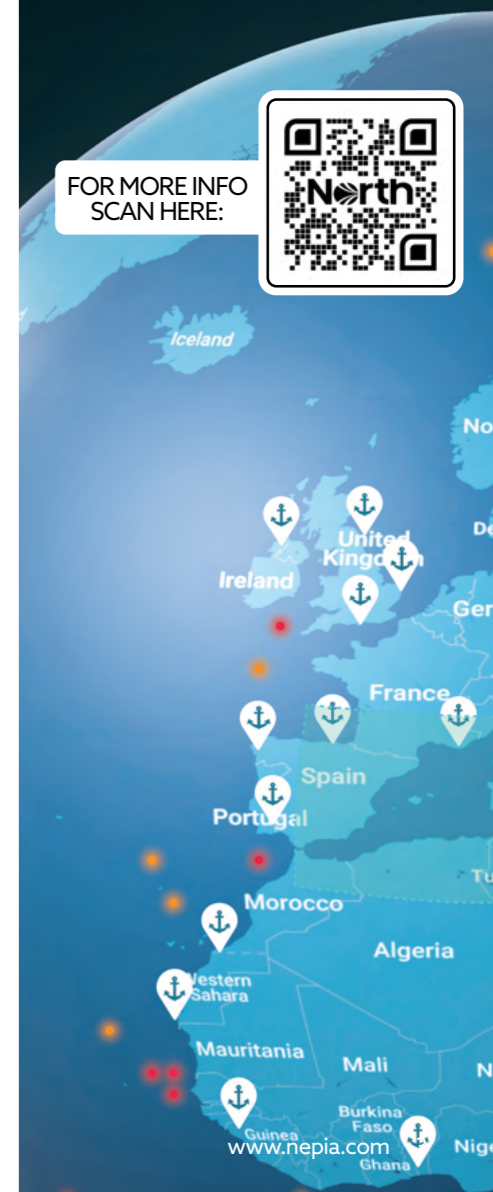
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View from the top

Someone once likened retirement to reaching the top of a mountain and being able to enjoy the view. After a little more than 37 years at North with 27 years as correspondent manager, I have decided that it is now time to enjoy the view!

It has been an amazing period in which the world has witnessed nuclear disasters, catastrophic hurricanes, tsunamis, civil wars, disease epidemics and the current pandemic. North has been, and is currently served by dedicated correspondents who have risen above such catastrophes and provided the highest levels of service. For this reason I have often described my job as the best job in the world. Thank you to all correspondents past and present for making this possible!



I know that in Neil, North has chosen an excellent successor. I would like to say that he has had a good trainer! but the fact is that Neil has sound experience and a great enthusiasm for the role which he deserves and now undertakes.

As explained in previous editions of the Correspondent Newsletter, Neil and myself have been meeting regularly during the pandemic with correspondents by video. In fact we have held as many meetings as we would have had visitors to our office in Newcastle over the same period of time. This will be the shape of meetings in the near and foreseeable future.

During these meetings, we have been asked by a number of correspondents if it will be possible to have meetings in June/July before I retire. Clearly, it is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate any requests as individual meetings. With this in mind, Neil and myself will be hosting 2 meetings on 1st July to which you are invited. The first will take place at 09.00 (British Summer Time) and the second will take place at 16.00 (British Summer Time). You can choose the most convenient time

for your own time zone. The meeting will include brief presentations from myself and Neil, looking back and looking forward to North and you, our correspondents. It will also be an opportunity to ask any questions and bid any farewells. We are also hoping to have representatives from North's recently expanded internal correspondent team present at the meeting. We anticipate up to an hour for each meeting. If you and your colleagues would like to receive a meeting invitation which will be held via Microsoft Teams, please contact either Neil Watson (neil.watson@nepia.com) or Nick Tonge (nick.tonge@nepia.com). We will be happy to meet you and your colleagues, provide you with the opportunity to raise issues and to answer any questions which you may wish to raise. In order to manage the Q&A session, please can you submit your questions/issues in advance to Neil and myself, as priority to address the meeting will be given to requests made in advance.

We look forward to seeing you on 1 July. Keep safe and many thanks.

