

## LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY



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### CONTENTS

Edward Finch's Patent Propeller	Terry Kavanagh	1
Early IoM Turbine Vessels	John Shepherd	5
Young Girls Voyage to Hobart 1852	Catherine Jones	13
News Ways of Sailing	Charles Dawson	19
Water Transport - an up-date	Alan McClelland	24

# Liverpool Nautical Research Society

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## Society Notes

Please note that for the first time in about five years, subscriptions have been increased this year.

Now £8 per annum, the family subscription remains at £10.

It does save the Hon Treasure quite a lot of work when payments are on time

# EDWARD FINCH's PATENT PROPELLER

by Terry Kavanagh

In 1841 Edward Finch, a Liverpool Iron Master, claimed that his newly patented<sup>1</sup> propeller was an improvement on the paddle-wheel and the screw, which in those early days caused an obstruction when the ship was under sail alone<sup>2</sup>. The idea was to replace the paddle wheel on each side with one of his patent propellers, "consisting of two sectors on the same plane. The propellers enter the water simultaneously, twice in the revolution of the shafts, at an angle of about forty degrees, and they would be the most deeply immersed when the engine is at half stroke. Thus, by stopping the engine "at the end of the stroke, the crank .... will be vertical and the propellers horizontal, and consequently out of action, and at the same time above the water; they will .... in no way interfere with the progress of the vessel"<sup>3</sup>.

It appears that Finch exhibited a working model of his invention at both the Liverpool and London Scientific Institutions, and the men of science who viewed its operations were impressed. This success encouraged him to develop the scheme, and he made arrangements with John Rigby to build a wood 18hp steamer at Sandycroft on the River Dee. The sloop-rigged vessel of 31<sup>60</sup>/<sub>100</sub> tons burthen, named "*Lapwing*" was launched in April 1842; the dimension were 68.0ft x 10.9ft x 6.8ft<sup>4</sup>.

Her first experimental trip on the Mersey was remarkably successful, and showed that "in sailing vessels steam may be used occasionally to great advantage," according to the LIVERPOOL TIMES<sup>5</sup>:

"A correspondent who sailed in her on her trial voyage round the NW Light Ship, informs us her motion was easier than any steamer he had ever sailed in, and her speed was surprising for so small a vessel .... [She] is ... urged forward by

impulses as in a boat with oars, or like the efforts of a person swimming; these impulses, we are informed, are scarcely perceptible when the vessel has got underway .... and instead of waves and undulations following the boat, so dangerous in a narrow river to small craft, a succession of eddies are observed, which have a tendency to produce smoothness on the surface as in the wake of a sailing vessel."

The next day the "*Lapwing*" returned to Hawarden for further trials. Then, on 15th July 1842, the CHESTER CHRONICLE informed its readers about:

"THE LAPWING STEAMER. - By advertisement in another column, it will be seen that this vessel, worked by the newly-invented propellers, commences running on Tuesday next, from the Crane, Chester, down to Rhyl. Lovers of mountain scenery have now an opportunity of being gratified with a sight of those beautiful and varied scenes which the fine bold coast of North Wales possesses in such unlimited number."

The advertisement read as follows:

"EXCURSION along the Welsh Coast, (landing Passengers at Flint, and Bagillt) to MOSTYN, and weather permitting, to RHYL. THE LAPWING, STEAMER, worked by Fuiche's [sic] propellers, under the command of Capt ROWLAND, will start from the CRANE, Chester, on TUESDAY next, the 19th inst. at half-past Eight o'clock in the morning, on a TRIP of PLEASURE to the ABOVE PLACES, returning the same evening at half-past nine. Fares, 2s6d. each. Children half-price. Wines, Spirits, Ale and Porter, to be had on board. The Lapwing SAILS DAILY to FLINT AND BAGILLT. For particulars of the time of starting see the handbills, which will be issued monthly. Terms of freight, etc. may be known by applying to Captain Rowland, No. 4 Crane-street."

Presumably the "*Lapwing*" remained on that station for the next few months. But when she received her Certificate of Registration at the Port of Chester on 22nd August 1842, one Francis

John Johns, and not Captain Rowland, was her Master. Her sole registered owner was William Rigby, of Harwarden, Merchant, who probably employed her in the coasting trade - though only for a short time. Because on 27th February 1844 he sold her to the Bahia Steam Navigation Company, of Brazil<sup>6</sup>.

As far as can be ascertained, no other vessel was fitted with Finch's patent propellers - and the reasons are not far to seek. This form of paddle-boat had all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of the side-paddler. The "*Lapwing*" simply didn't have the turning or maneuvring qualities of the side-wheeler, which qualities more than compensated for any turbulence created by the original 'radial' wheel's fixed floats. Besides, that ceased to be a problem after the (gradual) introduction of the 'feathering' wheel, since the floats could enter the water and emerge from it without shock and with the least amount of disturbance; and throughout the immersion they - unlike Finch's invention - were acting solely in accelerating a stream of water in the right direction for successful propulsion. Moreover, by mechanically and automatically placing the floats and maintaining them in their true position for maximum efficiency, it was possible to have a wheel of much smaller diameter than with radial floats; and thus the engineer could run at a much higher number of revolutions, the requisite power coming from engines that were smaller and, consequently, cheaper and lighter than those used in Finch's day

Of course, paddle wheels and the engine driving them were still heavier, and occupied more space than screws and their propelling machinery, as there was a limitation to the number of revolutions of a paddle wheel far below that of the screw. The engines, etc., in the case of side-wheel steamers occupied the most valuable part of the ship, and the straining action on the hull was more severe and had to be taken at a part less able to withstand it than was the case with screw engines. These arguments apply with equal force to a paddle-boat like the "*Lapwing*" - but in any

case, Finch's invention was soon rendered obsolete by the advent of the screw propeller whose pitch could be altered, and which had an apparatus for lifting it out of the water, so that it ceased to obstruct the passage of the ship.

#### REFERENCES

- 1) British Patent no 8901 (1841) Patent Library L'pool Central Library
- 2) That is why Ericsson's paddle screws were taken out of the Laird's-built iron-hulled steamer "*Robert F. Stockton*" (1838), before she crossed the Atlantic the following year, and took up service towing barges on the Delaware Canal in the USA. And why the small iron auxiliary schooner launched from the same yard in 1843 and destined for the Baptist Missionary Society in Africa, had her Smith's patent screw removed - though this screw was expected to "be of great advantage in calms and light airs in navigating the [African] coast and rivers". CHESTER COURANT 6th June 1843
- 3) British Patent no 8901 pp2/3.
- 4) Clwyd Record Office S/1. Port of Chester Shipping Register
- 5) Quoted in CHESTER CHRONICLE 6th May 1842
- 6) Clwyd Record Office S/1

### Preliminary Notice

DAY CONFERENCE 13th January 1996

To be held jointly with

Liverpool University and Merseyside Maritime Museum

In their policy of attracting wider notice and recognition of the work and aims of the LNRS, the Council have agreed to arrange a number of speakers to provide talks/read papers in the Museum's Theatre .

Further information in the next issue of BULLETIN

# THREE EARLY TURBINE STEAMERS

## *of the ISLE of MAN STEAM PACKET COMPANY*

*by John Shepherd*

BETWEEN 1905 and 1984 the IoMSPCo operated a total of 21 steam turbine vessels. The earliest steamers had direct drive turbines and triple screws, but from about 1912 geared turbines and twin screws were a permanent feature as this arrangement had proved to be more economic. The reliability and smooth running of the turbine steamers is legendary; for instance in a career of 29 years between 1946 and 1975 the "King Orry" made 7,412 sailings for the Co, steamed 516,770 miles and 'broke down' just once. This article looks at the first three turbine steamers in the Manx fleet - the "Viking" of 1905, the "Ben-my-Chree" (3) of 1908 and the "King Orry" (3) of 1913.

The first turbine steamer ever to visit the Isle of Man was the Midland Railway Co's "Londonderry" which operated an excursion sailing to Douglas from the newly opened port of Heysham on Saturday 13th August 1904. The railway company said that it would inaugurate a regular Heysham-Douglas service in 1905 with their new turbine steamer "Manxman". To counter this threat, the IoMSPCo placed an order with Armstrong, Whitworth & Co of Newcastle upon Tyne for a new direct drive turbine steamer which would be guaranteed to steam at least three-quarters of a knot faster than the "Manxman". This was the IoMSPCO's first turbine steamer, and the only vessel ever to be built for them on the north east coast. Armstrong, Whitworth won the order as they had experience of building fast vessels for the navy, and they were the only yard which could meet the tight delivery schedule. The new steamer was named "Viking" at her launch on 7th March 1905, and her maiden voyage was from Liverpool to Douglas on

26th June 1905, after which she became the mainstay of the Douglas-Fleetwood service. On 25th May 1906 the "*Viking*" crossed from Fleetwood to Douglas in 2 hrs 22 mins: a record which stood until the introduction of SeaCat services on 28th June 1994.

The "*Viking*" did not have it all her own way at Fleetwood. In an attempt to 'cream off' some of the Fleetwood traffic, the Midland Railway Company sent its new and large tug/tender "*Wyvern*" over to Fleetwood from Heysham each day. She would berth at the Corporation Wharf ahead of the "*Viking*" and embark Douglas-bound passengers who sailed to Heysham on the "*Wyvern*" and then transferred to the railway company's steamer for passage to Douglas.

The Admiralty purchased the "*Viking*" from the IoMSPCo on 11th October 1915 and fitted her out as the seaplane tender HMS "*Vindex*". She was stationed at the Nore and at Harwich, but transferred to the eastern Mediterranean in 1918. HMS "*Vindex*" returned to Plymouth in March 1919, and a month later the Steam Packet Co bought her back from the Admiralty. She reverted to her old name and Cammell Laird refitted her at Birkenhead. On 25th June 1920 the "*Viking*" was back on the Fleetwood-Douglas service, where she remained every summer season during the inter-war years.

At the time of Operation Dymano, the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, the "*Viking*" was undergoing repairs and so took no part. However, just before the invasion of the Channel Islands on 1st July 1940, the "*Viking*" steamed into St. Peter Port, Guernsey, and took 1,800 children to the safety of Weymouth. Her war service continued as a Fleet Air arm target vessel based at Crail, Fife. From 1943 until 1945 the "*Viking*" was a personnel ship; she was a coal burner and suitable bunkering arrangements always presented problems. She suffered considerable damage on 28th June 1944 when a V1 flying bomb exploded nearby as she



was lying at Rotherhithe on the Thames. With the impending end of the War in Europe the "*Viking*" was derequisitioned in May 1945 and left Tilbury 18th May arriving Barrow 23rd May. She was overhauled at Barrow and Birkenhead and she returned to Steam Packet service 18th June, still with her hull grey, but with her Steam Packet funnel colours restored.

The "*Viking*" was retained in the IoMSPCo until the end of the 1954 summer season. She remained a coal-burner to the very last. During the 1949/50 winter her turbines were re-bladed as she lay in Morpeth dock, Birkenhead. There were many who hoped that the old ship would be allowed to complete 50 years' service, but it was not to be and the final passages of "*Viking*" were made on the Fleetwod run on 14th August 1954 under the command of Captain J.E. Quirk. Her departure from Fleetwood was broadcast on that evening's BBC Radio Newsreel. On the morning of 16th August, Captain Quirk took the old steamer out of Douglas for the last time, bound for Barrow and the scrapyard of T.W. Ward & Co. The "*Viking*" was 49 years old and in view of her long association with the Fleetwood service, her bell was presented to the Borough of Fleetwood at a ceremony held on 24th May 1955.

The success of the "*Viking*" led the Company to order a larger turbine steamer from the Barrow yard of Vickers, Sons & Maxim Ltd. She was launched 23rd March 1908 and named "*Benny-Chree*" (3). Direct drive turbines coupled to triple screws gave a trials speed of 24.26 knots, with 26.64 knots being achieved on one run of the measured mile at Skelmorlie on 8th August 1908. Going astern, she could make 16.6 knots. The "*Ben*" had a passenger certificate for 2,549 and carried a crew of 119. She could burn 95 tons of coal in one day's steaming; her mean average time for the first season's sailings between the Bar Lightship and Douglas Head was an impressive 2 hours 24 minutes.

Early in the "*Ben's*" career, alleged racing in the Mersey channels caused a question in Parliament to be put by Gershom

Stewart MP to the President of the Board of Trade. In reply Mr Winston Churchill said that he would write to the shipowners concerned. The evening arrivals of the "Ben" and the Liverpool & North Wales excursion steamer "*La Marguerite*" off the Rock Light had obviously been taken too seriously! The IoM steamer and the Llandudno steamer were scheduled to arrive at Prince's Landing Stage within five minutes of each other, and friendly racing did in fact take place up to September 1962 when the "*St. Tudno*" made her last sailing.

When the review of ships of the merchant service was held on the Mersey in celebration of the opening of the Gladstone Graving Dock by King George V on 11th July 1913, the "Ben" was in the line, being anchored in the Crosby Channel off Waterloo.

The Great War of 1914-18 began on 4th August in what should have been the peak of the summer seasonal traffic. Passenger arrivals in the Isle of Man fell away drastically over the first weekend in August, and at a special meeting of the IoMSP Co Board of Directors held on 10th August it was decided to lay up the "*Ben-my-Chree*" (3) with immediate effect, together with the other larger units of the fleet, the "*Viking*" and the "*Empress Queen*".

The "*Ben-my-Chree*" (3) entered Cammell Laird's wet basin on 2nd January 1915 where she underwent conversion to a sea-plane carrier. A hangar was built aft of the second funnel which was to house six seaplanes which could be lifted in and out of the water by a crane. Forward there was a flying-off platform of about 60 feet in length. Work off the Belgian coast preceded her departure for the eastern Mediterranean and the Dardanelles campaign. On 2nd September 1915, the "Ben" rescued 815 people from the torpedoed Liner "*Southland*" in the Aegean Sea.

There was once a popular story that the "Ben" was loaded with ammunition and sent round the Cape of Good Hope to serv-

ice warships that were under orders to sink the German light cruiser "*Königsberg*" which was sheltering the River Rufiji in Tanganyika (Tanzania). She is said to have made this journey, from England to East Africa, at an average speed in excess of 22 knots, including stops for coaling. However, as surviving log fragments have shown, it would have been impossible for her to have made this trip in the time between her North Sea operations and her main Mediterranean war work.

On 11th January 1917 the "*Ben-my-Chree*" was anchored in a supposedly safe bay off the island of Castellorizo (off the south Mediterranean coast of Turkey). However the surrounding hills were occupied by turks who opened fire, setting fire to petrol, and holing the ship which sank in shallow water. The "Ben" was abandoned after half an hour and her crew of 250 were able to get safely ashore, with only four wounded. The Master and the Chief Engineer later returned to the "Ben" and saved the ship's cat and two dogs.

The salvage steamer "*Valette*" raised the wreck of the "*Ben-my-Chree*" (3) at Castellorizo in 1920 and it was towed to Piraeus. Following examination, repairs to the wreck were not considered possible and in 1923 it was towed from Piraeus to Venice for demolition.

At the end of the 1912 season the IoMSPCO announced that they had sold the paddle steamer "*King Orry*" (2) for scrapping at Llanerch-y-Mor, near Mostyn, Deeside, and that a new steamer of the same name would take her place in 1913.

The "*King Orry*" (3) was launched by Miss Waid on 11th March 1913 at Cammell Lairds. Miss Waid was somewhat startled at the launching ceremony when the ship began to move down the slipway before she had finished her speech! This was the first geared turbine steamer in the fleet - these had proved to be more economical than direct drive.

In September 1914 the new steamer went back to the builders for transformation to an armed boarding steamer. She left Birkenhead 27th November and, on the way north to join the Grand fleet at Scapa Flow, struck a submerged reef in the Sound of Islay when steaming at 19 knots. Using hand steering and with only the port turbines working, she proceeded to Birkenhead for repairs in Cammell Laird's Drydock.

After the Battle of Jutland (31st May - 1st June 1916), the "*King Orry*" was used for target towing for gunnery practice as she was able to tow the largest targets at more than 12 knots. At one point she suffered severe heavy weather damage and was sent to Liverpool for repairs. It is reported that the battery at Fort Perch Rock, New Brighton, put warning shots across her bows when she failed to respond to signals.

The "*King Orry*" had the distinction of following the light cruiser HMS "*Cardiff*" (Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Sinclair) and 14 German capital ships at the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet, 40 miles east of the Island of May at the entrance to the Firth of Forth on 21st November 1918.

After a spell of trooping between Southampton and French ports, she returned to Cammell Laird early in 1919 for complete reconditioning and resumed Steam Packet service in July. The inter-war years were fairly uneventful for the "*Orry*", the most dramatic incident taking place on 19th August 1921 when approaching Liverpool in thick fog with almost a full complement of passengers on board, she ran on the rocks near Perch Rock Lighthouse. Undamaged, she was refloated on the next flood tide.

A major refit was given to the ageing steamer at Barrow over the winter of 1934/5, her appearance being altered with the provision of a new, shorter funnel, and glass screening fitted to the promenade deck. The "*King Orry*" remained a coal-burner until 1938, but was converted to use oil in time for the 1939 summer season.

Following the outbreak of war 3rd September 1939, the "*King Orry*" entered Sandon Dock, Liverpool along with the North Wales steamer "*St Tudno*" for conversion to an armed boarding vessel. She was assigned to the Dover Command with effect from 27th September. On 29th May 1940, after being bombed in the approaches to Dunkirk and severely damaged, she was ordered to clear the harbour and approach channel before she sank. Shortly after 0200 on 30th May the vessel sank after her engine-room flooded.

This short article has looked at the careers of the first three turbine steamers in the IoMSPCo. In the 1920's, to replace vessels lost in WWI, the Company purchased a further five second-hand turbine steamers and went on to build thirteen of their own, commencing with the "*Ben-my-Chree*" (4) of 1927 and finishing with the "*Ben-my-Chree*" (5) of 1966. There was a timeless magic about sailing on these steamers, with the evocative sounds of the steam turbines and the magnificent triplechime whistles. The "*Manxman*" (2) became the very last classic steam passenger vessel in British waters and made her last sailing on 4th September 1982. Sadly the steam turbine car-ferries, the "*Manx Maid*" of 1962 and the "*Ben-my-Chree*" (5) of 1966 were disposed of in September 1984 to make way for a diesel-powered roll-on roll-off ferry.

Vessels mentioned above:

"*Viking*" ON118604 Steel triple-screw, direct-drive turbine steamer grt 1957  
length oa 110.03m x 12.80m built Armstrong Whitworth, Newcastle, yard no 719. Engines:  
Parsons Marine Turbine Co Ltd speed 22.5knots. Cost £83,900  
Sold to T.W. Ward Barrow for breaking up

"*Ben-my-Chree*" III ON118605 Steel triple-screw direct-drive steamer grt 2550  
length oa 118.57m x 14.02m bt and engined by Vickers, Sons & Maxim, Barrow yard no 365  
speed 24.5knots. Cost £112,100. After sinking by gunfire 1917, br/up Venice 1923

"*King Orry*" III ON118608 Steel triple-screw steamer geared turbines grt 1877  
length oa 95.40m x 13.11m bt & engined Cammell Laird & Co Ltd Birkenhead yard no 798  
speed 20.75knots £96,000. Bombed & sunk Dunkirk 30.5.1940

## The Diary of Catharine Jones

Written on board the "*Derwentwater*" between October 11th 1852 and January 14th 1853

When Evan Jones was granted a ticket of leave in 1850 his comparative freedom allowed him to arrange for his daughter to visit him in Tasmania. This she did, leaving Llanddyfnan in 1852

1852

Oct 11th: I left the village for the station in a wagon, my dress boxes being too heavy to carry. All the village people were at their doors to see me go, nearly all crying, I did not cry. The journey to Liverpool was very long, and the seats hard. When it was too painful to sit any longer I lay on my stomach, and kneeled, and looked at everything rushing past.

