Barges have consistently seen an increase in the number of barges being entered with the Club and as with all other types of vessels, barges bring their own particular set of problems.

Some of the barge related claims experienced by the Club have proved very expensive and it has been found that a common underlying cause for these claims is a failure to treat the barge in the same way as a seagoing ship, despite the operating environment being the same. To address this issue and to clarify its position with regards to barges, the Club utilises the 'Barge Clause' on a barge's 'Certificate of Insurance'. The wordings of this Clause are as follows:

**Barge Clause**

There shall be no right of recovery from the Association in respect of any claim where failure to fulfill these conditions is in any way cause of the said claim irrespective of extent of that cause.

Barges display Navigation Lights and Shapes in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (as amended).

Barges must have an approved Cargo Securing Manual and all cargoes except bulk cargoes (e.g. coal or gypsum) must be secured in accordance with this manual unless otherwise agreed by the Managers in writing.

Barges operated at all times within the limitations imposed by the approved stability book and loadline certificate specific to each barge.

Sideboards, where fitted, to be maintained in a serviceable condition.

Tug, towing arrangements and gear to be in accordance with industry acceptable standards.

An explanation with regards to the various sections of the Barge Clause is as follows:

1. **Navigation lights and shapes**

We have experienced a number of claims where Members' barges have been involved in collisions. Subsequent investigations have shown that the barges were not exhibiting navigation lights or daylight shapes in compliance with the Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea and/or local port regulations, which in certain situations may require additional lights and/or shapes to be displayed. The reason for not displaying the lights / shapes was mainly attributable to either theft or a failure of the batteries of lights to last for the entire duration of the voyage.

Unfortunately in a court of law, the failure to display the lights / shapes is paramount and the reason for not displaying these is inadmissible and thus the defence of such cases was severely weakened.

We recommend that every effort is made to secure and stow the lights / shapes such as to deter their theft and consideration should be given to fitting heavy gauge retaining brackets.

With regards to navigation lights, a number of our Members are successfully using solar powered navigation lights which surmount the problem of the relatively short battery life of normal battery powered lights.

2. **Cargo Securing Manual**

A Cargo Securing Manual is a SOLAS requirement and by definition may not be a requirement for barges. However, the Club, on the back of handling an increasing number of claims which have had their cause attributable to poor securing, requires all barges (except those only carrying bulk cargoes) to be provided with an approved Cargo Securing Manual. The Cargo Securing Manual is ordinarily approved by the Flag or Class (certifying authority) of the vessel; however in cases where these approvals are not possible (possibly due to it not being a statutory requirement) an approval by a Club approved surveyor would suffice.

It is appreciated that the level of securing required for a cargo will depend upon the cargo type and the trading area of the barge and thus the Cargo Securing Manual needs to be prepared 'barge-specific' taking into account the cargo ordinarily being carried on board, trading area of the barge, weather and external forces that the barge is expected to
We recommend that the services of a marine surveyor, approved by the Club’s Managers and experienced in cargo securing, be called upon to assist Members in drawing up a suitable securing manual.

Requests to waive the requirement for a Cargo Securing Manual may be considered only upon application, on a case by case basis if the Managers of the Club are convinced that due to various factors, such as the construction of the barge, type and quantities of cargo carried, trading area and nature of voyages undertaken by the barge, a Cargo Securing Manual may not be considered necessary for the conduct of safe operations onboard the barge.

3. Stability book and loadline certificate
The Club has noted on a number of occasions that a barge has been loaded beyond limitations imposed by the barge’s approved stability book and/or her loadline certificate. This may partly be due to the persons charged with loading the barge being unaware or unfamiliar with the barge’s stability book and loadline certification.

When a barge’s actual freeboard is less than that assigned by the Load Line Certificate or if she is loaded beyond limiting stability conditions, she may be considered in breach of the Club Rules and her entire P&I cover may be under review and thus it is essential that the persons charged with loading the barge are familiar with the stability book and loadline certificate.

When a barge’s actual freeboard is less than that assigned by the Load Line Certificate or if she is loaded beyond limiting stability conditions, she may be considered in breach of the Club Rules and her entire P&I cover may be under review and thus it is essential that the persons charged with loading the barge are familiar with the stability book and loadline certificate.

4. Sideboards
The Club has been exposed to a number of claims where poor or suspect conditions of sideboards have resulted in cargo either being lost overboard or having shifted. Such scenarios may give rise to further situations such as the barge losing stability, running aground, pollution risks and in extreme cases, the barge floundering or even capsizing.

Apart from containing cargo, side boards also protect cargo from “green seas”. They are normally fitted on barges designed to carry bulk cargoes.

In most cases, sideboards are not subject to Class inspections as they are not considered a ‘Class item’, however the Club requires that sideboards, when fitted, should always be maintained in a serviceable condition so as to avoid any doubt being raised over a barge’s cargo worthiness.

Unless they are purposely strengthened, sideboards are not designed to be used as a securing point for lashing general cargo and Member’s may make reference to the approved Cargo Securing Manual in such an instance.

5. Towing arrangements
The tug used to tow a barge, be it the Member’s own or one chartered in, must be of sufficient horse power/bollard pull to undertake the tow in accordance with industry standards. We have experienced claims involving the use of under powered tugs which had been unable to keep the barge under control especially when manoeuvring.

The towing arrangements, gears and connections must be sufficient for the size of tow and the equipment must be certified, well maintained, regularly inspected and tested.

It is imperative that the barge operator ensures the tug employed to tow the barge is seaworthy in every respect, including all aspects of navigation, certification and structural condition.

Members may also make reference to the Club’s Loss Prevention material relevant to the topic such as the Basic Stability for Small Vessels booklet and Tug and Tow a Practical Safety and Operational Guide.