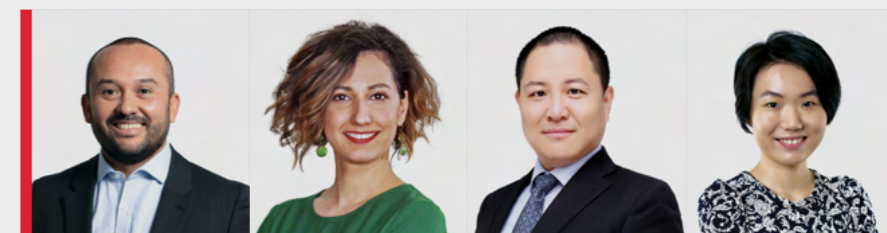
By Nick Tonge
Deputy Director (Correspondents)

I have often described my job as the best job in the world. Thank you to all correspondents past and present for making this possible!



Correspondents' Expertise Group has expanded

For over 35 years, Nick has remained the "go to" person at North for all correspondents' needs. Going forward, Neil will remain the focal point for managing the relationship with correspondents following Nick's retirement in early July. You may also recall from issue 1 of the Correspondents' Newsletter, that we introduced you all to a new team at North, the Correspondents' Expertise Group (CEG).



New team members added to the CEG. From left to right: Gustavo Gomez, Angelina Kofopoulou, Linus Wang and Yixuan Wu

The CEG has allowed us to ensure that the information and relationships were not all vested in one person and that there would always be someone available to deal with any correspondent-related enquiry both for you, our Members and, of course, our colleagues within North.

Following on from the success of this and to highlight the diversity of products within the North Group, we have added Gustavo Gomez from our Fixed P&I and Sunderland Marine to the CEG.

We also recognise that many correspondents enjoy a very good working relationship with colleagues in our regional offices due to their geographic location.

We have therefore added Angelina Kofopoulou from our Greek Office, Linus Wang in Shanghai and Yixuan Wu in Singapore to the CEG.

It is important to emphasise that the day-to-day management of the relationship will continue to be managed by Neil following Nick's retirement in July. However, North's CEG provide an important local contact for you and will ensure that your details and news can be shared quickly and easily throughout the North Group of companies.

By your North Correspondents Team

The 'bayanihan' spirit

Pandiman Philippines has managed throughout the pandemic months to maintain its man-on-the-spot value for North, due in large part to one significant aspect of the Filipino psyche: the 'bayanihan' spirit is ingrained from birth. It is the coming together of a family or a community to assist each other in times of need or crisis.



Dedicated staff voluntary sacrifice family time to ensure correspondent service levels are maintained

The Philippine Government decreed a lockdown on 18th March 2020 which closed all public transport, airports as well as all non-essential businesses.

Being a first responder for the country's repatriated sick or injured seafarers, we were thankfully allowed to operate. Due to the shutdown of public transport, staff living near our offices now had to walk to Pandiman to report each day, which was vital in continuing to operate. To keep the office sanitized, a lone janitor volunteered to cycle eleven miles through the deserted streets to keep everyone safe. Very soon a number of key staff slept on premises using the conference room as a dormitory.

Important to the success of Pandiman's lock-down operation was the continued flexibility of the Company's officers, managers and staff to work around ever-changing Covid-19 protocols, making finding bizarre and novel solutions to problems.

We were asked to arrange safe transport for a Russian ship's master to Manila for medical care. We then assisted in returning him to Russia a month later with the assistance of the Office of the President of the Philippines and the Russian Embassy. However due to local restrictions he could only get as far as Helsinki. On a hastily purchased bicycle and pulling his suitcase

behind him, he pedaled the last few miles across the border into Russia, where his wife stood waiting!



Having travelled over 7,000 km, Master takes bicycle to complete journey

Thirty Cuban nationals were stranded on board an LPG tanker with no-one willing to board because of the fear of possible

exposure to the virus. To avoid further suffering of the crew, Pandiman along with the owners and a manager, boarded the vessel via a daunting pilot ladder. This would have been nerve racking at the best of times, but we did this in full PPE! They were eventually allowed to travel home after a delay due to flights and travel documents, the seafarers finally returned to Cuba.



Stranded but not neglected by correspondents

The world will take time to recover from the pandemic, but whilst it continues, the bayanihan spirit of Pandiman will no doubt be familiar to North's correspondents around the world.

By Fiona Mancas
Pandiman in Manila

Giving back to the community

One of the projects that is close to Nick's heart is North's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Program. This is not just limited to Newcastle, but extends throughout the world via our regional offices, each of which contribute towards this program. Correspondents have made a major contribution to this for which we are very grateful. Further details of North's CSR activities can be found on North's website.