I asked a cabman to take me to Mrs Kerfoot's house in Pudsey Street, Liverpool, but I was then nearly at that street at the station entrance, so a man carried my boxes to the house for me. Mrs Kerfoot's children took me to find a Boot shop, I was to buy a good pair of boots for 4/11d; but I had never seem a shop that only sold boots, and I bought some very soft boots with buttons for 8/11d. I had never seen a cake shop before either and I bought a cake with sugar on it. In Wales we do not have any cakes, only bun-loaf at Christmas. I bought some peppermints too and this pencil and book.

I then had to go to Dale Street to pick up some fruit trees for my Father. He did not get much fruit in Tasmania and had arranged my visit at the time when the trees would travel best. I picked up a plum, apple and pear tree, and the children helped me carry them, they were very heavy with soil. Mrs Kerfoot made me some cocoa and I shared the cake with her children and went to bed.

Oct 12th: The children were all up early to help me carry my things to the station, and I had breakfast of porridge and bread and treacle, and I paid Mrs Kerfoot 1/6d.

The journey to London was longer than to Liverpool, and the posts rushing past the train all the time made my head ache. I sucked the peppermints, but had nothing to eat or drink, and when I got to London I had some herb beer, then I got into a cab and went to the docks.

The ship the "*Derwentwater*" was to sail on the evening tide and the cabman said I had plenty of time. London is very busy and noisy and the Town Cryers and little boys with no shoes on their feet run around with

papers shouting. I pay the cabman and find I have no more money until I get to Tasmania, I should not have bought the cake and such dear boots, but will get all I need on the boat.

We arrive at the "*Derwentwater*" and the Captain tells the cabman that the boat cannot sail until the 13th October. I tell the cabman I have no money and nowhere to go, so Captain Wrangmore takes charge of me and I am allowed to go on the ship. I am travelling what is called steerage but the Captain says I may have the bottom bunk in the dining room for my bed, but it must be used all day for people to sit on.

- Oct 13th: I sit all day watching the river and the other boats and the men at work, and I start this diary. We had lovely food, stewed meat with dumplings, potatoes and carrots. There is a cabin boy named John and he brought me my meals and I had to eat alone as all the crew are working and the passengers are not allowed on the boat yet. Captain makes me drink milk as he says it is the last milk I will get. Everybody is very kind so long as I do not get in the way of the work.

Passengers are now coming on the boat. Boy John says I should have a good wash; when we get moving water will not be so plentiful. There is a lot of shouting and noise, and then I know we are sailing. I am up very late as all the passengers go to watch the lights on the river and I cannot go to bed while the room is needed by the passengers. There are six sleeping in this room, all ladies, and they have beautiful clothes. I do not sleep at all well and I have to be early as my bunk is wanted for a seat for breakfast.

- Oct 14th: We have left the river and the boat now rolls a lot. John the cabin boy tells me to get some fresh air then I won't be so sick: I feel sick but I have not been. I had a good breakfast of eggs and bacon and jam, but I can now only face some soup. Lots of people are off their food so I can lie on my bunk and I sleep all afternoon. I do not eat anything else today. My Uncle who now has my Father's woollen mill had made me a big shawl to keep me warm and I wrap myself up tightly and do not feel quite so much alone. Everybody seems either sick or looking after their sick ones. I have only spoken to John all day.

- Oct 15th: I feel very sick again and Captain Wrangmore says I will be sorry that I have not eaten, the fresh food only lasts a week on this journey then I will want the things I have turned away. I am glad I spent the money on the peppermints they make me feel much better.

- Oct 16th: The ship is very quiet, almost everybody except the crew are sick. John says the crew are glad of this as it leaves most of the fresh food for them. John says they were nearly all drunk when they came on board,

and he was glad I came on early as the Captain told him to look after me, and it kept him out of the way of the drunken crew. John works very hard, everybody wants him at once, and the crew shout at him all the time.

Oct 17th: We are all still rather sick, but are now beginning to talk.

Everybody is very kind to me, but feel so shy. Captain Wrangmore asks often if I am comfortable and I say yes but I am not really. At night when the ship is quiet save for the creaking and splashing and I am supposed to be asleep, rats come over my bunk to get to the food dropped on the floor by the passengers. It is swept and kept clean but with the ship tossing crumbs roll into places that are not swept. I wrap myself from head to foot in my big shawl but I can still feel them walking over me. We have to be very careful of the water now. I and the lady next to me wash in the same water, and keep one lot in case we need it. The dining room is beginning to smell now, all the people in it all day and six of us sleeping in it all night.

Oct 18th: No land to be seen anywhere and such a rough sea, but John says we are making good time and will be in Tasmania early. I watch the men playing games all morning, they play cards and chess for such a long time. The Ladies have needle work with them but can seldom do much as the boat tosses so badly. They talk among themselves but when I join them they stop. I do not think they are talking about me, only about things I am too young to understand. The food is still good, but no milk now except for special things.

Oct 19th It is very cold today, I have been out in the fresh air, the rooms smell so much now. The sea air is so strong my face is peeling. My thick home-knitted stockings keep my feet and legs warm, and I use the shawl all the time. We have not yet gone into the salt food but John says we will do any day. I am eating everything now, and the cook makes lovely dumplings. We still have potatoes turnips and carrots. I am still frightened of bedtime and the rats, but one of the crew said that a ship without rats is no good at all. The ladies have put all the lovely clothes away and wear only plain warm things now.

Oct 20th: Very cold, just sea and sky. I watch the men climbing the rigging, there is nothing else to do.

Oct 21st: I don't know where we are and I am too shy to ask questions even from John.

Oct 22nd: I have forgotten what day it is and will have to wait until there is a church service to find out. We have prayers every day but I say my own in Welsh.



We are on salt food now, the water is shorter. Three of us wash in one lot and we keep the other to drink. For breakfast we had salt ling, it was lovely, John stole a piece of butter for me, he put it under the fish. The older people find the biscuits very hard, but cook makes oat cakes now and then. We had boiled beef and carrots for dinner. I slept all afternoon as it was too wet to go out. It only rained at night before. The crew catch every drop of water.

Oct 23rd: I am homesick. I have been for days but tried to shake it off. The fields around the village smell so sweetly, but I never knew it until now.

Oct 24th: I have been lent a book to read so I feel better. It is still raining hard and I am very thirsty, but must not get my clothes wet going out as they could not be dried. I wish I was older then I could join the other passengers more. We had salt herrings for breakfast, and boiled bacon and soup for dinner. I would love some Welsh bread and butter to eat.

Oct 24th: We had cold boiled bacon for breakfast and I soaked a biscuit and had jam on it. I have grown fatter as my bodice hooks pull. I shall spend some time letting it out when we get a calm day. It is blowing very hard today and cold. The wind gets into every corner of the boat. I am glad of my warm things, but all the ladies tell me I should have brought some thin clothing for Tasmania. Perhaps my Father will buy me some. In Wales we always wear wool.

Oct 25th: Have not done anything but read today, it is still very windy and cold. I think of Evan and Mam at home, and try to dream I am with them.

Oct 26th: John knows I am homesick, he brought me a biscuit with thick butter and jam on it from the Captain's cabin. He had to carry it in his shirt in case he was seen. He told me that if he is caught with one he slaps it butter side up under the Captain's table.

Oct 27th: Nothing but sea and sky, very cold, very thirsty.

Oct 29th: I sleep whenever I can to pass the time on.

Oct 30th: Dry and very cold, my hair froze as I walked on deck. I eat well and would drink more if I could. I am growing tall and fat. I hope my clothes fit me to meet my Father.

Oct 31st: Very cold again, I have nothing to do.

Nov 1st: Watered my Father's fruit trees with some of my water. All the dead leaves are off now, but they are away from the cold.

Nov 2nd: Very homesick and sad, just wait for meals

Nov 30th: The weeks have gone very slowly, I seem to have been on this ship longer than I have lived at home. I have watched for other ships passing. My eyes just ache with the light. I have watched the sails being mended and wish I could do something. The lady who sleeps next to me is making

a sampler, I will do one on the journey home. We are quite used now the boat can roll as much as it likes we can still walk and do things.

Dec 1st: I am getting tired of the salt food. We cannot have oat cakes now as the cook wants the oats for stuffing the meat at Christmas. I feel very homesick when I think of Christmas coming.

Dec 8th: Captain says we will be in Tasmania in just over a month.

He is very good and does all he can to make everybody comfortable. He lets the men and some of the ladies do light work, but says I should play.

Dec 9th: One of the crew made me a wooden doll. It is very well made and moves its arms. Everybody is trying to find me something to dress it with.

Dec 10th: I have mixed some blacking and am going to polish everybody's boots, I did such a lot today

Dec 15th Sea and sky and boots to clean still, but the sun shines brightly and I feel better.

Dec 24th: Everywhere has had a special clean for Christmas. I saw two ships today. I never seem to be outside when we pass a ship.

Dec 25th Cook gave me some toffee he had made, and we all sang carols. Captain took the service and we all thanked God for our deliverance so far. We had plum duff and stuffed salt pork for dinner. We all sat round and the men told stories at night.

Dec 26th Captain told us all the flour was finished as weevils had got into it, and for the rest of the journey it would have to be biscuits. I enjoyed the biscuits, and the people with poor teeth soaked their biscuits.

I have washed my clothes as well as I could, but there was very little water and salt water is not good for wool, so they are going a bad colour. In Wales we have to be careful with water, but it is easy to carry it from the well, I do not think I will ever be careful with it again.

Dec 27th: Captain Wrangmore says we are past the worst part of the journey, and will soon be calling at a port for further supplies. He asks us to be patient with the food, but will give us a real Christmas Dinner when we leave Capetown. It is very sunny again and my hair is getting quite golden. One of the men says my eye-lashes and my hair have turned to guinea.

Dec 28th: I have let my bodice seams out but it is still tight. I will have to buy some material to match and put it in when we get to Tasmania. Tomorrow I will take the hem off my skirts and make them longer.

Dec 29th: All the passengers and crew speak to me now, I am not lonely any more, but I still get bored, then I clean more boots. All my blacking has been used but I can have as much as I want as I have cleaned so many boots.

Dec 30th: The sea is lovely, full of life, I spend many hours watching it. The ship smells a lot now. The ladies use a lot of scent but I only brought soap.

The ship is sorted out now, lots of people do not like others so keep away. We had one bad fight and one bad row. The Captain settled it and said any more fights and any more rows and the offenders would be put on a charge. The crew fall out a lot but never when the Captain is about. They swear a lot too. I hope John will grow up like the Captain.

Dec 31st: We landed at Capetown at 3 am. Captain said we have made good time, but only those leaving the ship must land. We took on stores all day.

1853

Jan 1st A new year, we started well, roast beef, cabbage, potatoes, Christmas Pudding and sauce for dinner. Milk in the cocoa. The bread tastes like cake. I had some apples today from a man whose boots I had cleaned. He has a lovely snuff-box, the head of a bird with bright eyes. We had birds with the ship today. I feel much happier now.

Jan 2nd: It's lovely to see land in the distance, John says we will not be far away from the land now until we land.

Jan 3rd: It is beautiful weather, not a cloud in the sky, and the food is lovely again too. Today we had currant cake.

Jan 4th: I had oat cakes and jam for my breakfast, John says I would not have been so comfortable if the Captain had not been so kind to me and given me this bed. The steerage is very rough. I have not been to see because I am shy and some of the men are not nice.

Jan 5th: We will be in Freemantle tomorrow. I am getting excited about seeing my Father. He used to be very good to me before he was sent away. If I sat still in church he would make me a corn dolly on Monday night after his work. He used to go a long way to take people the clothes he had made, and would always bring me something back. I have been sewing all day. Made a bed for my doll out of sail canvas. The doll will have to lie on it in her underclothes as I have no stuff to make a nightdress.

Jan 7th: I wish I had to get off at Freemantle instead of going on to Tasmania. The crew are always drunk when they come back on board, and they make such a noise and I am afraid of fights.

Jan 8th I wonder if I will know my Father. He will know me as I am the only girl on board. Children are not brought on these voyages at this time of

year as it can be very cold. It was lovely for the boat not to be moving again. I had some fruit today, some sweets, I don't like beer.

Jan 9th: Felt sick today, have been eating too much. Rested all day

Jan 10th: Packed some of my dress boxes. My handkerchiefs have gone yellow. I brushed my clothes as I had been told to do, before I packed them. I have two dresses I have not had on yet, turkey-red wool trimmed with black braid, and a light blue cloth. I will meet my Father in the red one.

Jan 11th: Just sat watching the lovely sea. There are not as many people here now, but one or two new ones have joined us to go to Hobart.

Jan 14th: I was given copies of "Household Word" to read, and have not stopped reading for days. The sun is lovely.....

The diary ends at this point, but when the "*Derwentwater*" arrived at Hobart, the passengers wrote a testimonial praising Captain Wrangmore for his kind consideration and fine seamanship. Among the signatories was the name of Catherine Jones.

Catherine seems to have been confused with dates and ports visited. It is highly unlikely that the ship called at Capetown. It probably called at a port a few days sailing from Freemantle and then made for Freemantle. From the latter port the voyage was probably direct to Hobart. There is also another possible cause of the inaccuracies - the original transcription.

#### Editor's note

The outstanding feature(s) of the story seems to contradict the tales of the many dangers that travellers in those days are said to have faced. The impression is that the girl might not be 15 years old and was met with kindness and sensitivity both in Liverpool and London.

Another aspect is the situation of her father. He was probably sent away from family and the woollen mill he once owned, for some kind of misdemeanor and transported to Tasmania before 1850. Would a ticket of leave man be able to earn money through his own enterprise and have made sufficient to send home the cash for Catherine's passage in steerage? Port Arthur, a penal establishment near Hobart, is now a tourist attraction.

"Derwentwater" wood barque, bt Sunderland 1852 copper sheathed: 139ft x 28.7ft x 19.6 580 gross.

## NEW WAYS OF SAILING

*by Charles Dawson*

WITHOUT WIND, it is not possible to sail, although we still say that steamships and motorships sail. But even to sail in the old sense does not require sail in the old sense of areas of canvas. Billowing sails and high, slender masts can be exchanged for other forms of wind-propulsion.

In the 1920's the surge of interest in aerodynamics fired the imaginations of a handful of maritime innovators. In Germany in 1922, Anton Flettner, an engineer at the Institute of Aerodynamics - one source says that he set up this organisation himself - decided to study various aerodynamic problems and from this developed his rotor system that aimed at driving a vessel by exploiting the Magnus effect. This was called after the German physics professor Heinrich Gustav Magnus who, in Berlin in 1852, had studied the action of an airstream on rotating forms. The Magnus effect takes such a direction that it can be exploited to drive a ship forward. In a strong wind, the Magnus effect can surprise especially artillerymen, tennis players and cricketers - not to mention baseball players.

Following his investigations, Flettner, with financial assistance from Dutch investors, refitted the old 45m long 3-masted schooner "*Buckau*" with two 2.8m diameter x 15.6m high rotatable cylinders driven by small engines at 100-150 revolutions per minute. The power required for his system, he found, was much less than that demanded by a conventional propeller-driven vessel. After many successful sea-trials, the ship was re-christened "*Baden-Baden*". She began successfully transporting goods on the Baltic and North Seas and on North Atlantic routes for several years. She was sold in 1929 and after being stripped of her rotors

was turned into a diesel auxiliary schooner in the West Indies. She was abandoned at sea in 1931.

The German Navy later fitted three rotor-towers to the 90m long, 2,800-ton "*Barbara*" which successfully crossed the Atlantic at an average speed of 7½ knots. She did not go into naval service, but was chartered by R.M. Sloman of Hamburg in the Mediterranean fruit trade. The 1930's depression forced her sale to the Bugsier Line of Hamburg; and renamed "*Birkenau*" she was reported running there in the 1960's, but under the Greek flag.

At the time of Flettner's work, although his trials proved the viability of his idea, his vessels could not compete with conventional craft, mainly because of the relative cheapness of fuel at that time. By 1930 his idea was more or less forgotten, but since then fuel crises and concern for the environment have reawakened interest in this and other forms of marine propulsions that are more economical and less harmful to the environment.

In 1956, another German engineer with an aerodynamic background, Wilhelm Prölss, who had worked for 34 years with Deutsches Shell and was at one time responsible for the design and operation of airport facilities in all eight of West Germany's major airports, became interested in the problem, arising out of his abiding fascination with sailing craft.

He interested Gunther Kempf, director of the Institute für Schiffbau, the Shipbuilding Institute at Hamburg University, in carrying out tests, which were actually financed by the Research Council of the City of Hamburg over a period of six years. The result was a basic automated rigging design that utilised four or more 60m high orientable masts and a reversal of the sail-curve axis. In a conventional sail, the billow of the sail is perpendicular to the mast, whereas in the Prölss rig it is parallel. The orientation of both mast and rigging is performed hydraulically.

The Prölss rig is the basis for propelling the DynaShip, a 6-masted square-rigged bulk carrier designed by the DynaShip

Corporation of Palo-Alto, California. From studies carried out in the 1970's it was claimed that a ship of this design would require six fewer crew - perhaps 20% less - than a diesel-powered vessel of similar size. Scale model tests indicated that a DynaShip 150m long could average 12 to 17 knots and attain a top speed of 20 knots in a strong wind.

Ocean Carriers Corporation of Sausalito, California developed a proposal for a different rig of Prölss type, of 4-masted Bermuda schooner type, and using bi-pod masts.

In the 1980's, work was being carried out in Japan on another system. A 66m long 700-ton cargo ship called "*Shin Aitoku Maru*" used two large, rigid sails, albeit of canvas stretched over retractable metal frames. Sail-setting was carried out by hydraulic jacks automatically controlled by a system including a computer which monitored wind conditions to pass the required signals to the system. Combined with a highly fuel-efficient engine, energy saving of between 8% and 10% were claimed.

In the USA, the Windship Company came up with a design using the Prölss rig but using rigid sails with slits. Various adaptations of this idea have been exploited in the US for smaller vessels like tugs and even day-boats and racing craft.

At the same time in France both the state and the shipbuilding industry started to take a new look at the Flettner-type rotor-driven ship. A young French dynamicist, Bertrand Charrier, with support from the State Research Board CNRS and in cooperation with Channel-coast shipbuilders, went into the theory and practice of the subject in depth. In 1980 he won the first prize with a rotor-assisted catamaran design in a competition promoted by French merchant-shipping interests aimed at producing fuel-saving fishing boats.

Since 1980, the most ambitious rotor-driven projects have been carried out under the direction of the renowned Frenchman Captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau, who in 1975 had formed a

European association for the purpose of promoting the exploration and protection of the marine environment. Cousteau's cooperation with Professor Lucien Malavard of the French Academy of Sciences, who also holds the chair of aviation at the Sorbonne, helped to enlist material and financial aid from French ministries. Charrier, a pupil of Malavard, was brought into the team as project engineer. Cousteau's first ship "*Calypso*", was a converted French naval minesweeper which had been built as long ago as 1942.

