Project Profile: M.V. John D. Leitch

The ‘John D. Leitch’, formerly the ‘Canadian Century’, entered Port Weller Drydocks in 2001 for substantial refit, repairs and upgrades. The ‘Canadian Century’ entered service for Upper Lakes Shipping in 1968 and has carried upwards of 50 million tons of product (mostly coal) during her extended life on the Great Lakes. The ship was unique at the time of her introduction owing to a large 300 ton reclaimer that was fitted in her single cargo hold, extending from the engine room bulkhead to the forward bulkhead.

Growing maintenance costs associated with the reclaimer, combined with the need for substantial repairs to the forebody, led to the Owner’s decision to replace the reclaimer with more traditional manned wheel loaders and replace the previously sloped raised tank top with a flat raised tank top.

As has been common with prior major upgrade projects, the Owner/Operator has taken this opportunity to substantially upgrade the unloading system as well. In this instance, the original and badly deteriorated roller track gate system was replaced with new EMS-Tech Inc. patented basket gates. This style of gate has a proven track record on a number of new constructions, conversions and refits. The gates onboard the ‘John D. Leitch’ are operated remotely from the control room mounted forward.

In addition to installation of new gates and a control system, the Owner also decided to install Garland style idlers in the tunnel. Algoma Central Marine was the first to introduce Garland idlers to gravity self-unloaders on the ‘Algosteel’ in 1990. Since then they have been successfully installed in the tunnels of many ships.

EMS-Tech Inc. is pleased to have been a part of the project team having completed the design of the unloading system for Upper Lakes Shipping and PWDD.

The ‘John D. Leitch’ currently sails under the management of Seaway Marine Transport, a partnership of Algoma Central Marine and Upper Lakes Group. With the exception of the converted steamer ‘James Norris’, the ‘John D. Leitch’ is now the oldest self-unloader in the Upper Lakes’ fleet.