Juan Pinzon and Santiago Moreno helping to rebuild a football pitch

It is therefore very gratifying and noteworthy when we learn of CSR projects with which our correspondents are involved. Our Colombian correspondents, A&A Multiprime, advised of their involvement with the "Tiempo de Juego" charity in Santa Marta

<https://tiempodejuego.org/en>



They recently paid for and assisted in the rebuilding of a football pitch in Santa Marta which had been abandoned for some time and was being used as a refuse disposal area.

A&A Multiprime said, "Giving back to the community in which we live and work is very important to us. This is why our latest project was to support the charity "Tiempo de Juego" in the port of Santa Marta...This project was possible thanks to the local community involvement, our Employee's voluntary engagement and a corporate donation from ourselves.

The second stage will come soon, where we will build a new children's playground next to the pitch."

If anyone else is involved in a CSR project around the world, we would be more than happy to celebrate your involvement.

By Santiago Moreno
A&A Multiprime in Colombia



The Correspondents' questionnaire

In my final Correspondent Newsletter interview with one of our listed correspondents, Hedia Ben Alaoui of Budd Tunisie in Tunis, Tunisia responds to some questions about her role as P&I Correspondent and working with North.

Q How long have you been in a correspondent and how did you start in the industry?

A I started in the shipping industry in 1994 after having graduated in Translation: Arabic, English and Russian from the University of Languages Bourguiba School and joined Budd Protecmar – Tunisie which is part of the Budd Group network.

When I joined the company, I had no previous experience in shipping activities. I was introduced to the shipping industry and particularly to P&I field by my manager Elias Mami to whom I owe my career.

Over the years I have had opportunities to work on a wide range of claims on behalf of many shipowners, charterers and obviously for numerous P&I clubs, gaining considerable experience and skills in claims handling.

Q What are your earliest/most memorable recollections of working with North?

A My most memorable recollection was when I first visited North of England P&I Association in 2004 for North's Residential Training Course. It is a memorable time when I met people with whom I had handled claims, held telephone discussions, and corresponded, thus putting their faces to their pictures. I am Mediterranean and face-to-face meetings are very important to me.

Everyone I met from North was so kind, friendly, and knowledgeable about their field of expertise, without forgetting Mr Nick Tonge who showed a very professional and friendly attitude when he was the first person from North I met when arriving in the Lumley Castle.

Q What is the current state of the shipping industry in your country?

A Further to the country's current economic and political situation, the current state of the shipping industry is in general stagnating in Tunisia, and this is not limited to the Shipping Industry but all other economic sectors.

Consequently, imported cargoes are quite limited to the basic needs, such as cereals, steel and timber cargoes. Due to the economic and financial problems of the country there is less diversity in the range of cargoes as previously experienced.

Moreover, we are discovering new practices with the change of the country's regime (the Arab Spring, Revolution); the strikes that the ports are experiencing from time to time are deeply harming the Tunisian Shipping Industry, causing complexities in terms of C/P issues (demurrage, delay of delivery etc...) for the shipowners/sea carrier in addition to the local claims that may arise therefrom.

Q Can you mention one of the most interesting and/or challenging cases you have dealt with?

A I think it is difficult to recall the most interesting and/or challenging case after all these years. Indeed, every case that I have handled had its own charm and they are all interesting and challenging for me especially because we are in a very difficult jurisdiction.

In Tunisia it is very easy to obtain court orders to arrest vessels. In fact, any allegations of rights grant the claimants the right to arrest vessels and obtain security.

Probably the most interesting and challenging case I have handled involved a reefer vessel carrying a cargo of bananas in 2006. At that period the import of bananas was limited to the relatives of the former president of the country.

Claimants in this instance were very influential and powerful. As you can imagine, significant pressure was applied on my manager, myself, and our appointed lawyer; it was a very difficult time for us as P&I Correspondents but with the support of North, which we highly appreciate, we were successful in the end. It was a huge relief and provided great moral satisfaction that the law prevailed despite the considerable position of the claimants in Tunisia.

Q What are the challenges you face locally in attending to the vessel's interests?