It was decided that new solutions would be sought in building a successor to her. Work was started on this project in 1980. She was named somewhat waggishly, "*Moulin á Vent*" (Windmill), a 20m long catamaran which served as a test platform for more advanced ideas on the use of rotors.

The main disadvantage of Flettner's system, they found, was that it required the reversing of the direction of rotation of the rotor in a tacking situation. The solution they applied to "*Moulin á Vent*" was a non-rotating but orientable cylinder of 1.5m dia, and a 'shutter-flap' that is automatically positioned, by signals from an on-board computer, to cover one of two perforated lateral vents running the length of the cylinder.

At the top of the cylinder a 12hp fan sucks wind through the other, uncovered vent. The combination of the orientation of the flap and the air intake deflects the flow of air behind the cylinder, radically increasing the "lift" force and reducing resistance. The result of that the deflected air current propels the boat in the desired direction. The increase in 'lift' allows for a reduction in the surface of the propelling mechanism, thus avoiding the mechanical problem of reversing that is inherent in the Flettner system.

The Cousteau windship's so-called "aspirated", orientable cylinder can therefore be much more slender than Flettner's rotating type. In addition, since in the Cousteau type the cylinder



does not rotate, although it is orientable, its mechanics are considerably simpler.

By way of comparison with a vessel similar to "*Shin Aitoku Maru*", described above, a saving of fuel of between 30% and 40% has been suggested for a vessel fitted with two orientable cylinders with moveable shutters.

All the results of their tests and further development of the system have led to the design of their latest wind-craft "*Alcyone*", (Daughter of the Wind), designed by A. Mauriac and J-C Nahon, Naval Architects, Marseilles. Her dimensions are 27.55m long x 8.92m x 2.34m draft and she was built in 1984/5 by SNAC, Rochelle-Pallice, of special aluminium alloy made by Cegedur-Pechiney.

The craft is fitted with two of what are now called Cousteau-Pechiney Turbosails 10.2m high. Cousteau makes the very valid point that his system is not only fuel-saving, but is also kind to the environment, since fuel pollution is much reduced.

Studies have shown that Turbosails can be fitted to ships of very large tonnage. On-going projects to equip ships of up to and over 200,000 tons seem to promise a new era in the field of shipbuilding if the enormous savings and other advantages claimed for the system by the Cousteau Society of realistic.

Sources:

- 1) Stephen D Orsini, "The Return of Sail", *THE COMPASS* No 1. 1979
- 2) John Bunker, "The Ship that Sailed Without Sails", *THE COMPASS* No 1, 1983
- 3) "Till havs med smurrande torn" (To sea with rotating towers) "SVENSKA DAG-BLADET" (Swedish Daily News) 12th January 1983
- 4) "Science et Vie", January 1983
- 5) John B. Woodward, "Feasibility of Sailing ships for the American Merchant Marine", Dept of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, Marine Administration of the US Dept of Commerce Feb 1975
- 6) Ocean Carriers Corporation, Sausalito, California, "The Western Flyer Project: a Modern Sailing Cargo Ship", Sept 1976 meeting of the Soc. of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers.
- 7) The Cousteau Society Editorial Offices, New York, "Aspirated Cylinders: The Shape of things to Come" *CALYPSO LOG* Summer 1983
- 8) The Cousteau Society, New York, "*Alcyone*", (Daughter of the Wind) undated

## WATERBORNE TRANSPORT

*an up-date by Alan McClelland*

On May 9th John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, published the "Thames Strategy", a report commissioned from the Ove Arup partnership. This concerns itself not only with the purpose and quality of riverside development, but with the encouragement of waterborne transport. Of the latter the report states that in addition to private finance public funding may be necessary to make it economic. Given increasing public worries about the environmental impact and real costs of moving freight by road (lorry traffic increased by 7 per cent last year to reach its highest level ever), it is to be hoped that the "Thames Strategy" becomes the basis for a government policy which will also have regard to the potential of all navigable rivers, broad waterways and coastal seaways.

So far as the Mersey, the Ship Canal and even the Weaver are concerned, their freight-carrying capacity is immense, especially when placed in the context of expanding European-wide integrated inland waterway and short sea services. It must be emphasised that this is not to ignore the problems presently experienced in securing back-haul cargoes, especially for continental destinations. The solution to them, at least in part, probably lies in increasing the encouragement to freight distribution and industrial enterprises to locate on carefully chosen sites where inter-modal transfers may be easily effected, and which are accessible to the latest low air draught cargo vessels and tankers.

There can be no doubt that road transport with its great flexibility offers considerable attractions to industry and commerce, the more so given the "just in time" delivery system philosophy. However it should be noted that the total costs of heavy reliance on road haulage have only fairly recently come under detailed, critical scrutiny. One result is that the Royal Commission Report on Transport and the Environment which appeared last year called for a re-think of the £2 billion road building programme. Of particular significance in the conclusions of the Commission was the assertion that consistent government policies, innovative use of technology and commercial enterprise could give water transport an enhanced role in and around Britain. The point was made that in Japan, approximately 45 per cent of domestic freight movements are waterborne, and the government was recommended to set a definite target of 30 per cent for the proportion of UK freight carried by that mode by the year 2000. Such a policy would undoubtedly require port improvements including the creation of some completely new facilities, but as the Report stated: "It is less expensive to contribute to the costs of water transport than to repair and upgrade roads to take regular HGV traffic".

## REVIEW

### REFLECTIONS ON A RIVER *A Colourful Portfolio of the Mersey's Shipping*

By Paul Boot & Nigel Bowker

Revised and reprinted in the UK 1995

John & Marion Clarkson 18 Franklands, Preston PR4 5PD Price: £11.50  
(also available in the Foyer Shop of the Merseyside Maritime Museum)

For those of us who can remember when ships were designed to match purpose with graceful lines and when at tide-time the River was often crowded with them, this book is a trip down memory lane. This is a collection of excellent colour photographs of vessels ranging from local craft to the QEII, but mainly regular cargo and passenger traders in the late '50's and 60's, which have long since disappeared with the companies that owned them.

There are 62 pages of photographs, each in a well-chosen local setting. To each there is an interesting informative footnote about the ship, its career and demise.

Whilst most of our members may have this book, it would make an ideal present for anyone with an interest in Merseyside shipping of yesteryear

P.J.H.T.

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## NOTICE

### SEAFARING 1939-45 AS I SAW IT

by Capt R.H. McBrearty

The Pentland Press Ltd. ISBN 1 85821 282 0. £14.50.

A personal narrative of the author's life on seven vessels as 2nd mate and mate during WWII from Murmansk to Australia. The author's previous book "Seafaring in the 30's" was published in 1990.

# LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

## PROGRAMME 1995-95

### 1995

Sept 21st The Liverpool-Australia Steam Navigation  
Auxiliary Steam Clipper "Royal Charter"

*Peter Day*

Oct 19th Development of Scottish Fishing Boats in old  
photographs

*Matthew Tanner*

Nov 16th Port health and the Port of Liverpool *G. Davies*

Dec 21st Xmas Social

### 1996

Jan 18th Elder Dempster in the Second World War

*J.E. Cowden*

Feb 15th "Charles Tayleur": a man of his time

*Frank Neale*

Mar 21st Ship & Boat Builders of Europe

*L. Roberts*

Apr 18th Crews of Flags of Convenience Ships

*Tony Lane*

May 16th A.G.M. other t b a

All meetings 12 noon for 1230 in the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

# LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY



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## BULLETIN

### CONTENTS

Early Days of Cruises	A.H. Joyce	25
Blackpool Steam Navigation Company	Capt W. A. Sparks	29
Liverpool's Fishing Industry	Adrian Jarvis	35
John Dyer's Seaman's Certificate 1826	G.D. Hawkins	41
First Aluminium Boat	Charles Dawson	47

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## ERROR !

### Please Note

The date of the AGM as printed on the membership card is incorrect: the AGM will be held on Thursday 16th May.

### Society Notes

There are still a number of subscriptions outstanding. If you have not yet paid, please send the appropriate amount to the hon. Treasurer at the address above as soon as possible.

## CRUISING THE MED FOR 15 GUINEAS

*by A.H. Joyce*

The day-to-day operating costs of a ship are of prime importance to the shipowner, so it is interesting to see what the operating costs of the "*Vandyck*" and the "*Voltaire*" were over half a century ago when they were running short cruises. Specifically I shall look at 1932-1933. By today's standards, even allowing for the considerable inflation in prices since, the costs seem ludicrously low.

In the early 1930s, shipping the world over was in the throes of a severe depression and many well known shipowners had suffered such severe losses that they had ceased trading. In Great Britain hundreds of ships were laid up in various ports and backwaters. Lamport & Holt suffered badly and on 27th August 1930 were placed in the hands of a receiver and manager, Sir William McClintock.

The "*Vandyck*", built at a cost of £1,317,410 in 1921, and "*Voltaire*", which had cost £1,151,250 in 1923 were virtually sister ships, with gross tonnages of 13,233 and 13,248 respectively. Their speed was, however, rather on the slow side at only 15 knots maximum. In July 1930 they had both been withdrawn from the Company's New York, Brazil and River Plate passenger service as they had made a loss of £35,000 for the first six months of that year. The "*Vandyck*" was laid up at Southampton and the "*Voltaire*" in the River Blackwater. Owing to the abnormal conditions prevailing in the shipping industry such ships were worth only a fraction of their original price. Both vessels were valued at only £150,000 each, and then only if a willing buyer could be found for them.

However, in the Spring of 1932, thanks to a slight improvement in the shipping situation, it was decided to convert the

*"Voltaire"* into a first class cruising ship and this was carried out for the comparatively small outlay of £8,132. Starting with a series of cruises from Liverpool, the first on 2nd July 1932, the *"Voltaire"* continued with these until 7th October 1932. During this period she completed seven 13-day cruises. Gross earnings amounted to £61,603 and after taking costs into account, the voyages produced a profit of £12,718. This enabled Lampport & Holt to write off the whole of the £8,132 cost of her conversion to a cruise liner and left a surplus of £4,586. The operating costs from 2nd July until 7th October averaged out at only £504 per day.

Because of the popularity and financial success of these cruises it was decided to make a similar modification to the *"Vandyck"*, but the cost of her conversion for cruise purposes was rather higher at £26,500. She began her first cruising voyage on 2nd June 1933, the *"Vandyck"* nearly missed this first cruise because when undocking at Southampton on 26th May she collided with the dock wall sustaining damage to her stem, which was set to port, several plates both port and starboard being buckled. Rapid repairs enabled the vessel to leave Southampton in time to arrive in Liverpool on Thursday 1st June and sail on her Whitsuntide cruise the next day. The ship made a further six cruises in 1933, with gross earnings of £63,498 yielding a profit of £6,410. Operating costs were £508 per day. The *"Voltaire"* was similarly employed during 1933 making in 'all 13 cruises, resulting in a profit of £16,695. Operating costs were £507 per day.

Fares for passengers on these cruises were very low by today's standards, but they needed to be in order to attract the customers in the face of keen competition from other companies using their spare capacity of surplus liners for cruise purposes.



The charge for a 7-day cruise on either ship was 15 guineas (£15.75p), with 20 guineas (£21) buying a 13-day cruise.

A report dated 20th October 1933, made at the end of their first season, stated that the converted vessels had proved to be most admirably suited to the cruising trade, being of a handy size for manoeuvring in the smaller ports of destination, yet with generous passenger accommodation. The report deemed the vessels equally satisfactory regarding operation, being highly efficient in fuel consumption. The "*Voltaire*" required, under full power, 9½ tons of fuel a day for all purposes, with the "*Vandyck*" needing slightly more. The report concluded "We have in the short period of less than two years not only built up a most valuable good will in a trade which undoubtedly will continue profitable for many years, but we have made aggregate voyage profits of £25,822". In order to operate a cruise liner carrying several hundred passengers and crew at costs of around only £500 per day, the closest scrutiny must have been given to all expenditure. What the costs of operating a similar type of ship would be today is difficult to say - probably more like £500 per hour!

The "*Vandyck*" was taken over by the Admiralty shortly after the outbreak of war and converted into an 'Armed Boarding Vessel'. She was bombed and sunk 10th June 1940 en route to Norway to take part in the evacuation. 160 of her crew survived the bombing and landed in Norway, but eventually ended up in a PoW camp.

The "*Voltaire*" was similarly taken over by the Admiralty, but was converted into an 'Armed Merchant Cruiser'. These vessels were sometimes called 'Admiralty Made Coffins' (AMC) and so it proved to be when the "*Voltaire*" encountered the German raider "*Thor*" and after putting up a brave fight, was sunk by her on 4th April, 1941. The Lamport ship could do only

14 knots. and with her high super-structure was no match for the smaller, faster and more manoeuvrable German whose shells quickly set her on fire, at the same time damaging her steering gear so that she was going round in circles. After the "Voltaire" sank, the "Thor" spent several hours picking up 197 survivors, and they also eventually ended up in a PoW camp in Germany.

*WEST INDIES CRUISE : February 15th, 1936 : "VANDYCK"*  
*from Southampton to MADEIRA, BARBADOS, TRINIDAD,*  
*PANAMA(Cristobal), JAMAICA (Kingston), HAVANA,*  
*FLORIDA (Miami), BAHAMAS (Nassau). BERMUDA and*  
*AZORES.*

*48 days from 70 guineas.*

*EASTER CRUISE : April 9th, 1936 : VOLTAIRE*  
*from Liverpool to GIBRALTAR, CASABLANCA (forRabat),*  
*SANTA CRUZ DE LA PALMA, MADEIRA (3-day stay),*  
*LISBON.*

*18 days from 24 guineas.*

## THE BLACKPOOL STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY

*by Captain W.A.Sparks*

One day in May 1938 I was walking around Birkenhead Docks looking for a job when I came across a small passenger steamer in Morpeth Dock. Her name was "*Atalanta*". I stopped to watch a seaman who was standing on the quayside, washing some outside paintwork, and asked him if there were any jobs going on the ship. He replied that this was very likely as the ship was going into service soon. The next time I saw that helpful fellow was when I signed on the ship as a cabin boy and he was in uniform. He was the mate. This was my second voyage and my discharge book showed that I had signed off the "*Voltaire*", the year before where I had served as a deck boy.

The "*Atalanta*", I soon found out, was an old LMS CLyde steamer about 30 years old. Her present owners were the Blackpool Steam Navigation Company. I smile now at that name as I did when I first heard it, for the words "Steam Navigation Company" conjured up all the romance of the sea and the great shipping companies which sailed to the distant East or South America. But 'Blackpool', no, it didn't really fit, did it? But never mind, it was a job and I was delighted to get it. I had not long turned 15.

The first odd thing that I noticed when I joined the ship was the fact that we had no cabin. The seamen and firemen lived in the fo'c'sle, and the officers and petty officers had a cabin each. These privileged folk were the master, mate, bosun, carpenter, chief and second engineers and the chief steward.

However, the eight catering ratings had no cabin at all and as I was a member of the catering department, this included me. Our belongings were stowed away in any locker space we could

find and we slept on the settees that were fitted round the sides of the passengers' dining saloon. No-one seemed to complain.

The "*Atalanta*" sailed from Blackpool North Pier on various types of cruises, but only in the daytime from about 8.00am until 9 or 10.00pm. At that time the Company had another ship in service, an old Birkenhead ferry renamed "*Minden*" (ex "*Bidston*"). Some days we would make a trip to Llandudno where the passengers would have several hours ashore. Other trips would be northwards towards St. Bees Head, or out to the Morecambe Bay Lightship. The lightship crew would lower a lifeboat and come alongside, whereupon our passengers would throw money, sweets and cigarettes down to them and we would also pass them a bundle of newspapers and magazines. The "*Atalanta*" would list over badly when all the passengers went to one side and we always had to make sure that the scuttles or portholes were securely closed down in the dining saloon, because they went below the water. Other cruises were for fishing or angling, when the ship would steam a few miles off shore and anchor for three or four hours. Prizes were offered for the best catch.

As a cabin boy I had many different jobs to do, depending on where I was needed. Sometimes I would be looking after officers' cabins; at other times I would be required up on deck to sell picture postcards of the ship to passengers. Other tasks included washing glasses in the bar, washing dishes in the pantry after meals were served to a crowded dining saloon, and helping the cook in the galley. There was also lots of cleaning to do in bathrooms and toilets, lounges and the dining saloon. Up on the main passenger deck there was a buffet. This was a box about eight feet by six with an opening window and small counter, and here it was that tea, coffee, sandwiches, crisps, biscuits, sweets, chocolates and cigarettes were dispensed to an ever hungry crowd of holidaymakers. I had charge of this *caboose* on many an occasion. Water for tea making was boiled in a steam urn and

passengers were charged threepence (less than 1½p) per cup, which I considered expensive. So did many passengers and complaints about the high cost of a cup of tea were frequent. There was not a thing I could do about it and they, poor souls, couldn't go anywhere else could they?

In bad weather the ship would soon become a mess with passengers being seasick. The "*Atalanta*" was a shallow draught ship and would roll and pitch in much less than a moderate swell. There might be blue sky and sunshine, but the rolling would reduce many holidaymakers to near hospital cases. Children never seemed to be affected as much as adults and it was not unusual to see some youngsters enjoying a new found freedom and running wildly about the ship while mum and dad were laid low. I was often seasick myself. The misery of this condition is quite impossible to describe and is particularly dreadful when one has work to do. All I wanted to do was to lie down somewhere and die, but having essential jobs to carry out I couldn't lie down, so I just died and carried on like a zombie.

The "*Atalanta*" was immensely popular in Blackpool and was usually fully booked. She was a coal burner requiring bunkers a couple of times a week and on those occasions we steamed round to Fleetwood. A night in that busy fishing port gave us all a chance to go ashore. At the end of a day's cruising she would anchor off the North Pier if not requiring bunkers at Fleetwood. Once the passengers were ashore we had a lot of cleaning up to do and then we would sit in the passengers' dining saloon and have our evening meal. This room was both our messroom and sleeping quarters. Fishing was a popular pastime when at anchor and the catch would be taken down to the galley to be cleaned and cooked for our supper. We were usually tired out after a long day and glad to make up our beds on the saloon settees and turn in.

One Sunday morning the "*Atalanta*" was embarking passengers at the North Pier for a trip to Llandudno. It looked

like a full ship with the prospect of a long, tiring day ahead and I was sent to the top of the pier with two shipmates to collect stores. One crate of fresh milk remained and I happened to be in turn to fetch it. Well, crates of milk are rather heavy and I found myself struggling with this one. With half the length of the pier still to negotiate I looked up, not wanting to believe what I saw. The "*Atalanta*" had cast off her moorings and was already moving stern first out from the pier!

Total panic beset me. I had missed my ship - the unforgivable crime. What to do? It was too far to shout and I couldn't swim or else I'm sure I would have jumped off the pier and tried to reach the departing steamer that way. There was nothing I could do but sit on my crate of milk and reflect on how I could plead when charged with desertion, absence without leave and whatever other contrivance the Board of Trade could level at me.

I struggled back to the top of the pier and spoke to Tom the gatekeeper. I followed his advice and left my crate of milk in his little office, along with my white jacket. He kindly loaned me half-a-crown and informed me that the Blackpool Steam Navigation Company also owned a hotel nearby called the Palm Court. He was sure that they would give me my meals when I had explained what had happened.

The "*Atalanta*" was not due back from Llandudno until about 9pm so I went and had dinner at the Palm Court. It was a posh place and I felt a little out of place in my slacks and shirt, but they tucked me away in a corner and looked after me very well. I still had to face being disciplined when I rejoined the *Atalanta* and the closer it got to nine o'clock the more nervous and apprehensive I became. I was down on the pier in good time, bringing my crate of milk with me - a sort of peace offering maybe. Imagine my amazement on reporting to the Chief Steward to find that he was concerned on my behalf. He had already accepted responsibility for what had happened in that he had omitted to

tell the bridge that he had a man ashore. So that was that! My real regret was that extra work had been thrown on my shipmates. Of course no one believed my expressions of regret and I had my leg pulled for a long time about the way I had worked my head. Indeed the cook would get very cross when I told him about the lovely things I had eaten at the hotel. I repaid Tom his half-a-crown a couple of days later and he was pleased to hear that I had not been punished. I am glad to say that in 47 years at sea that was the only time I missed a ship.

The "*Atalanta*" also provided a novel way to view the famous Blackpool illuminations - from the sea. We would steam up and down, keeping close inshore and parallel with the promenade. On several occasions the ship herself provided a free attraction to holidaymakers when we remained alongside the pier on a falling tide. We would end up high and dry and surrounded by crowds, many of whom assumed that we had been caught napping. In fact it was done deliberately in order to examine the underwater openings in the hull and the state of marine growth.

I remained with the "*Atalanta*" until the Autumn of 1938, and rejoined her again in the Spring of 1939. I tried hard during the Winter to find deep sea employment but to no avail. The slump of the early thirties had come to an end and things were improving, but jobs at sea still seemed hard to get.

In the August of 1939 the news was of imminent war with Germany and we were informed that the "*Atalanta*" would be needed for minesweeping - a task she had performed during the previous conflict. On 2nd September 1939 she docked in the port of Preston and we were paid off. I went home and war was declared next day.

*[This Article originally appeared in GANGWAY, the journal of Lamport & Holt Line and the Booth Line].*

*ATALANTA* Off NO 20211. 463 grt 186 net. 210' 4" x 30' 1". 3 direct-drive steam turbines, triple screws.

The "*Atalanta*", the first and only turbine steamer in the Glasgow and South Western Railway Company's fleet, was built by John Brown & Company in 1906 alongside the Cunard Liner *Lusitania*. The "*Atalanta*" was slower and much 'dumplier' than the other Clyde turbine steamers, and differed in outline from anything previously seen on the Clyde. She was also smaller than the other turbines. She could carry 1,414 passengers. After a spell on excursion work from Ayr, she was usually on the Ardrossan to Arran route. The "*Atalanta*" had a very bad name for rolling in a heavy sea. In May 1913 she almost came to grief at Whiting Bay (Isle of Arran), where her circulation pump became choked with seaweed and she was driven ashore; but although holed she was patched up and taken to Greenock for repair.

During the First World War the "*Atalanta*" was renamed "*Atalanta II*". She was employed first as a troop carrier and later as a minesweeper at Harwich. She also for a time led a flotilla which included the Clyde steamers "*Mars*" and "*Mercury*" and the Blackpool steamer "*Queen of the North*".

In 1936 the "*Atalanta*" was transferred to the Wemyss Bay / Millport service. In June 1936 she ran aground at Tan Point, Cumbrae. She was sold out of the Clyde in March 1937 and was thus the first of the LMS turbine steamers to be withdrawn. The Blackpool Steam Navigation Company purchased and used her for excursion work at Blackpool, and also between Fleetwood and Barrow-in-Furness in connection with Lake District tours of the LMS Railway, (as had been done when the Furness Railway operated its own steamers on this route).

The other vessels of the Blackpool Steam Navigation Company were sold in October 1937: the "*Queen of the Bay*" to J.A.Billmeir & Co.Ltd., and the "*Minden*" to T.W.Ward Ltd for scrapping at Preston. The "*Atalanta*" thus sailed alone at Blackpool in the summer seasons of 1938 and 1939. She was requisitioned on 8th June 1940 for net laying duties and her promenade deck stripped of all obstructions. The "*Atalanta*" was returned to her owners at Methil in 1945 but was not reconditioned and ultimately taken to Ghent for scrapping by Van Heyghen Freres.



## LIVERPOOL, A Fishing Village Gives Her Sons The Boat and the Net”

*by Adrian Jarvis*

This inscription, on one of the *bas-reliefs* which decorate St. George's Hall, tells us something that we all know; namely that during several hundred years, Liverpool's maritime activities were largely limited to fishing. What it also does is to tempt us to imagine that when Liverpool fulfilled its destiny by becoming one of the great ocean ports of the world, the fishing industry disappeared. This was not in fact the case, although the amount of fish caught in Liverpool in the nineteenth century is pretty trifling when compared with the catch of somewhere like Grimsby, or with other Liverpool trades. The fishing industry grew considerably, albeit slowly, and that growth only escapes our notice because everything else grew so much more.

The sources for the early nineteenth century trade are not only thin but often positively misleading, and as we come to mid-century the situation improves only a little. One very uncomfortable discovery is that Braithwaite Poole, described by Valerie Burton as 'the eminent Victorian statistician for the Port of Liverpool', and generally regarded as reliable, appears to be completely wrong about the size of the fishing industry. Writing in 1853, he informs us that there were about 1,000 boats, 'decked and undecked', which employed about 8,000 men and boys. This obviously means that some of the boats were quite large by contemporary fishing standards, since the small undecked boats employed at most two men and a boy. The herring season lasted from June until September, and 'we frequently receive 1,000,000 herrings in a morning'. The total of herring caught in 1852 was about 3,000 tons, worth some £30,000. The total value of all the fish trades (ie

including curing, wholesale and retail sales etc) he gave as about £250,000. The picture is of a substantial business.

Unfortunately, if we do the unthinkable and question what Braithwaite Poole has to say, we rapidly run into difficulties. The trade worth £250,000 yields not a single entry in the 1853 *Gore's Directory* about anyone having anything to do with fish. This is clearly impossible and must be an error in the compilation of the *Directory*, or even a deliberate editorial policy, for by 1867 we find a couple of dozen fishmongers. By 1887 there are a couple of *hundred* fishmongers, together with a varied catch of merchants, salesmen, curers and a net-maker. Certainly we may believe the trade grew over that period, but not by that much. Fortunately we can find other sources of information, albeit a little sparse, which clarify the picture a little.

#### CONCERN ABOUT OVER-FISHING AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF SUPPLIES

The strident disagreements about fish conservation which periodically burst across our newspapers nowadays are nothing new. In the early 1750s, William Hutchinson was paid by the Corporation to investigate the best means of supplying Liverpool with fresh fish, particularly cod. Tables of rates and dues for the port convey the impression that the only fish coming in were herring and pilchard, but clearly Hutchinson must have been catching at least some cod, for in 1756 the Corporation granted him an interest-free loan of £400 for three years to fit out a second cod smack. Now the Corporation was a fairly *well-eeled* body, but it would have been quite out of *plaice* of them to make such large sums available if the supply of fish was not perceived as a considerable problem. Hutchinson appears to have made reasonably systematic attempts to discover which fish could be found where and when, but any 'field notes' he may have made are lost. Furthermore, it seems highly probable from later records which have survived that there were actually plenty of fish in Liverpool Bay in Hutchinson's day. It was not, however, until

H.M. Government began to listen to persistent complaints about declining fish stocks that we find what seems to be fairly hard information. Early in the nineteenth century there had been outbreaks of concern about the supply of herring, which was preserved in various ways to be exported in barrels to colonial plantations as a cheap form of protein for cheap (and slave) labour. Liverpool did not feature to a great extent in this concern as it was apparently not a significant herring-catching centre, although it did export quite a lot of the product. In 1866 however, the *Royal Commission to Enquire into the Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom* produced its report. This was an enquiry of an altogether wider nature which also got down to fairly fine detail, and its warrant required it to consider whether the supply of fish was diminishing, static or increasing. The Commissioners travelled the country, holding local hearings in fishing ports, one of which was Liverpool.

Among the witnesses was one Robert Isaac, a fish dealer and smack owner of some thirty years' standing. That statement alone shows how far we may rely on *Gore's Directory*, even before we go on to his statement that the Liverpool Fish Company had 19 or 20 boats in the 1840s. He then goes on to say that "we never had less than 30 or 40 boats working out of the port", which is rather a far cry from Braithwaite Poole's 1,000 vessels. In 1869 however, the first *Government Return of Fishing Boats Registered at Ports in the United Kingdom* showed Liverpool as having 39 First Class boats (those over 15 tons), 146 Second Class (under 15 tons but 'navigated other than by oars only') and 10 Third Class (the rest). These classes had total tonnages of 1,315; 464; and 9.5. The total number employed was given as 470 men and 58 boys. Registration of fishing boats had only come into force the previous year, so we may assume that some fishermen had decided that it was a club they didn't want to join, or had simply not got around to it: the true figure was probably a bit higher than it appeared, but it is scarcely likely that it could have declined to such a level from that given by

Braithwaite Poole without attracting a good deal of attention. Indeed, one fragment of evidence suggests that there had been a mini-boom, in that the number of pauper children placed by the Parish into apprenticeships under fishermen was much higher in the late 1850s than at other times. While pauper apprentices were cheap labour, they did have to be fed and there was presumably no point in feeding them if there was no work for them.

All the Liverpool witnesses before the Royal Commission had agreed that catches were declining in both quality and quantity. In particular, sole, which was very much the premium fish of the day, was in short supply. For this reason the larger boats were going further afield: Caernarvon Bay was a popular spot, partly because, as the Mayor of Caernarvon explained, the local boats were inferior and did not stay out so long because 'it was the preference of the men to be at home drinking'. They did not seem to have offered much competition to the interlopers from Liverpool. Andrew Tyrrell, a Corporation Markets Officer, testified that demand for fish was rising and now exceeded the local supply, which was supplemented by bringing in fish from other ports by rail. The nature of the trade was changing too; while most fish went to market, there were far more retail fishmongers than formerly. Again we find Braithwaite Poole under fire, with Tyrrell stating that there were no herring off the Liverpool coast, and had not been for twenty years apart from a few caught by stake line at Crosby. No drift net fishing took place.

In 1878, another Enquiry took place, this time under the aegis of the Inspectors of Fisheries. The 1866 Royal Commission's Report had bluntly dismissed much of the evidence it had heard as mere nostalgia about how fish were not as big as they used to be. The issue did not go away, and again we find witnesses testifying to the problems caused by over-fishing, especially in the specific matter of going shrimping when the larger fish were breeding in the shallows outside the Mersey, which allegedly caused the destruction

of huge numbers of potentially valuable fry. The amount of fish brought to market in Liverpool was said to be increasing, but the amount caught to be diminishing, the difference being made up by rail-borne 'imports'. Again the size and quality of locally-landed fish were said to be both diminishing, especially in the case of sole.

It is in this 1878 Report that we find the first definite mention of water pollution as a problem for fishermen. The largest single pollutant was untreated sewage gathered from all over the densely populated towns of south Lancashire by tributaries of the Mersey. This was tolerable in the upper reaches because other pollutants, including sulphuric and hydrochloric acid, heavy metal and arsenic compounds, and a vile cocktail of tars, poured in by bleachers, dyers and gasworks respectively, made the rivers stink less than they otherwise would. In the lower reaches, the Mersey's powerful tides swept the problem out to sea. One witness complained that "the stench of this, fourteen or fifteen miles from Liverpool, was enough to poison one". A later enquiry, held by Lancashire County Council in 1889, brought out the problem of the dumping of domestic refuse at sea. This practice had begun in 1880, and was widely suspected of harming fish and accused of damaging fishing gear. George Davies, a trawlerman, caused repeated outbursts of laughter with his account of things he had trawled up.

It appears that the two factors of destruction of young fish and pollution creeping out from the estuaries of major rivers caused fishermen to go further afield to get reasonable catches. The average size of both first and second class boats increased during the 1870s, and continued to do so. Most of the boats ceased fishing out of Liverpool as there was little or nothing to catch nearby, so they might as well shorten their sailing time to the fishing grounds by working out of Hoylake. It had also become progressively more difficult, as the docks spread north and south, for the fishermen to find places to land their catch at a price they were willing to pay, namely nothing. Henry Isaac was by now fishing off the coast of

Ireland, and some boats were fishing off the Isle of Man. (These were not after the famous Manx kippers: like nearly all of the Liverpool boats they were trawlers).

It might seem, therefore, that the days of the Liverpool fishing fleet were nearly over. This proved not to be the case as a small steam trawling industry established itself in the 1890s. What happened next was rather surprising. Nationwide, the steam trawler saw off the sailing boats with astonishing speed and completeness. In 1893 the total sailing tonnage was 116,971 against a steam tonnage of 19,030. By 1900 steam tonnage was up to 60,706, while sail had fallen to 38,033. In Liverpool there were 45 first class sailing boats in 1893, and 60 in 1902. Even the number working from Liverpool itself rose from five to seven. The reason for this reversal of the national trend is unclear, although it is possible that the ban imposed, and unusually effectively enforced, by the Lancashire Sea Fisheries Committee on powered vessels in inshore waters may have had some bearing on the matter.

There is still a great deal of research to be done on local fishing activities. Whilst no-one could pretend that the Liverpool fishing fleet was of great importance, it exhibits a few interesting characteristics, and it also serves to remind us of the continuity of history. When historians tell us that something has disappeared, the initial reaction should often be one of scepticism. "Please, teacher, my pencil has disappeared" normally means "Please, teacher, I am too lazy or stupid to find my pencil". Sometimes things genuinely *did* disappear, but in some cases, including fishing in and around Liverpool last century, they just got hidden under something bigger. *This note is abridged from a paper presented to the Association for the history of the Northern Seas, the full version of which appears in their 1995 Yearbook. (Offprint in MAL).*

*JOHN DYER*  
*and his Seaman's Certificate - 1826*

*by G.D. Hawkins*

My Grandfather's name was John Henry Dyer Hawkins and I had always wanted to know where the name Dyer came from. Following the death of my Father I examined the few papers and other records in our possession. Among these was a seaman's discharge character certificate dated 1826 for John Dyer folded up and patched with stamp edging. There was also the 1857 marriage certificate of Sarah Ann Dyer which quoted John Dyer (master mariner) as her father. (opposite)

I searched the IGI lists for John Dyer's baptism around the period from June 1807 to June 1808. Although a John Dyer was baptised at Ilfracombe Aug 1807 I remain uncertain of this person for the IGI shows that John Dyer is a very frequent name in Devon. A significant success however was the finding of the marriage of John Dyer's daughter Sarah Ann Dyer in the General Register Office index for the first year of official registration 1837 for 3rd November 1837 at Poplar, Middlesex. From the Census returns of 1841 we find Sarah still with her mother's family although neither of her parents was there.

I looked up John Dyer's ship "*Sarah Christiana*" in Lloyd's Register to find she first appears in the Register for 1800. In LR for 1826 she is listed as a ship, sheathed with copper over boards: Captain Fisher, 955 tons and having three decks, built River (Thames), 28 years old. Owners Spencer & Co. Surveyed at London. In Lloyd's List under (news from) Jamaica of 19th December was "*Sarah Christiana*", Captain Fisher, arrived from London. Lloyd's List of 2nd June 1826 under Gravesend for May 31st: "*Sarah Christiana*", Capt Fisher, arrived from Jamaica.

The seaman's certificate reads as follows:

**Merchant Seamen's Registry**  
**UNDER PATRONAGE OF THE SHIP OWNERS' SOCIETY**  
No 2, Commercial Road, near Ratcliffe Cross  
*10th June 1826*

This is to certify, That it appears by the Return Made to this Office

**That the Bearer, *John Dyer - an Ordinary Scaman***  
is of a good Character *has been Four years at Sea, and is*  
*Reported by his last Captain as a "Very Good young Man"*

Aged *18 years*

Born in *Devonshire*

Height *five Feet three Inches*

Marked

Served last in the Ship *Sarah Christiana - to and from*  
*Jamaica* *John Fisher* Commander

Further particulars of him are to be found, if required, at this office, by  
reference to the Book, No. 2 page 184

4576

*H. Dewdney & Co.*

Superintendents

On the reverse of the certificate is the imprint:

To prevent fraud and Desertion

PREVIOUS TO SAILING

-----

The Captain who ships the Bearer is requested to keep this Certificate, and  
return it to the REGISTRY OFFICE.



Following the more obvious and easier study pursuits arising from the certificate, I later looked at the remaining areas indicated by the certificate. It was by now becoming apparent that this document was in many ways the most interesting and valuable of our family relics; not only did it relate to an ancestor, but as an archive it was perhaps unique and opened up an area of knowledge previously unknown and was thus accordingly exceptionally precious. Statutory registration of merchant seamen started with the 1835 Merchant Shipping Act; the experts I had contacted expressed surprise that any registration had existed before then. It seemed that such a certificate should in fact perhaps never have survived at all; the seaman bearing it was supposed to have passed it on to his next captain. A search for the site of the Merchant Seaman's Registry proved fruitless.

After getting home from the search I wrote to various organisations which possibly could be the successors to the MSR and with one of them I struck gold.

One of the concerns I had written to soon replied, saying that it had some minute books of the MRS back to 1816 and enclosing an account of what was known of the Registry.

“A very real problem for shipowners of those days , and one which existed for centuries before, was that of manning their vessels with trustworthy, hard-working crews. Usually the officers and mates were the only permanent members of a ship's personnel. The men were a transient lot, drifting from berth to berth in a never-ending search for better pay and living conditions. In between times, and when they had money in their breeches, they often kept their feet firmly placed a shore, sometimes with their families, often in taverns. In truth, there was little to attract

men to the sea. The voyages were long, their duties arduous and constantly beset with danger. The food was inedible and not infrequently in short supply. Their quarters were foetid and incubators for disease. Discipline was harsh and the master afloat was omnipotent, brooking no insubordination or infraction of the iron rule.

Nor could the sailor live any easier on shore. In the ale houses he was robbed by the landlord and the women or shanghaied by the crimps. If he ventured on to the streets, he fell prey to the long arm of the Press Gangs, ever ready to 'enlist' another likely looking lad into the Navy. So the sailor returned to the sea with reluctance, awaiting the opportunity to leave it once again, albeit temporarily.

Consequently, the shipowner often found he had for himself a crew of malcontents - prison fodder, or bewildered novices from which the master had to mould an efficient labour force. This being an era which had not been introduced to the luxury of psychology, or, if it had, would have laughed it to scorn, the rope's end and the fist instilled the lesson and punished the tardy. It was not surprising that the men sought to escape, impossible while at sea but feasible when port was reached, especially when there was an added attraction such as might be found in the gold-laden hinterland of California. Desertions were commonplace, and often to such an extent that a master had to send his mate and bosun ashore to coax and wheedle with extravagant promises sufficient replacements to get his ship once more under sail. . . . even if a good crew could be found, it was certain that a few among these would be trouble-makers, 'sea

lawyers', who, within the confines of the fore-castle, could sow a bountiful harvest of unrest which could sweep through the ship destroying confidence and trust.

One day in 1817, a Lieutenant Brown of the Royal Navy sought audience with the Committee to propound to them his scheme for dealing with the problem of manning. His proposal was that he should . . . . establish a Register of Merchant Seamen, a pool from which owners could draw their men knowing that each recruit had been scrutinized and approved as suitable for employment. The Committee, impressed, agreed to sponsor the Register, . . . .

In February, 1818, the Registry took offices at No 2 Commercial Road, Limehouse, and informed members of the society, and also seamen, that they were in business. Between April and May of that year, 198 sailors had signed on the Register, and 54 of them were found berths . . . . by November the Register stood at 1,287 men . . . . the shipowners did not utilise the service as fully as expected, and in January, 1819, Messrs Brown and Davenport wrote to the Committee complaining that masters continued to engage men without reference to their establishment."