A The challenges faced locally in attending to the vessel's interests consist in the following:

- Trying to maintain good relationship with the port authorities, administration, and terminal operators especially those who are new to the field.
- Trying also to maintain a good relationship with the cargo interests notably the state companies who have very tough attitudes and the cargo underwriters.
- Keeping abreast of ever-changing regulations and local laws
- Appointing qualified surveyors and experts to deal with specific matters / litigations, and qualified lawyers to defend the member' interests.
- Among the most important challenges for us in Tunisia is the shipping industry struggles to attract new talent since the experienced surveyors and marine related experts are retiring.

All these challenges are necessary and essential to better represent the club and its members locally.

Q What has been the biggest challenge to you and your colleagues during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

A For us the biggest challenge was to find and create adequate means to continue working outside offices and in the ports during the lockdown and to establish the possibility of teleworking which is a new practice imposed by the pandemic situation. It is important to ensure contact with colleagues and services providers to ascertain that good service and the continued protection of interests are rendered to members despite the difficulties imposed by the lockdown restrictions.

Q What prevailing shipping trends in your jurisdiction?

A In Tunisia, the courts are not very familiar with maritime law, however, recently we are noticing that there is a movement from the courts' side to get more involved and interested in understanding more about maritime law. Some judges are making efforts to better understand international maritime trade, and hopefully this will have good consequences for the vessels' protection /defence of interests and fighting.

Q What are your top three tips for reducing/defending claims?

- A**
- To understand and clearly identify the issues of the claim.
 - To obtain the necessary information and documentation from members/ club at the earliest possible stage of the file as well identifying details and understanding the nature of the claims. This will enable us to establish the strategy for protecting and/or defending the members' interests and ascertain if surveyors and/or lawyers' appointment is required.

- To create a positive environment, to maintain credibility and confidence with the club/member, and to ensure good communication links with the claimants to easily handle the matters and minimize/avoid any litigation that may lead to increased complexity in resolving the claims, and where necessary/possible, and always with authority from the club, in convincing them to accept a club letter of Undertaking instead of arresting vessels and requesting bank guarantees. This is not always possible! I am, however, optimistic and may be one day we achieve this goal here in Tunisia.

Q What are your passions outside of working as a correspondent?

A My greatest passion is painting, walking (when I have time), and swimming whenever the weather permits. Since the death of my parents and recently my mother my new passion is spending more time with my sisters and nephews.

Q How do you see the role of the Club Correspondent evolving over the coming years?

A In Tunisia, with the various economic and jurisdictional issues, I believe the role of correspondent is essential. Indeed, the instability of the country politically, and economically, the new practices that we are experiencing such as judges, lawyers, port authorities, stevedores, administration' strikes and riots render the intervention of the correspondent with good local knowledge quite necessary to resolve the claims and to deal with the threat of arrests.

Clubs need a local correspondent who is knowledgeable, well connected, and respected locally to assist members resolving the claims and to responding to incidents in promptly.

The clubs also need a trustworthy correspondent to be their "eyes, ears and legal flag bearer of the clubs".

To sum up, the correspondent's expertise, experience, knowledge, familiarity, and connection in difficult jurisdictions such as Tunisia where the international group members are trading, is almost a pre-requisite.

Q Do you have any useful tips for claims handlers at North?

- A**
- To obtain all the necessary documentation and information from members in the early stage of the incident.
 - To have clear communication with involved parties notably, the members, and the correspondent and provide correspondents with all necessary documentation and information that are in their hands as to enable the correspondent to assess the situation and to recommend the appropriate strategy for handling the claim.
 - To maintain a clear communication with involved parties notably the members and the correspondent to ensure a better handling of the claims especially when it is a matter of complex liabilities and casualties.
 - To be pragmatic: indeed, for certain claims it could be cost effective resolving and closing them quickly; for other claims which are complex, claims handlers need to have patience for defending the claim until conclusion; in fact, it is important to keep fighting especially when it is a matter of principle and/or paper claims, to at least close the doors and all the avenues from which claimants can take advantage.

By Nick Tonge
Deputy Director (Correspondents)



Hedia Ben Alaoui of Budd Tunisie in Tunis, Tunisia.

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We are required to take appropriate measures to safeguard personal data, in particular personal data relating to crew injury or illness, so we may encrypt or secure information we send you. Correspondents are encouraged to ensure they are dealing with personal data in accordance with applicable legal obligations; in particular, emails or documents relating to crew injury or illness claims may require additional protection. Examples of good practice are password protecting or encrypting documents when practicable, and checking that email recipient lists are correct and limited to those who need to see any personal data being sent.


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