I visited the office of the successors to the Merchant Seamen's Register and with much interest looked at the old minute books. Unfortunately, the register have not survived. In return, I was able to provide information to the office which did not know that the Registry had survived until at least as late as 1826.

I now needed to fill in the events of John Dyer's career. I spent some time in the Public Record Office at Kew. In the statutory records of mariners, I found an entry relating to one

man of about the right age, sailing mainly out of Bristol. I can not yet confirm that this is really "my" John Dyer. I have obtained a copy of his will but this does not help at present.

Having found that the certificate is so valuable, I have had it professionally conserved. It was not in bad condition considering its age, but it had been folded and had some acid staining.

A recent development arose recently when, discussing this article with Harry Hignett, editor, he drew my attention to an entry in Gore's Liverpool Directory of 1823 referring to a "Merchant Seamen's Register, instituted 1822". Now the question arises, was the Liverpool Registry independent of the London Registry or did the Liverpool Registry arise as a branch of the London Registry? Another field for research.

I am not sure what I might do to trace John Dyer's history. Lloyd's Captains register has given nothing. Perhaps I should next obtain a country-wide down-load from the IGI.

I hope that one day my research will take me down to Devon, but I'm not ready yet!

## THE FIRST ALUMINIUM BOAT - 1892

*by Charles Dawson*

In 1889, at the World Exhibition in Paris, when the newly-erected Eiffel Tower was being fêted as a triumph of iron structural engineering, the yet newer, silver-bright metal aluminium was also being exhibited. Only a few decades previously it had been so expensive that Napoleon III had ordered a private dinner service made of the metal while his guests had to do with gold. It had taken over half a century after its discovery in 1824 by the Danish physicist Hans Christian Ørsted (1777-1851) and its first production in 1827 by the German Scientist Friedrich Wöhler (1800-1882) before a cheap industrial method was developed for the production of the metal. Sir Humphrey Davy (1778-1829) had isolated its oxide in 1809, and at that time its name was proposed to be alumium. The first big-scale production of the metal commenced in 1888 at Neuhausen, Switzerland where the necessary cheap hydro-electric power was available from the Rhine.

One of the great inventive geniuses of the nineteenth century, Alfred Nobel (1833-1896) the dynamite king, always alert to the potential of new materials and processes, saw at once that aluminium was a metal of the future and wasted no time. Typical of his way of involving himself directly, he became a major shareholder in the Neuhausen company taking an active part in its further development.

During 1890 and 1891, Nobel was often in Zürich where he had a large circle of friends and colleagues in the technical and educational fields. Among these were representatives of machine and motor constructors who were interested in the application of Daimler's internal combustion engine to 1886 to drive motor boats. The names of the owners of the impressive vessels they built show that it was still very much a rich man's hobby with

kings and magnates topping the lists, so it was not surprising that Nobel himself ordered his own boat. Launched in August 1892, Nobel himself named her "*Mignon*".

It was typical of Nobel that he should take the opportunity to use "*Mignon*" as a development project. He and his brother's firm Branobel owned oil-wells in Russia and he was interested in the potential of the various fuels that could be produced from the refinery. Therefore the engine of *Mignon* was no ordinary type - a "steam" engine fuelled with naphtha but with the same liquid in the boiler instead of water !

His interest in the potential of aluminium as a constructional material led him to order the hull of "*Mignon*" to be built in the new metal. She was therefore the first boat in the World to be built of aluminium. Graced with a beautifully decorative clipper bow, she measured 12m x 1.8m x 0.9m and carried 25 to 30 passengers. To her maiden trip in September 1892 in the Lake of Zürich, Nobel, bent on making the best of his talents for marketing, invited a scintillating band of professors and industrialists. Nobel had at first thought of taking "*Mignon*" to his San Remo home, but was advised against this by friends who had suffered bad experiences on the choppy waters of that part of the Mediterranean coast, so he stationed "*Mignon*" in Zürich and often extended invitations to take lake trips to his friends there. By the Spring of 1894 he had decided to remove his boat to Sweden, but it was not before Summer 1896 that "*Mignon*" arrived at Finnboda Shipyard in Stockholm, who were somewhat worried about the problems of despatching her further north to Nobel's new home, and awaited further instructions. By the Autumn Nobel had too many other more pressing problems on his plate and in the end he donated "*Mignon*" to a kindergarten in Astrakan that was run by Branobel and there we can assume she must have ended her days.

## Local News

BHP Petroleum Co have now placed their central production platform (constructed at and towed round from Hartlepool) in position some 25km north of the Point of Ayr. In addition to producing oil it will control and distribute gas and oil arriving from other L'pool Bay wells, one three km off Ainsdale Beach. All oil and some of the gas will be taken away by tankers while much of the gas will be sent south along the west side of the Dee estuary to the Powergen gas-fired electricity generation station.

As the calypso goes:

"I'm going away on a Harrison Boat and if I "

## CARIBBEAN CARGO SHIP EXPERIENCE

*The Author*, from Felixstowe to 11 ports in the Caribbean including Kingston, Bridgetown, Guatemala, Costa Rica, on Container vessel of 27,630 tons carrying 8 passengers on 42 day round voyage. Remaining cabin availability - Sept 28: 1 Single Nov. 9: 1 Suite. April 25 1996 : 1 twin. June 6 1996 - 1 suite otherwise fully booked.

*For further information call Pathfinder:  
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# LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY



Vol 39 no 3    Winter 1995/6

## BULLETIN

*Best wishes to all our readers*

### CONTENTS

War-time Voyage in the "Orbita"	Margaret Nichol 49
War Begins on the "Celtic Star"	David Enticknap 52
Commercial Traffic on the Upper Dee	T. Kavanagh 59
John Molyneux's will 1690	64
Yarwoods Forces Vessels	Clive Guthrie 66

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## Society Notes

At the November meeting, Chairman Alan McClelland announced that the Council are a) studying ways to encourage younger members especially student membership b) looking at the present constitution of the Society which is unchanged since 1958.

The Museum Archivist intends to ask members of the LNRS for assistance in uncovering sources of information for a number of Liverpool companies which have now apparently ceased trading. A separate letter will be sent to all members about this, early next year.

# EVADING HITLER'S U-BOATS

## *A Long Voyage Home From India*

*by Margaret M. Nicoll*

WAR had seemed to be only a remote possibility when we had arrived in India in 1937. My husband was serving as a medical officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps based in Bangalore. We had had time to settle into the colonial lifestyle. Things changed abruptly when, in 1942, my husband was posted to Iraq with instructions to commission a new military hospital near Baghdad. As a Japanese invasion on the eastern coast of southern India looked imminent, wives and families were instructed to return to England without delay.

I packed up the house and with my two small children caught the train to Bombay. Here we were able to stay with friends. A week went by before we received our sealed embarkation orders. The next morning we waited at the dockside for our boat to dock. Our ship for the long journey home was to be the troopship "*Orbita*".

It was fortunate that the only one other person that I knew amongst the hundreds of other passengers who were waiting for the boat was the General Officer Commanding South India Command, who had been a family friend in Bangalore. As we were the only people who he knew, he was glad of some company.

The "*Orbita*" was an old but lucky ship. Built by Harland & Wolff in Belfast, launched in 1914, but not completed until the end of the war. In September 1919 she made her maiden voyage to Valparaiso via the Panama Canal for the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. She was 15,495 tons, 570 ft long, max. speed 15 knots and designed to carry 190 1st class, 221 2nd class and 476 3rd class passengers. In 1941 she was requisitioned for use as a troopship. We were assigned to a dingy (3rd class) three-berth cabin below decks. The ship remained in dock for the next two days while we sweltered in the heat and humidity of the beginning of the Monsoon. It was my daughter's 4th birthday on 17th June 1942.

Italian soldiers captured during the North African campaign had been imprisoned in camps near Bangalore and we had to wait for 2,000 of them to join us for the voyage back to Liverpool. We eventually sailed from Bombay without escort. Hitler's U-Boat campaign was at its height, and safety regulations forbade the closure of the cabin doors which instead were fastened ajar with a hook. At around midnight one night I caught sight of a

large rat scurrying across the bottom bunk, at the time occupied by my two and a half year old son.

For the entire journey I was encumbered with three adult-sized, kapok filled life-jackets. Quite how a four year old and a two and a half year old were supposed to wear these adult jackets was never explained but there were no childrens' sizes available. The food was of very poor quality and consisted of mainly bread and coarse fish.

The "*Orbita*" was carrying double the number of passengers for which she was designed. There were approximately 1,000 passengers and crew in addition to the 2,000 Italian prisoners-of-war accommodated in the ship's hold. All the portholes and windows in the saloon were blacked out. Thick pungent cigarette smoke pervaded the atmosphere in the evenings. The hit song of the time was "*She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes*". This tune was on everyone's lips for the voyage. On the open deck there were no chairs and we had to sit on our kapok life-jackets.

The 'Asdic' made its continuous day and night echo soundings as the ship zig-zagged the whole way from Bombay to Liverpool in her effort to avoid the German U-Boats. Towards dawn and dusk these manoeuvres would be intensified as this was thought to be the most likely time for an attack. The passengers were not allowed to know where they were or how far they had sailed as there was always the fear that the enemy might find us. The ship preceeding the "*Orbita*" had been sunk by a U-Boat in the Mozambique straits.

Things looked up a bit when we arrived in Durban as we were allocated another cabin up on the main deck. Unfortunately we had to share it with another family as it had six berths. The General kindly entertained me to lunch in Durban and to dinner at Capetown, and best of all allowed us the luxury of using his bathroom on board ship.

In Durban we enjoyed the glorious clear sunny skies of the South African winter, but we encountered rain and gale force winds for three days on the way to Capetown. Ashore at Capetown I treated the children to an ice cream, but only after they had licked them did I realize that I had no South African money with which to pay. The townspeople generously gave the ship a consignment of oranges for the voyage, which was a welcome addition to our diet. The next port of call was Freetown, where only the General was allowed ashore. Two of the Italian P.O.W. took the opportunity to try and escape by swimming ashore, but were soon recaptured. We spent one day here before picking up an armed merchant cruiser which was to escort us for the rest of the journey home.

The "Orbita" had been converted from coal to oil burning in 1926. There was a fire in the engine room on the last stage of the journey and the drinking water tanks were contaminated with oil. From then on we had to clean our teeth in fizzy lemonade. We did not undress for the last two nights as the fear of being torpedoed was greatest. Our handbags were packed with food and warm jerseys, ready to abandon ship if necessary.

The "Orbita" eventually arrived in Liverpool at about 5 pm on 2nd August 1942, 47 days after leaving Bombay. My daughter was disappointed: "You promised me that we would be able to have a trip in one of those little (life)boats!" The dockers had all gone home so we had to drop anchor in the Mersey for the night amidst the forest of masts of all the sunken shipping.

The next morning we docked and once ashore everyone had to go through stringent security screening. The men first and only later the women and children. By the time we had finished it was too late to catch the train and we were one of the families which were accommodated overnight at the Adelphi Hotel. During the night there was an air raid and the sirens sounded. The "Orbita" shipmates met on the landing... "*She'll be wearing silk pyjamas when she comes*". Would it seem too wimpish to go into the air-raid shelters after all we had endured? We didn't get to sleep until very late and consequently overslept. Later the next morning we caught the train to Peterborough. We were back home with our family in wartime England.

The "Orbita" survived the war, as did her sister ship, the "Orduna". After the war she was used to carry emigrants to the Antipodes, but was finally scrapped in 1950.

# A FORTUNE OF WAR

by David Enticknap

At the break out of war in 1939 it was near three months to the end of my 4-year cadetship. My first voyage had been to the Cape and Australia on the "*Albion Star*" followed by five River Plate voyages and one Australian trip in the "*Stuart Star*". At the time I was in the beautiful "*Dunedin Star*", master, Captain Goronwy Owen, homeward bound from Townsville, Port Alma, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide for Hull, London and Liverpool with a cargo of 9,290 tons of beef, lamb, mutton, pork, apples, pears, cheese, butter, wool, rice, canned meat, canned fruit, silk yarn, wine hides, tallow, egg pulp, lead and titanium ore, plus 12 passengers.

After a call at Capetown for fuel on 21st August the news became increasingly gloomy and it was obvious that we were heading into a war. On Sunday 27th August the ship was placed on a semi-war footing and had a trial blackout. All shutters were put in place, the saloon windows were covered, all portholes that had no deadlights were painted black, and tarpaulins were placed over all skylights. On Saturday 2nd September the gyro pilot was switched off and the quartermasters resumed manual steering. This was because they could respond immediately to a shouted order, but several precious seconds could be lost if the officer of the watch had to dash in and alter the gyro setting. Bosun's chairs were rigged on the funnel and the white disc and blue star were painted out, leaving a plain red funnel with a black top. Obviously this did not make us any less visible, just slightly less identifiable. Lifeboats were uncovered and extra provisions placed in them.

The following morning, Sunday 3rd September, we listened on the radio to Mr. Chamberlain announcing that "therefore this country is at war with Germany". The bosun promptly mixed up all the black and white paint he could find to produce a sort of 'battleship grey' and this was hastily applied to the white topsides amidships, while men with long handled brushes leant over the bows and stern to obliterate the name and port of registry.

The next day we learned that the passenger ship "*Athenia*" had been torpedoed on the previous evening with many deaths, and this impressed upon us the fact that the precautions we were taking were not just a pointless exercise. On 5th September we heard the "*Bosnia*" had been sunk only about 50 miles away; anyone who could be spared became extra lookout. The "*Dunedin Star*" entered the Mersey on 7th September without incident.

Our junior cadet had taken the two year course on the training ship HMS *Worcester* and so was technically in the Royal Naval Reserve. A

telegram awaited him in Liverpool with orders to report to the Navy without delay so he packed his gear and left the ship at once. The 4th officer was told to report to the "*Celtic Star*" as 3rd, and two days later the chief officer called me in and told me that I was to be promoted to acting 4th and was also to go to the "*Celtic Star*". This was truly a surprise. I had been looking forward to long leave and then sitting for my ticket after one more voyage. It had never occurred to me to hope for advancement at this stage. But strange things happen in wartime and now it had happened to me. In a state of euphoria I realised that I was now an officer! No longer would I have to share a room or make my own bed. My days of chipping paint and polishing brass were behind me. And then there was the money . . . the rate for a 4th in those days was £13.10s a month but, being uncertified, I was to receive £1 less. However, a war bonus of £5 a month had just been announced, so at a stroke my pay had gone up from £3 to £17.10s. Never again in my entire life was I to get a pay rise of 500 per cent and I felt like the richest man on Merseyside. That evening I went into Liverpool and enjoyed an excellent celebratory dinner (at a cost of 4s.7d).

On 12th September I took my gear over to the "*Celtic Star*" and reported to Captain J R Wills. What a change from the "*Dunedin Star*"! A single screw steamer instead of a twin screw motorship. 5,574 tons instead of over 11,000. Ten knots instead of seventeen or more. Twenty-two years old rather than three, with primitive rod and chain steering gear, no gyro compass, no automatic pilot, no smoke detectors, the minimum of radio equipment, old fashioned accommodation and spartan washing facilities. However, none of this seemed to matter; my narrow gold stripe compensated for all.

"*Celtic Star*" and her two sisters, being the oldest and smallest ships in the Blue Star fleet, were the obvious training grounds for newly promoted officers. I knew this of course, but was still surprised to find that from the captain downwards, every deck and engineer officer was making his first trip in that rank. Despite this we all fitted in nicely and very quickly settled down to be a really happy ship. By this time grey paint had been applied overall and an 'armoured control position' had been placed on each bridge wing; heavy vertical steel cylinders, each just large enough for a man to stand in, with slits at eye level and a telephone to the wheelhouse so that the watch-keeper could shelter in one of them during an air attack. Our armament was also brought aboard; two old rifles.

The orders were to sail to the River Plate and bring home a cargo of meat, taking out coal for use in the Vestey-owned meatworks. On 21st September the old ship left the Mersey and sailed round to Cardiff to load 5,850

tons of coal. At 07.30 on Tuesday 3rd October the "*Celtic Star*" slipped through the sea lock en route for Milford Haven amidst a certain amount of quiet excitement, for we were soon to have our first experience of sailing in convoy. As was to be the normal routine for the next six years the lifeboats were swung outboard as we left and secured with canvas belly straps and quick release catches so that, should the need arise, they could quickly be freed and lowered. We stayed at anchor in the Haven overnight, then put to sea with orders to rendezvous with the main body of the convoy near the Scilly Isles. The weather was bad before sailing and got progressively worse but we reached the convoy soon after day-break. There were two destroyers and three merchant ships in line abreast and a signal was made to take position astern of the centre ship which was the commodore and named "*Lagato*". Few other signals were made, for the weather was too bad to attempt anything except trying to keep in company. The escorts were having a terrible time and at dusk they turned back and left.

We struggled on through the night and at daylight on Friday 6th October we found ourselves quite alone. The convoy had been dispersed by the foul weather so we turned to the course given in the orders and settled down for the run to the Canary Islands. The weather eased gradually and life slowly returned to normal. A week later on Friday 13th October we anchored at Teneriffe at 10.00 and at 19.00 went alongside for bunkers and some much needed food supplies. Early next morning it was back to the anchorage and the day was spent lying close to a German cargo ship which was watching our every move. By 19.00 it was quite dark so the anchor was weighed and we left, steering courses intended to convey the impression that we were homeward bound. When well clear and out of sight the ship was turned south and started the long run to the River Plate. Soon afterwards 'Sparks' heard the German send out four long dashes on the radio. The weather got better and warmer and everyone began to feel happier at being out of the danger zone - it had not yet been confirmed that the *Graf Spee* was cruising the South Atlantic ahead of us. On Tuesday 17th October a ship was sighted astern and it was soon obvious that she was quite large and very fast, as she quickly overhauled our ten knots. Everyone tried to identify her and hoped that she was not one of the surface raiders reputed to be at large because, if so, there was nothing we could do to defend ourselves and there was a very real prospect of being sunk or captured.

There did not seem to be any point in loading the two rifles or asking for more speed. But peering through the telescope I suddenly made out the so familiar silhouette and, to great relief all round, I announced "It's the *Dunedin Star*". She must have recognised us at the same time and altered



course slightly so that when she rushed past us she was only a few lengths away. People on both ships were waving wildly and an Aldis message saying 'Good Luck' came over. Then she was ahead and leaving us far behind. Even in her wartime grey paint she looked a magnificent ship and the six-inch and 12-pounder guns on her poop made us think wryly of our own pathetic armament.

Wednesday 18th October 1939 began according to routine. At 04.00 the Chief Officer and I went on watch, he on the starboard side of the bridge and myself on the port side. Course was 186 true, there was a moderate northerly breeze, the weather was fine and clear but heavy cloud obscured the moon and stars so it was very, very dark and it was not possible to distinguish between the sea and the sky. At 04.55 I suddenly realised that four points on the port bow there was a tiny patch of black which was slightly darker than the surrounding area. I stared harder and realised that it must be a ship. Then I saw another similar dark patch very fine on the port bow. I rushed to the wheelhouse and told the chief officer and as I pointed to the one ahead I suddenly saw several similar shapes to starboard. "It's a convoy", I said, hardly believing my eyes.

The Chief Officer shouted "Hard a starboard" to the quartermaster and told me to switch on the lights. I did so and went back to the port side of the bridge. The vessel ahead was now very near and the two vessels were closing quickly. I thought "Will she never answer her rudder? If we collide head on like this, no collision bulkhead could stand up to it." At the very last moment each ship managed to swing very slightly to starboard so that the impact, when it came, was at the break of the focsle head. The other ship seemed huge and was towering over us. She crashed along our bow and advanced, scraping along the side. There was a terrific roaring and rending noise and flames and sparks shot up as these two great masses of metal ground against each other. I noticed that the foredeck bulwarks were being bent inwards and realised that I was in a dangerous place, so I jumped back into the wheelhouse.

A second later there was a much louder bang as the wing cab, the armoured control position and nearly all the port side of the bridge was wrenched away and hurled down on to the deck below. On main deck level the 2nd Officer woke up and saw that the deck-head beam which was normally about four feet above his pillow was now only 18 inches from it. There was a moment's relative quiet as the bridge house on the other ship cleared our bridge house. Then it hit our engineers' house. The 'spud locker' on the boat deck disintegrated, the 3rd Engineer's room was stove in, and then her bridge front came up against our No.4 boat which, of course, was in the

'swung out' position and projecting over the ship's side. The boat was reduced to matchwood in one sudden blow and the two davits were torn out of their sockets, bent double and hurled inboard.

The two hulls then seemed to separate but after a second or two came together again when her port quarter struck a heavy blow on our port quarter. Then she was gone and in practically no time was lost to sight in the darkness. Suddenly, after all the terrible noise of the crashing and grinding and destruction there was an eerie quiet. The Chief Officer called out "Get the Captain" and I started down the bridge ladder which, though twisted, was still in position. Halfway down I bumped into him coming up. "What's happening?", he asked. "Run into a convoy, sir", I replied. I went back up the ladder with the Captain following and we went through the wheelhouse to the starboard side to join the Chief Officer. The three of us looked forward and saw with horror that there was a large ship ahead, very close, beam on and crossing to starboard with just a green light burning.

"Hard a port! Full astern! Three short blasts!" The only three orders that could be given in such circumstances but not one of them had any chance of being effective in the few seconds left to us. The rudder went over immediately but by then the ship was swinging to starboard in response to the previous helm instruction and this swing had to be stopped before any correction could be felt. The engineer on watch heard the telegraph ring without any warning or stand-by signal, although the noise of the first collision must have alerted him. He had to grab the controls and stop the engine, which was running at full speed. He then had to engage the reversing gear and run it to put the valves into the astern position and, finally, reopen the steam valve to get her started again. I pulled down on the lanyard operating the steam whistle but, as always after a period of disuse, the pipe was full of cold water, not live steam, and while this hissed and gurgled out precious time was lost before a coherent signal could emerge.

After what seemed an age a definite swing to port started, and the vibration told us the propeller was trying to check the headway, and I managed to blow three short blasts. But it was all to no avail and we drove, at almost full speed, into the other vessel's stern with a sickening crash, and stopped dead in the water. The other ship drifted away and we all heard an agonised scream echoing across the water towards us. The rest of the convoy, which was a large one, had now realised that something untoward was happening and red, green and white lights were appearing ahead and on both sides. There was nothing we could do except sit there and hope that they all managed to avoid us.

Eventually they had all passed by and HMS "*Hostile*", one of the escorts, came back and ordered the two damaged ships to make for Dakar in French West Africa, some sixty miles away. He had to return to the convoy and said that each would have to stand by the other and be of mutual assistance if necessary. There was nothing left forward of the "*Celtic Star*" bulkhead except for a mass of tangled steel, but it seemed that the bulkhead itself was still intact. To reduce the pressure on it an attempt was made at steaming stern-first, but the ship would not steer like this so speed was set at three knots with an officer permanently sitting in the wreckage looking for signs of strain. The other ship managed temporary repairs to her damaged steering gear and came along slowly in company. As a result of our own calculations and signals exchanged with the destroyer and the other ship, together with information gathered later, we were able to reconstruct the following sequence of events :

**TIMING :** From the first sighting to the first impact was eight seconds. The duration of the first collision was 26 seconds. After the first ship cleared the stern there was an interval of 56 seconds before the second crash. The whole drama took 90 seconds from start to finish.

**THE FIRST SHIP:** This vessel was one of the family, the "*Afric Star*". Having sailed in her sister I knew that under the bridge this class had a passenger deck protected forward and on both sides with a screen of teak and glass. It is not difficult to imagine the devastation caused to this when it came into a 17-knot contact with out lifeboat and davits. We also knew that she was a twin-screw turbine steamer so realised that her port propeller must have been perilously close to our side plating. A little nearer and it would have ripped into our engine room like a power-driven can opener.

**THE SECOND SHIP:** This was the tanker "*British Resource*", a single screw motor ship of 7,208 tons with a crew of 44 and a cargo of benzine and gas oil. Most of her crew were quartered in the stern and two men were killed outright and six more injured. About 15 tons of tangled steel had been torn away from the tanker and was piled up in the wreckage of our bow with the two bodies in it.

The "*Celtic Star*" had a crew of 51 and about 20 of these, sailors and firemen, lived in the focsle. All this accommodation was totally destroyed and compressed into scrap iron and it is extremely likely that they would all have been killed had it not been for the quick thinking and heroism of our lookout man stationed in the bows. When he saw the "*Afric Star*" bearing down on him, instead of dashing for safety, he ran round the focsle head shouting down each of the ventilators in turn: "Collision coming, get out quickly!". As a result all of the men were clear of the danger zone when we

hit the tanker and the only person hurt was the lookout himself when an awning spar fell onto this shoulder. At the enquiry in London some months later he was officially commended for his actions.

We limped into Dakar at 03.00 next morning, Thursday 19th October. Because of her cargo the authorities would not allow the "*British Resource*" into the harbour and she anchored in the bay. Light steel plating was welded over the damaged part (which was well above the water line) and a few days later she sailed for home. "*Celtic Star*" was berthed right away and a large floating crane and pontoon came immediately to lift off the wreckage. Then came a long, lazy holiday with very little to do while the repairers carefully cut away all the bent and twisted parts of the ship and replaced them with new, specially cast replicas. On 3rd December we heard that the "*Doric Star*" had been sunk by the *Graf Spee* and 11 days later received the joyous news of the Battle of the River Plate. It was not until 2nd February 1940 that all the work was completed and we were able to sail for Argentina. It had taken three and a half months but the French colonials had done a marvellous job and, with one small exception, the ship was as good as new. They had been unable to cast a new hawse pipe for the port side, so the plating was uninterrupted and it looked extremely odd to see a bow without an anchor protruding from it.

The South Atlantic passage was uneventful and we reached the River Plate 18th February. The first loading port was Fray Bentos; here the residue of the coal was landed. After ten days we went downstream to Buenos Aires and, 12th March, left for home via Rio Grande do Sol. Arriving Liverpool 24th April, and 9th May began studying for a 2nd mate's ticket.

I interrupted my studies to attend the Admiralty Court for the hearing of a 'claim by the owners of the "*Celtic Star*" against the owners of the "*British Resource*"', and a counter claim by 'the owners of the "*British Resource*" against the owners of the "*Celtic Star*" and the owners of the "*Afric Star*". After hearing all the statements the court decided that nobody was to blame and it was just one of those fortunes of war.

This Article originally appeared in GANGWAY, the Journal of Lamport & Holt Ltd. and the Booth Line.

# COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC on the UPPER DEE

*by Terry Kavanagh*

Until about the middle of the nineteenth century, small square-rigged, open-decked flats plied down the upper Dee from Bangor Isycoed and Holt to Chester.<sup>1</sup> They normally carried a crew of four or five "boatmen"; and went downstream with the current, using the sails when the wind served. In the upstream direction they relied entirely on bow haulers, usually working in gangs of nine<sup>2</sup> - a system which encouraged pilferage as well as inefficiency. In the 1770's one commentator described man-hauling as "degrading and unseemly, the means of harbouring and collecting persons of bad character and facilitating a system of plunder injurious to the trade and destructive of the morals of the people."<sup>3</sup> Another contemporary observer depicted the plight of the bow haulers thus:

"How they are bathed in sweat and rain. Fastened to their lines as horses to their traces, wherein do they differ from the laborious brutes? Not in an erect posture of the body, for in the intenseness of their toil, they bend forward, their head is foremost, and their hand upon the ground. If there is any difference it consists in this: horses are indulged with a collar to save their breasts; and these, as if theirs were not worth saving, draw without one; the beasts tug in patient silence and mutual harmony; but the men with loud contention and horrible imprecations."<sup>4</sup>

There was a towpath between Chester and Bangor Isycoed of course, but no horse ever tracked these barges, owing to the obstacles, such as stiles and fences, that had to be negotiated.

The river bargemen traded in gravel and stone dredged from that shoal part of the Dee opposite the mouth of the Alyn (caused by the great quantities gravel and stones washed from its mouth, when in flood. They also carried sand, timber, manure, and all kinds of farm produce. Grain, for example, was brought down to the famous Dee Mills at Chester, whenever the spring tides flowed over the Weir. At other times the quay in The Groves above the Causeway was used. And the "wellestablished" Barrel Well Porter Brewery's shipping quay in Boughton, Chester also received supplies of malt and barley from Shropshire via Bangor in the early 1800's.<sup>5</sup>

Local tradition had it that the Bangor trade began back in Norman times.<sup>6</sup> This may or may not be correct; but this fact is certain, that knots of timber floated down river from that place during the late Middle Ages,

tolls being taken as they passed under Holt Bridge and through the Eaton fishery pool in the direction of Chester.<sup>7</sup> Again, there was a small quay just below that bridge for "smacks and boats coming with divers merchandise from Chester."<sup>8</sup> Now according to one mediævalist, "it is probable that the traffic was very little."<sup>9</sup> But a local historian was, I think, closer to the truth when he wrote: "There was at this time great trade between Chester and the Borough of Holt, boats plying continually to Chester, but the Black Death [in 1349] took a heavy toll of the boatmen and the water-borne trade never recovered again."<sup>10</sup>

There were, no doubt, many reasons for this lack of recovery. But at an Inquisition taken at Holt in 1607 by the Commissioners of Sewers, appointed to remove "obstructions" in the river, "the Welsh Jury was very vehement against the Weare [or fish trap, at Eaton] & Causeway [at Chester] made in the River Dee, as the only Causes (and principally the Causeway) of the ..... ruin of their former Navigation." And the Cheshire jury at another inquisition, complained that "small boats and Ballengers (barges) cannot passe up the sayd River and downe by reason of the Causey and Weare from the new key [at little Neston near Parkgate] to the Town of Holt."<sup>11</sup> Both juries were opposed to these weirs because of their supposed prejudicial effects on the river, by their hindering the free access and discharge of the tidal and upland waters, and thus preventing them from cleansing and scouring the haven from the accumulating sands.

The citizens of Chester, for their part, argued (among other things) that the harbour was just as good as it was 400 years before; and maintained that "boates of small burthen maie have Free passage up and downe the River to and from the sea" whatever the state of the tides<sup>12</sup> - though larger, sea-going ships were forced to lie 6 miles below the City. And Mr (later Sir) Richard Grosvenor claimed that Eaton "weir is loosely constructed of twigs allowing a near normal flow of water and room for the passage of boats."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the Commissioners of Sewers got him to take a third of it down. But they failed to get a part of Chester Weir removed. Which was just as well, inasmuch as "a Breach, above 20 yards broad, & 18 foot deep ... made in the middle of the Cawsey" in 1601, "by the Violence of the Waters" had had a dramatic effect on the upper Dee water level. This happening was vividly described by one Thomas Crewe of Holt Hill: "The same Night the Causey did breake ... whereas the [ferry] Bottes at Eaton-Boate flotting, over night, vpon the Ryver, the morning after the great Breache, they were one Land, and the Ryver did falle at Eaton-Boate, a Yarde and halffe."<sup>14</sup>

The Eaton ferry boats, incidentally - and probably some of the Chester fishing boats - carried goods on the upper Dee. This is borne out by the "Petition of the poore inhabitants within the Townships of Farndon, Churton, & Aldford [presented 7th June 1645] to Sir Richard Grosvenor Knight & Baronet, praying that John Boswell might be suffered to use his corricles over the Dee, while Chester was besieged by the Rebels; That thereby Provisions might be carried into the City; and untill such time as they might all resort to Sir Richard's Ferry, as accustomed."<sup>15</sup> And nearly sixty years earlier, the Guild or Company of Drawers in Dee had ordered that if any of the Chester fishermen "do at any time take their owners said boat to carry clay stones or sclates ar any thing carry with the said boat without the licence of their said owner to pay for ev'ry default 3s 4p [40p]."<sup>16</sup>

That said, it would be a mistake to assume traffic on the upper Dee was heavy. Witness the Register of Boats and Barges, 1795-1812, which contains only two flats so employed, both of 18 tons burthen, namely, the "*Monmouth*", owned by James Lewis of Bangor Isycoed; and the "*True Blue*", her owner/master being George Brown of Holt.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, only craft "exceeding the burthen of 13 tons" were registered - and the following newspaper advertisement suggests that some of the upper river barges were smaller than this:

"To be sold by Auction, By Mr Mitchell, at the Old Crane Wharf, Chester, on Saturday, Aug 25th, 1838, (by order of the Assignees) TWO BOATS, lately used on the River Dee, between Bangor and Chester, 12 and 17 tons burthen each, with other requisites, in excellent repair, the property of Mr Hy Edwards of Bangor."<sup>18</sup>

Be that as it may, an unknown number of barges freighted with corn and farm produce came down from Holt to Chester during the Napoleonic Wars and after.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, James Lewis operated more than one flat, as is evidenced by this interesting letter dated<sup>20</sup>

"Feb 18th, 1815, Bangor.-John Lewis [master of "*Monmouth*" in 1795] this commes with our blessing to you and your familie. I hope you are in good health as we are at present. Thanks Bee to God for itt. I received a letter from Mr. G Gregorics, Atorney for you to meet him at Chester on the 21 of this instant, Too prove your ac[coun]t due from him to you. I have sent the letter to John Hughes last Tuesday, to send to you. Wheat is 12s. to 14s 6d, Barley is 5 and 3 at Chester, vere fine Old Walter Broughalls Sun Brings me on Monday next 100m. Wheat 13s. and 10 measures Bal 5s. If you

can sell your barlee neerer home and get your money, you had better. Your journey heer is a great way. If you should see Mr. Symon Pugh let him now that I have sent his bags that come to Bangor with barley 45b. I hope he will receive them safe. *Our boats have been to Chester twice this week and last* [emphasis added]. - From Your loving Father and Mother, James and Mary Lewis. Wee shall bee glad to see you when convenient. Your cheese that was at the Canoll, they are sold and all gone Beefore Saturday 11th. for 70s per hundred. They are to be paid for March 25th. I feer that they will lose much in weight."

James Lewis had more reason than most to enquire about his son John's health. Statistically, river boatmen were even more accident prone than sailors.<sup>21</sup> But luckily for John Lewis he wasn't involved in a mishap, which occurred about 5.30 one morning in 1825,:

"as Mr James Parry's boat, laden with timber, was coming down the river to this city [Chester], the current running very strong in consequence of the late heavy rains, she came into contact with the cable which goes across the river at Eccleston ferry and was upset, when the crew, four in number ... .. were precipitated into the water, and would in all probability have perished, had it not been for the exertions of the ferry man, James Arnett, who put off in his small boat to their assistance."<sup>22</sup>

Seventeen years later, in the winter of 1842, another flat, the express boat "*Manchester*", had a rough and stormy passage whilst conveying the body of a Lewis family member (who had died in Liverpool) from Chester to Bangor Isycoed for burial. Like the other upper river traders, she did not long survive him.<sup>23</sup>



## REFERENCES

- 1 An 1817 print of Farndon by G. Pickering, features two of these vessels
- 2 The Duke of Westminster's sand boat, which went up and down the river to get sand from the different sand holes, was towed by only five men. *Chester Courant* 27th May 1908 p.6
- 3 Quoted in Barrie Trinder, *The Industrial Revolution on Shropshire* (1973) p 108
- 4 *ibid.* pp108/9
- 5 *Chester Courant* 12th July 1804; 7th November 1809
- 6 *ibid.* 5th Aug 1908 p 8; *Cheshire Observer* 15th August 1903 p 3. (There are those who believed that Roman barges were man-hauled up river as far as Worthenbury; and the products of the tile works established by the Legionaries at Holt undoubtedly came down the river to Chester, possibly being transhipped at Heron brodge, just over a mile south of Chester, where there was a dock. See H. Robinson, 'Cheshire River Navigations, with Special Reference to the River Dee', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, vol. 55, 1968, pp63-68, 71)
- 7 Derrick Pratt, 'Medieval Holt'. *Denbighshire Historical Society* vol 14 (1965) p 42; *Cheshire Sheaf* [204] 4th Series vol 5, 1th Jan 1970, p 2. (It was Bangor-on-Dee's plentiful supplies of timber that persuaded the Duke of Bridgewater to build flats there from 1765-1775. See Hugh Malet, *The Canal Duke*, 1961 p 129)
- 8 Pratt, *op. cit.* pp 42, 56
- 9 H.J. Hewitt, *An Economic and Social History of Cheshire in the Reigns of the Three Edwards* (Chetham Society, Manchester, vol 88 1920) p 75
- 10 John Powell, *Holt and its Records Through the Centuries* (Holt, 1982 reprinted 1991) p13
- 11 *Harleian MSS* 2081 fol 210; 2003 fol. 766
- 12 *Ibid* fol 6
- 13 *Cheshire Sheaf*, *op. cit.* p 6 On the Commissioners of Sewers see T.S. Willan, *River Navigation in England 1600-1750* (1964), pp18-20
- 14 *Harl. MSS* 2084 fols 204, 216
- 15 *Ibid.* 2084 fol 171
- 16 Chester Record Office CR 750/1
- 17 Cheshire Record Office QDN4/1. Not surprisingly, some of the Bangor "boatmen" were also coracle net-fishermen. See Bangor-on-Dee Parish Registers 1675-1812 at Clwyd Record Office, Harwarden
- 18 *Chester Chronicle* 17th August 1838
- 19 A.H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (3rd ed. 1971) p 22; and G.L. Fenwick, *A History of Chester* (1896) p 461
- 20 *Chester Courant*, 26th August 1908 p 4
- 21 *Ibid.* 13th Dec 1825
- 22 Harry Hanson, *The Canal Boatmen 1760-1914* (Alan Sutton, 1984) p 134
- 23 *Chester Courant*, 128th October 1908 p 3; *Chester Chronicle* 11th December 1869

## John Molyneux's Will 1698

Bryan Blundell, mariner/merchant, benefactor of the Blue Coat School, first went to sea in 1687 in the "*Reserve*". A few years later he was second mate of the "*Amity*". In later entries in his journal he mentions holding shares in the "*Elizabeth*", "*Liverpool Merchant*", "*Planter*" and "*Lark*". Both his father and father-in-law were substantial wealthy citizens. One of the owners of "*Amity*" was John Molyneux, whose will gives some idea of the maritime business of those days.

The following items are taken from the will:

To James G..... son of James G...., mariner, one eighth part of ship "*Elizabeth*", now on a foreign voyage

To his son John his one third part of her cargo and also a quarter of a ship called "*Liverpool Merchant*" with her tackle and furniture and half part of the cargo, also his three-eighths of the ship "*Lark*", also his half part of the ship "*Planter*", also his quarter part of the ship "*Amity*" with her tackle and furniture and a quarter part of her cargo. To John also his remainder of the said ship "*Elizabeth*" being seven-sixteenths and seven-sixteenths of her cargo.

John Pemberton the Elder, whose son (also John) was partner with Blundell in several ships, was an executor. At John Molyneux's death 1699 the following accounts appear in the inventory:

Transport money's due from the King for sundry ships	600: -: -
Debts and goods beyond the seas	100: -: -
Debts owing at home and abroad	4,338: 5: 6
Cash or money remaining	696: 9: 10

Ships at home and beyond the sea:

<i>Loyalty,</i>	1/3 of ship and cargo	660
<i>Planter,</i>	1/2 " " " "	585
<i>Amity,</i>	1/4 " " " "	386
<i>Elizabeth,</i>	7 " " " "	656
<i>Liverpool Merchant</i>	1/4 " " " "	650
<i>Hawk</i>	1/2 " " " "	315
<i>Lark</i>	1/4 " " " "	41

Sundry goods sold:

Tobacco of the <i>Amity</i> 's cargo to ship off	5,898 lbs @ 4 1/2d	110:11: 9
" " " " " " sell in the country	13,422 lbs @ 8 1/2d	475: 7: 3
<i>Lyon</i> 's tobacco to ship off	3,300 lbs @ 4 1/2d	61:17: 6
" " to sell in the country	14,470 lbs @ 8 1/2d	512: 9: 7
<i>Lamb</i> 's " to ship off	22,477 lbs @ 4 1/2d	421: 8: 7 1/2
" to sell in the country	7,807 lbs @ 8 1/2d	276: 9:11 1/2
<i>Society</i> 's " to ship off	3,957.lbs @ 5 1/2d	90:13: 7 1/2
<i>Concord</i> 's tobacco to ship off:		
14,900 lbs at 4 1/2d.		279: 7: 6
More to sell in the country:		
10,973 at 8 1/2d.		388: 12: 6 1/2
Bulk tobacco unsold at his death		
since sold for		190: 0: 0
Raisins of the <i>Sam</i> and <i>Malago</i>		100: 0: 0
Ginger, Black and White		6: 0: 0
Indigo, 3pr hand screws, sieves and tobacco cask		5: 0: 0
Goods for Virginia not sent, and calve-skins		126: 0: 0
Exchequer notes		<u>930: 0: 0</u>
		3973: 18: 4
One third part of <i>Loyalty</i> 's cargo		100: 0: 0
Total with all other finance (omitted)		15 240: 18: 5

# MILITARY CRAFT

## built by Yarwoods of Northwich

*by Clive Guthrie*

During the existence of W.J. Yarwood & Sons Ltd, of The Dock, Northwich, Cheshire from 1896 to 1965 the company built a total of 161 vessels of all shapes and sizes for the three UK fighting forces, and, during World War II, the Ministry of War Transport. By far the greatest number built were for the Admiralty, but ironically the largest vessel constructed by WJY for Government account was for the Air Ministry, as was the smallest craft.

The first military order to be received by the yard was placed by the War Office (WO) during WWI for eight dumb cargo barges (124'bp x 16'4" x 7'4") for re-erection overseas and operated by the director of Inland Waterways. Commencement of this order was 11th November 1916, no details of their service numbers exists in WJY's yard book. This was followed by a further order for four wood steam tugs two being As155 and As136, the other two 'As' service numbers are not known: the four were completed between 29/11/1917 and 1/7/1918. It is believed that As155 became "*Lightermen*" in 1920 on being sold out of service to W.T. Beaumont, London and was eventually scrapped at Bristol in 1953. In 1921 one of the other three became "*Bricklesey*" in 1921 and owned by Aldous Successors Ltd, of Brightlingsea, but the fate of this tug and the history of the two remaining is unknown to the author.

The next orders were for the Admiralty and comprised six motor barges (120'9" x 16' x 7'9") each fitted with a kelvoin 50hp petrol engine. These were all delivered in 1918, four completed at Northwich, and two despatched for re-erection elsewhere: again the yard book sheds no light on the service numbers. This order was followed by one for the construction of four AC (ammunition-carrier) barges (124' x 16'4" x 7'9") on Admiralty account and also for re-erection. In 1919 a further two dumb barges for re-erection were commenced, these being delivered in 1920.

In 1917 the WO and Admiralty returned to the yard with a requirement for steam tugs. These were the 'West' class of which WJY built a total of three, "*West Acre*", "*West Bay*" and "*West Creek*" for the WO and the 'Poultry' class of which "*Campine*", "*Cochin*" and "*Leghorn*" were the three for the Admiralty. The 'West' class tugs were later transferred to the Admiralty and remained in naval service until after WWII. The first to be disposed of was "*West Creek*" in 1949 to Lamey's (Liverpool) and renamed "*Margaret Lamey*". 1950 saw the renaming of "*West Acre*" (although renamed "C9" from 1939 to 1948), to "*Lavernock*" when sold to Hancocks of Cardiff. Lastly "*West Bay*" became "*Larkspur*" in 1953 on disposal to Peter Foster & Co of Hull. After only three years service, "*Campine*" was sold to W.R. Johnson and renamed "*Britannia*" ...1923 and "*Leghorn*" was sold to J. Maxwell Jones. the third of this class was not disposed of until 1947 when the Anglo Danubian Trasport Co purchased the "*Cochin*". Again the author does not know the subsequent history of these six tugs.

The Admiralty returned to WJY in 1931 for a further tug, this time for C405, at 134 gt very similar in dimensions to the 'West' class but with a slightly larger engine (17", 35" x 24" as against 15", 32" x 24"). This tug was operated by the Naval Storage Dept and from 1944 to 1949 was based at Trincomalee, Ceylon. Was this vessel disposed of locally for further service or scrapped in 1949 ?

On 14th February 1934 Yarwood's launched the yard's largest building for military service. This was the RAFA's m/v "*Aquarius*" and at 296 grt also the largest vessel to be operated by the Air Ministry until being transferred to the Royal Navy in 1941 at Singapore. This ship was designated as a watercarrier, hence her name - but this was a cover, as her main duties were eavesdropping on Japanese radio signals. With the fall of Singapore in February 1942 it is assumed that "*Aquarius*" was captured by the Japanese, but no details have been uncovered regarding her ultimate fate. An item of interest is that Aircraftsman Shaw (T.E Lawrence) spent two weeks working at The Dock working on the "*Aquarius*" up to the time of her departure on 28/3/34 for Plymouth and actually sailing with her from Northwich. She sailed from Devonport 5th April 1934,

arriving at her Singapore base 26th May 1934. The average voyage speed was 8 to 9 knots.

The Admiralty again turned to Northwich in the same year with an order for the 152 gt tug and cargo vessel "*NAV Carbine*". The Royal Navy used her as an armament tug (cargo capacity 22 tons) based at Malta until her transfer to Alexandria in the early years of WWII. She was returned to Malta post-war. Ultimately, about 1972, she was sold to Marsa Ship Towage who renamed her "*British Terrier*". In 1990 the tug was purchased by P. Formosa of Valetta and renamed "*Sea Serv II*" and as such is still listed in the 94/5 Lloyds Register making her the oldest WJY vessel still in active commercial service.

Further tugs were built in 1938 for the Admiralty: "*Trunnion*" and "*Tampeon*" (each 178 tons) based at Chatham and Plymouth respectively. 1958 saw their transfer to Priddy's Hard. "*Trunnion*" was sold to H.G. Pounds of Portsmouth in late 1963, who presumably broke her up. "*Tampion*" was disposed of in 1964 to Van Den Bosche (Belgium), who towed her from Portsmouth on 13th February presumable for breaking up in Belgium.

By 1939 war clouds were gathering over Europe and Yarwood's completed two dumb barges (60' x 17' x 8') for the Admiralty on 1st September. Over the next six years WJY's production of vessels for Government service reached a total of 118 and which were either completed or laid down before August 1945. This figure comprising 49 craft for the Admiralty, 67 for the Air Ministry and two for the Ministry of War Transport.

Taking the Admiralty vessels first, Yarwood's completed the tugs "*Sparkler*" (steam) and "*C129*" (motor) in 1940. also completed in that year were the motor lighters "*Ballista*" and "*Obus*", steam coaster "*C85*", aviation fuel (dumb) lighters "*C220*", "*C198*", "*C219*", "*C337*", and "*C445*", the five latter all for re-erection overseas (C445 at Gibraltar, not away from Northwich until March 1941). 1942 saw the building of "*RN AIR2A*" and "*RN AIR3A*", both self-propelled lighters. Although Yarwood's designed these vessels the first of this class was built by James Pollock of Faversham. Of these "RN

AIR3A" was sold to Norway in 1947 and converted to a ferry. This vessel is still listed in Lloyd's Register 94/5 as "*Telambo*".

During the same year, "C444" was fabricated for re-erection - another fuel-carrying lighter with a capacity of 40,000 gallons. 1942/3 brought the delivery of three 350 ton capacity self-propelled lighters (steam-powered) - "C607/8/9" which only saw service in UK waters and were disposed of, two in 1969 and the third, "C609" in 1980 to T.W. Ward at Inverkeithing. A further order for four dumb aviation fuel-carrying lighters was completed in 1943 - "C600", "C601", "C626", the final one "C602" for re-erection. "C602" was abandoned at Christmas Island in 1961, "C601" was sold at Liverpool in 1975, "C626" became the seamanship training vessel "*Ajax*" at Torpoint and was reported extant in 1985. "C602" was shipped from Salford Docks, Manchester, for re-erection at Gibraltar, but appears to have been completed at Malta and finally disposed of locally at Singapore in 1971. Also in 1943 Yarwood's completed "C614" a steam coaster identical to "C85". Three further self-propelled 350 ton lighters were built in 1943, 1944 and 1945: "C622", "C623" and "C624" remained in UK waters until disposal in 1970, 1977 and 1969 respectively.

Following on, another five aviation fuel-carrying lighters were built, namely "C624", "C627", "C628", and "C629", in 1944 and, in 1945, "C603". These were well travelled vessels, "C627" operated at Colombo and Singapore from where she was sold in 1971. "C628" went to Hong Kong until sold in 1959, whilst "C629" was based originally at Sydney, NSW for one year before travelling to Hong Kong until disposal there in 1958. "C603" was a real globe trotter, to Sydney, Hong Kong Malta and finally dropping anchor at Gibraltar in 1964 until her purchase by Metalrock Ltd in 1980. The poor relative of this batch was "C624" which only managed service at such exotic ports as Holyhead, Sheerness and Chatham from where she was sold in 1969. Incidentally "C629" was given a new service number "VYC136" when converted to a water-carrier in 1946. The next vessel from The dock was the coal lighter "C625" in 1944 and which operated at Greenock and Devonport and sold to Metal Recov-eries (Newhaven) in 1963.

Two dumb lighters were built in 1943 by WJY, "NAV175" and "NAV175", the former based first at Devonport then Trincomalee and Mombasa and finally Hong Kong where she was sold in 1970. The (motor) self-propelled lighter "Catapult", being completed in 1944 and delivered to Milford Haven, transferred to Rosyth in 1949 and sold to T.W. Ward in 1980 for break-up on the Firth of Forth. "Empire Barnaby" and "Empire Fulham" followed in 1944, both served in the Admiralty until being sold to UK buyers in 1967, the first was sold on to Portugal for scrapping but only voyaged as far as Spain where she was declared unseaworthy at Santona and presumably broken up there.

"Empire Fulham" was purchased by I.P. Langford Shipping Ltd and later renamed "Fulham". Her ultimate demise is uncertain. A further two lighters were completed in 1945 "NAV183" and "NAV184", the second holding the distinction of being the last vessel to be built in WJY before the end of hostilities, although another seven vessels were either on the slips or on order. These two lighters were both sold to Torpoint Shipping Co Ltd in 1990

The first of the post-War completions was the coal-lighter "C633", followed by the 200ton ammunition-carriers "NAV217" and "NAV218", and, finally in 1945, the aviation-fuel carriers "C643", and "C644". Disposal was as follows: "NAV217" at Plymouth in 1992 and "NAV218" at Portsmouth in 1985. "C643" was lost while in tow from Singapore to Christmas Island in 1957 as part of the fleet build up for "Operation Grapple", the testing of Britain's first H-bomb. After service as Malta, and reserve as Pembroke Dock, "C644" spent the years 1957 to 1976 at Mombassa from where she was sold locally.

Probably the most interesting disposals were "C85", "C614", "C633", "C641" and "C642", all purchased by F.T. Everard & Sons Ltd in 1956. It should be noted that "C641" and "C642" were not completed until 3/46 and 12/46/ They were re-named "Conformity", "Commodity", "City", "Candourity" and "Clarity" respectively. Between 1957 and 1960 these coal lighters were converted into tankers by increasing the total length by approximately 30 feet. This increased the gross tonnage from around 350 to between 470 and 500 tons, whilst the dwt increased from 361



to between 570 and 600 tons. These tankers remained in Everard's service until 1969/70 when they were sold for breaking up. Mention should also be made of the tug "C129" which was sold in 1955 to H. Rose Tug Services, Poole, who re-named her "*Wendy Ann III*", later becoming "*Wendy Ann II*" and is still in service at Plymouth with Western Ocean Towage Ltd. The *m/v* "*Obus*" was sold locally in 1964, after service in Molmossa as an armaments dumping ship, and is still trading on the East African coast, owned by a company based in Dar-es-Salaam.

Moving on to the Air Ministry (AM) vessels, WWII was in its second year before WJY delivered any vessels for Adastral House. October 1940 saw the completion of two dumb cargo barges (60'x15'x6') numbered by the AM 502 and 503. After the delivery of these barges, WJY only built two other types of craft, of which production ran to a total of sixty-five vessels. These were ten 45' re-fuelling launches and fifty-five bomb scows. The launches were delivered as follows: 1076 & 1077 in 1942, 1078, 1079 & 1126 in 1943, 1080 to 1083, and 1127 in 1944. Bomb scow production was as follows : S49 to S53 and S106, 107 in 1941 (total 8), S108 to S124 (total 17) in 1941, S125 and S194-S222 (total 22) in 1943. The others were S215 to S222 (total 8) were, as Yarwood's wrote in their yard book, "materials forwarded to Grant & Livingstone Ltd of Ilford, Essex, for completion by them", in 1943/44. The disposal of the bomb scows took place between 1946 and 1948 at places as diverse as India, St. Lucia and Gibraltar. The disposal of the barges and re-fuelling launches is unknown to the author. Mention should be made that WJY lists all orders as being placed by the Air Ministry, with the exception of S194 & S195 which were shown as for the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

The final government body to order from Yarwood's was the Ministry of Shipping, which, by the time of delivery in June 1941, of the "*Empire Bridge*", this Ministry and the Ministry of Transport were merged to become the Ministry of War Transport. This ship sinking off Harwich 9th April 1946, after striking the wreck of "*Fort Massac*" (which had sunk after a collision with the "*Thornaby*" on 1st February 1946). "*Empire Bridge*" was engaged in cargo salvage on the

wreck of the "*Fort Massac*" and although attempts were made to save the "*Empire Bridge*", she was abandoned in August of that year. The second ship was the "*Empire Billow*" which was delivered to the MoWT in June 1943. The latter vessel was taken over by the Admiralty in 1946 and eventually scrapped at Antwerp in 1963. This, then, completes Yarwood's war-time production: no mean feat for a yard occupying an area of no more than nine acres.

The sole vessel completed post-War was of the seaward defence class: being HMS "*Marlingford*" (pennant no P3122) and was the only true warship built by the Company. She departed The Dock 17th February 1952 and after service at Singapore was disposed of there 8th September 1967.

The author's ultimate aim is to publish a definitive history of Yarwood's and would be pleased to hear from any one who can shed further light on the histories or who holds photographs of the many intriguing vessels mentioned above. He also acknowledges with thanks the assistance provided by A. Holtham and D. Sowden in the careers of many of these vessels after departure from Northwich.

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## Local News

### **"SEACAT ISLE OF MAN" DAMAGED IN FIRST AUTUMN GALE**

In the first gale of Autumn, the IoM SP Co chartered SeaCat was diverted to Liverpool on Wed 27th September. The high speed craft was deputising for the conventional ferry "*King Orry*" which was in Canada Dry-dock undergoing bow-thruster repairs. The SeaCat arrived Liverpool at 11.30 but the return passage to Douglas was postponed until 19.50 due to continuing NW'y force 6/7 conditions. About 40 minutes out, at 20.30 the same day, the craft struck a large wave just off Formby Light-float which damaged the bow visor. The master immediately returned to Liverpool and the 209 passengers were accommodated at the Adelphi Hotel until the "*King Orry*" resumed service the following afternoon. "*SeaCat*" was docked in Cammel Laird's wet basin. Investigations by the Marine Safety Agency and Det Norske Veritas are underway, DNV looking to see if structural alterations are necessary; the MSA concentrating on operational procedures.

The incident merely serves to demonstrate the SeaCat's frail construction. All operators of high speed craft around the UK have the 'back-up' of conventional ferries to which passengers can be transferred in bad weather. Not so the IoM Co - its motor vessel "*Lady of Man*" was away on charter to Madeira at the time of the incident.

The "*Lady of Man*" returns from her Madeira Charter early November and if common sense prevails will be available to cover for the overhaul of "*King Orry*" early 1996. The SeaCat incident may well deter the IoM Co from too much reliance on a high speed craft in 1996.

### **Former Baltic Ferry at Liverpool**

The former Baltic Ferry "*Habicht II*" is currently lying in Liverpool's Trafalgar Dock. The name has been crudely painted out to "*Princessroyal*". The plans to convert her into a floating bar and restaurant (yet again!) were blocked by M'side Fire Brigade. Built 1959 at Travemunde under her original name "*Alte Liebe*", in 1962 her name was changed to "*Orestad*" and in 1973 to *Baltica I*. In 1977 she became "*Habicht II*". Latterly she ran on duty-free trips from Karlshagen to Swinoujscie, after a long spell on similar trips from Flensburg, Kappeln etc to Danish ports. She is 918 grt, 54.31m overall by 11.92m, and had a certificate for 700 passengers and a speed of 13 knots.

## Local News continued

November 30th

Further to the news re *"Lady of Man"* it now appears that she will take up service for the IoMSP Co next year. The Company has ended its charter of the SeaCat and proposes bringing in a fast mono-hulled vessel to begin service in 1997.

A vessel which had been in Liverpool docks for almost three years sailed on 16th November. The Serbian-owned mv *"Playa"* had been detained by United Nations sanctions, but after being bought by Greek owners who affected repairs required by the Marine Safety Agency, the vessel sailed with a new name *"Kassos"*.

Meanwhile another vessel *"River Andoni"* has been similarly detained at Ellesmere Port (Manchester Ship Canal). It is understood that the problem of finance has been the factor in this detention. The crew were finally paid off earlier this year. A skeleton crew, mainly officers remains aboard.

Former LNRS editor Ray Pugh keeps a sharp watch on the vhf radio traffic in Liverpool Bay. He thought we should know of a short burst of traffic earlier this month:

Port Control at Royal Seaforth Dock called HMS *"Manchester"* at the Bar saying the vessel should wait until the Birkenhead-bound *"Stolt Alliance"* had been boarded by a pilot.

The warship replied *"Received - would that be the yellow-hulled tanker" ?*

Port Control: *"Well, we are too far away to see the colour"*

## Research Notes

The 2nd volume of the *Guide to the Archives of the Merseyside Maritime Museum* is being prepared for publication. Council has been for assistance with research into the historical background of the firms whose papers etc are held in the Archives.

Members will receive a letter with further details early in the New Year.

# LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY



Vol 39 no 4    Spring 1996

## BULLETIN

### CONTENTS

Royal Charter - A Disaster	Peter Day 73
QE Leaves the Clyde on Maiden Voyage	John Shepherd 81
Charles Tayleur -Man of his time	report 84
Port of Preston Container Trade	Peter Kenyon 85
Port Health	(report of talk) 90
Metamorphosis	Alan MacClelland 92
ED's in WWII	(report of talk) 94
Speed in Fog Correction	HMH 95

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## Society Notes

### Council Meeting of 15th Feb

Your attention is drawn to the AGM which takes place at the May meeting. At its February meeting the Council discussed possible amendments to the constitution of the Society. The present constitution and rules were last amended etc in 1958. Members will be kept informed of any recommendations. But please do take the opportunity to speak to the Officers and Council about the affairs of the LNRS.

## Research Notes

Lloyds Register of Shipping has moved to a new address in London. Lloyds originally planned to move to a green-field site not far away from Southampton, but was refused planning permission.

## THE ROYAL CHARTER

by Peter Day

My interest in the "*Royal Charter*" began in the 1950s when as a small boy living right on the edge of the sea on Anglesey, I was told stories about this famous ship and of all the treasure lost with her. My father had a large brass cover plate which had at one time been screwed down on one of the many stove-pipes of the ship.

As I grew older and more interested in the history and details of the "*Royal Charter*", I also learned that my great-great Uncle, Robert Williams, had with his family left Beaumaris to seek work in his trade of shipwright. The family settled in Chester and Robert Williams became a foreman shipwright in a yard at Sandycroft on the River Dee which built the "*Royal Charter*".

In 1972, with my father-in-law and (now diving) partner 'Jack' Smart, I commenced diving on the wreck.

.....

In August 1852, the Eagle Line's "*Albatross*" sailed into Liverpool carrying a cargo which included £500,000 in gold. The Australian 'Gold Rush' had begun!

Between 1852 and 1857 over 200,000 people emigrated to Australia including 100,000 English, 60,000 Irish, 50,000 Scots, 8,000 Germans and 4,000 Welsh. In just eighteen months the population of Melbourne increased from 23,000 to over 70,000. Of course not all those emigrants were on their way to dig for gold, but it was the gold and the fortunes around it which inspired them: some to go prospecting, some to open businesses supporting the miners and some as bankers and so on.

To carry so many people across the oceans there was fierce competition between the shipping companies, and the fight to attract business to their ships was paramount. Most ships at the outset were slow emigrant sailing ships, and they were all

subject to being becalmed as they passed through the Doldrums. It was there that many lives were lost as a result of disease. On a single passage in the early 1850s, twenty two passengers died on an East Indiaman - this was common and accepted. The most saleable item was speed: companies which could provide the fastest passages claimed the best slice of the emigrant trade.

There were two types of ship available, typically English steamers such as the "*Great Britain*" which, on her maiden voyage to Australia, carried six hundred passengers paying fares ranging from 70 to 75 guineas. On arrival in Australia the entire crew jumped ship in favour of the 'diggings'! It took the Master three months to assemble a crew to make the passage back to Liverpool. By 1860 there were only 2,000 British steamers against 25,500 sailing ships. The great rivals to steam were the fast sailing ships such as the "*Marco Polo*", commanded by her famous skipper 'Bully' Forbes. Her maiden voyage carrying 930 emigrants took just 68 days. Although conditions were hard compared to standards today, *only* two people died on that trip. On arrival at Melbourne, the master committed all his crew to prison to ensure he had men to sail the vessel home again. After loading cargo plus £100,000 in gold, the "*Marco Polo*" sailed back to Liverpool and was acclaimed "the fastest ship in the world".

The Americans had vast resources of timber and had developed the art of building large, fast sailing ships. The British Industrial Revolution created many fine engineers with the knowledge and skills to build ships of iron which were more efficient and, weight for weight, stronger than timber.

Under construction at Sandycroft, on the River Dee (just to the south of the Queensferry road bridges) was the "*Royal Charter*". She was being built to the order of Charles Moore &



Company who were in financial difficulty and sold the partly completed ship to Gibbs, Bright & Company. Gibbs, Bright were, in fact, the Eagle Line, owners of the "*Albatross*" and the "*Great Britain*". They operated the line through another of their companies, The Liverpool and Australia Steam Navigation Company Limited.

The new owners immediately initiated several alterations; principally a lengthening of the ship at both the bow and stern, but without affecting the length of the keel. The extra length gave her a length to width ratio of 7:1, calculated to produce great and effortless speed. The ship was to be 2,710 tons, 320 ft long overall, and 308.5 ft at the keel. She would have three masts, a steam auxiliary engine of 200 horse power, 700 tons of coal bunker capacity and one funnel. A new patent system for lifting and lowering the propeller had been incorporated in the design. The idea was that for periods when she was under sail, the screw could be raised to prevent drag and shaft rotation.

At the time of her launch the area around the yard was excavated to accommodate the length, but she was damaged coming off the stocks. It was thought that a sacked worker had sabotaged the supporting frames. As the "*Royal Charter*" went down the river she grounded and the resulting damage meant lengthy repairs in Liverpool.

When being prepared for her maiden voyage it was thought the "*Royal Charter*" would carry only a small outward cargo, and that the weight of the three tall masts would render her unstable. To counter any instability several tons of Cheshire sandstone were put into her as ballast, and on top of that the cargo was loaded. There had been an underestimate; she received a super-abundance of cargo and instead of drawing 20 feet, she was 22.5 ft in the water with just 6 ft of freeboard.

The "*Royal Charter*" left Liverpool on 18th January 1856, not at all unstable, but robbed of her 'seaworthy' qualities by the tonnage of ballast.

A new patent system for lifting and lowering the propeller had been incorporated in the design. The idea was that for periods when she was under sail, the screw could be raised to prevent drag and shaft rotation.

When off Cape Finisterre the "*Royal Charter*" encountered 20-25 ft high waves, and because of her deeper than anticipated draft she was sluggish to the helm. The handling problems forced the maiden voyage to be abandoned. She turned and put into Plymouth where, after removing the cargo, much of the stone was taken out and the cargo returned to the hold. The "*Royal Charter*" set off again on 16th February 1856 and in the twenty-four hours out from Plymouth covered two hundred and eighty miles.

The vessel arrived in Melbourne on 15th April, having made the passage in just under sixty days - a record. In the previous five months, the shortest passage made had been 91 days. The owners now advertised:

**'The Magnificent Steam Clipper "*Royal Charter*"  
Australia in under Sixty Days'.**

During the last week of August 1859, a cargo of copper, hides and wool was being put aboard at Port Philip roadstead. Little notice was taken of a small steamer which pulled alongside under Police escort. Small but heavy wooden cases were hoisted on to the clipper, each box having a number recorded by clerks. Those wooden boxes contained £322,000 in gold bars, bullion on its way from Australian banks to British vaults.

The "*Royal Charter*", now famous, would be bringing home some 399 passengers, many of whom were miners who

had 'struck it rich' and businessmen who were returning to Britain with their personal fortunes. One passenger on the voyage was the Rev<sup>d</sup> Dr William Scoresby, a doctor of science who had been on the ship's maiden voyage. The doctor had made many long ocean passages whilst researching the effects of iron hulls on magnetic compasses. In 1859 Dr Scoresby published the "Journal of a Voyage to Australia and Round the World for Magnetical Research".

Having weighed anchor and hoisted sail the "*Royal Charter*" turned and headed for the open sea. It was ironic that high in the rigging was a sailor named Isaac Lewis whose home was at Moelfre on the far off Island of Anglesey.

At daybreak on 24th October 1859 the "*Royal Charter*" was off the Old Head of Kinsale. There were passengers to be disembarked and some to pick up at Queenstown. To prevent delay the pilot boat had brought out the joining passengers, and would land those leaving the ship. Three hours later she was under way again, heading across the Irish Sea for Britain. Nearing Bardsey Island, the tug "*United Kingdom*" came alongside and passed recent newspapers to the ship. On board the tug were eleven riggers who hitched a ride to Liverpool on the faster ship.

As the "*Royal Charter*" rounded North Stack the unfinished breakwater off Holyhead could be seen, and looming over it was the massive ship "*Great Eastern*". Several of the passengers asked Captain Taylor if they could go closer, but the captain would not deviate, wanting to ensure his passage time.

As the "*Royal Charter*" progressed along the Anglesey coast, the sky began to darken and the wind increased . . . . . Off the south-west coast of England this same wind had already

begun a storm of terror, driving ships ashore, wrecking harbours, and causing many deaths.

With the "*Royal Charter*" now off the north coast of Anglesey, the wind veered suddenly and viciously to blow from the north. The ship had little or no sea room, and nowhere to run. As the gale developed and the sea began to turn white there was growing alarm amongst the passengers. By eight o'clock on the evening of 24th October the "*Royal Charter*" would hardly answer her helm; the pilot had never been sighted off Amlwch; the spars were almost bare of canvas and the steam engine was having little or no effect. By nine o'clock she was being cast along like a piece of driftwood. This ship was not alone in her plight; just along the coast at Red Wharf Bay, the "*William*" was already ashore, and that huge ship the "*Great Eastern*" was in serious trouble at Holyhead. Around the British Isles that night no fewer than 133 ships were totally wrecked, with another 90 ashore. Already more than 400 people had lost their lives and, knowing that his ship was being driven towards a lee shore, Captain Taylor gave the orders to "let go the anchors". In those awful conditions it took an hour for the crew to let go the port anchor and with one hundred fathoms of chain out the "*Royal Charter*" was dragging shorewards. The starboard anchor was let go with seventy fathoms of chain. At 1.30am on the morning of 25th October the port cable parted, and at 2.20am the starboard chain gave way under the strain. The ship turned right round and drove through the darkness towards that unseen coast.

With the "*Royal Charter*" totally out of control and being thrown around in those massive breaking seas, one can well imagine the sheer terror of those poor desperate souls. Signal

guns were fired, rockets went into the air - none was heard or seen.

At 3.30am there was a shudder through the ship followed by repeated heavy thumps - she was aground. Soundings were taken fore and aft - "Two fathoms forward, three and a half fathoms aft". The ship was drawing nineteen feet forward, she was well aground. Thinking he could drive her inside the breakers onto a sandy beach, the captain ordered the engine 'Full Ahead'. The captain thought that it was high tide and that later, at low water, his passengers would be able to walk ashore. How wrong he was! The tide was low and about to come in with high water just before 10.00am. It was to spell doom for his ship.

Captain Taylor tried to reassure his passengers, but as the grey light of dawn began to appear at about six that morning, the full horror of their situation struck home. They were just thirty-five yards from the black menacing rocks of the cliffs.

Not far away two local men were attempting to save the roof on a cottage from being blown off. Looking over the roof in that half light there appeared a strange and unusual sight; a massive hull with stumps of masts and a funnel. The two men came down from the roof, one running to the village to summon assistance, and the other made his way down the cliff path to see what help could be given.

At this stage a seaman of Maltese origin stripped and tied a rope around himself and prepared to enter that raging water in order to get a line ashore. He was to go down in history as "Rogers of the *'Royal Charter'*". His real name was Joie Rodriguez, but he was known as Joseph Rogers. He got ashore aided by a group of locals and his rope was used to set up a

breeches buoy, but because of arguments and jealousy on the ship it was never used to save a life.

As the upper parts of the ship were being destroyed people either jumped or were washed into the maelstrom. A dedicated group of Moelfre men - "the famous twenty-eight men of Moelfre" had formed a human chain and time after time went out into that raging surf to grab any poor unfortunate they spotted. And so, out of the 370 passengers, just eighteen survived. Of the eleven riggers, five survived, and of the one hundred crew, just eighteen lived. Not a woman, child or ship's officer survived.

Within days there were divers down on the wreck. The attraction was gold, thousands of pounds worth. Much was recovered in the first year. Since that time diving has continued, but with little success. One locally based group has conscientiously worked the wreck on a seasonal basis, excavating thousands of tons of sand, sifting the material, measuring the ship's remains and picking up the occasional item of value or interest. Groups from off the island have tried to get-rich-quick by blasting here and there, or by duping investors out of their money. There have been legal battles with the local group trying to preserve the physical aspect of the wreck for those who will come to look at the remains in later times; but for now, there she lies, covered in several feet of sand and, just a few hundred yards away lies the *Hindlea*", wrecked in an identical storm one hundred years later - to the day - when again fearless men from Moelfre put out to sea in the most frightening of hurricanes, the wind and huge waves driving on shore, to pluck from the very deck of the "*Hindlea*" the whole living crew.

Editor's note: Joie Rodriguez died in 1895 and was buried in Litherland.

# THE QUEEN ELIZABETH LEAVES THE CLYDE

## FEBRUARY 1940

compiled from contemporary newspaper reports

by *John Shepherd*

Originally the maiden voyage of the "*Queen Elizabeth*", which was launched in September 1938, was planned to begin at Southampton on 24th April 1940. At the outbreak of war she was being completed in the fitting-out basin of John Brown & Company, Clydebank. Her presence there undoubtedly proved a source of anxiety to the Government, for not only did the ship present a sitting target in the event of enemy air attack, endangering herself and the entire shipyard, but also her vast hull was taking up a great deal of space which could well be used for other, vital work.

In November 1939 permission had been given to Cunard White Star and the builders to go ahead with essential work to enable the ship to be moved. By February 1940 the work had reached such a stage that the Admiralty, invoking the Defence Regulations, requested that the ship should leave the Clyde at the earliest possible date and "remain away from the British Isles so long as the Order remains in force". Cunard White Star were tolerably certain that the ship was in a condition to comply with the instruction, but the problem was where could the "*Queen Elizabeth*" be sent? The number of ports outside the British Isles which could receive the world's largest liner was limited, but it was decided to send her to New York where

bringing a cargo of oyster shell from Denmark) replaced both the "Jonan" and the "Bounty". The "Marie", the "Noach" and the "Prior" remained on the route until March 1956 when the first of several purpose-built coastal container vessels arrived - the mv "Clipper" which replaced the "Marie".

During the Suez crisis of August 1956, several vessels appeared on services out of Preston for the Atlantic Steam Navigation Company (ASN). The company had operated a roll on-roll off route between Preston and Larne using Landing Ships (Tanks) on long term charter from the Ministry of Transport. These former LST vessels were named "Empire Cedric", "Empire Celtic", "Empire Cymric", "Empire Gaelic" and "Empire Nordic" (all traditional White Star names - hence Atlantic S.N.Co.). They had operated on routes between Tilbury and Antwerp and Preston and Larne since 1948, but during the Suez crisis they were recalled for military use. The ASN vessels were mainly ro-ro, but had carried unit loads on the upper deck along with trailers. As suitable ro-ro vessels were not available to replace them, the ASN had to charter conventional coasters and remove their lifting gear (the derricks were left lying on the dockside at Preston), and temporarily convert its ro-ro service to lo-lo using Lancashire flats, trailers and tank units. Lancashire flats were lorry-type flats with lifting shackles but no road wheels and were loaded and sheeted by the customers. This was inconvenient, but at least the service could continue. The Atlantic Steam Navigation Company started its own container routes from Preston in the 1960's.

Captain W.H.Laws, Master of the "Empire Cedric", gave an interview to the local press on his vessel's return to Preston on Saturday 12th January 1957. *"It was an interesting trip and we had good weather. We spent three weeks at Malta before*



*loading and joining a British convoy for Port Said. The 'Cedric' arrived there on 'landing day', and went alongside the next day. After discharging we ran a shuttle service between Malta and Port Said carrying troops and army vehicles. We saw very little fighting."*

August 1956 saw the start of another unit load service from Preston - that of Northern Ireland Trailers Ltd (N.I.T.S.Ltd) who normally used ASN ro-ro vessels. They inaugurated a container service to Larne, commencing with the departure of the "*Violet Erica*" (N'lands) on 29th August. The British "*Loch Linnhe*" became her running partner in early September. The "*Prior*" and the "*Marie*" returned for ACCS making a four ship operation until late November 1956, with the British "*Glenapp Castle*" also making occasional trips for ACCS. 1957 opened with three services out of Preston operating eleven vessels. Mid-January saw the second purpose-built coaster when the N'lands "*Biscaya*" joined ACCS on charter to replace the "*Prior*", which temporarily left the service.

Suez operations had ended and the ro-ro vessels began to return releasing all the chartered ASN coasters. There was much changing of the vessels already mentioned in this article which arrived and sailed to relieve each other. This was to take place all through the history of container operations at Preston, and only new vessels will be mentioned in future. However, a full list of all vessels used will be added as an appendix. The Dutch "*Biscaya*" sailed to Larne on 5th February 1957, and after a change of name, returned as the "*Elisa*" on the 7th, still chartered to ACCS. After 20th February, only three vessels remained on container/unit load services, namely "*Clipper*", "*Elisa*" and "*Loch Linnhe*". Much business had returned to the

## CHARLES TAYLEUR - A Man of His Time

Synopsis of a paper read to the Society by Frank Neale on 15th February 1996.

Charles Tayleur was born in Market Drayton, Shropshire, in 1775, the third son of a family with Liverpool connections. In 1807 Tayleur, having established himself in Liverpool, purchased an overdue vessel which eventually turned up to his considerable profit. He became a cotton importer, principally from Central America, and lived at 14 Castle Street. By 1809 he had invested in four ships and was a specialist in the Latin America trade, sending his son out to Rio de Janeiro to act as his agent.

The steam engine was establishing itself as the motive power of the future and Tayleur became a large shareholder in the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Company, setting out on a new career as a locomotive builder. In December 1830 he established the Vulcan Locomotive Works at Newton le Willows, there being no suitable land available in Liverpool. By 1842 the Vulcan Foundry was a great success, building locomotives and bridges, and Tayleur saw that iron was the material of the future for shipbuilding. The transition from sail to steam and from timber to iron was taking place.

In 1834, at the age of 59, Tayleur established an ironworks at Warrington Bank Quay with his partner George Sanderson. Much of Bank Quay's profits came from cannon and armaments for the Crimea, but, in 1853 the "*Tayleur*" was launched sideways into the Mersey at Warrington. The vessel was eventually lost off the Wicklow coast and another Tayleur-built vessel sank off Liverpool's Pier Head. Tayleur's ship-building company went into liquidation in 1856, and shortly afterwards Tayleur died at Torquay.

J.S.

\* off Lambay Is., DUBLIN BAY,  
- 84 -

See 340. Bau

# IRISH SEA CONTAINER TRADE AT PRESTON

(part 1) 1954 to 1960

by Peter Kenyon

When mv "*Prior*" arrived at Preston from Garston on Sunday 19th September 1954, few people realised that this was the start of a service which would be part of a revolution in seaborne trade. This vessel inaugurated a service which came to be known as Anglo Continental Container Services (ACCS), a new transport system, which the "Lancashire Evening Post", in its issue for 25th June 1965, reported as having grown to forty weekly sailings from Preston to Northern Ireland and Eire.

The first sailing of "*Prior*" from Preston was on 22nd September 1954 for Larne with a cargo listed as 'general', but which was in fact lift-on-lift-off (LOLO) units comprising flats, tanks and other types of containers loaded with commodities which were previously carried as 'break bulk cargo'. On her return from Larne on 27th September, the cargo was listed as 'CONTAINERS' - the new shipping term had arrived.

The new service usually operated three times per week, but four months later in January 1955 a second vessel was added - mv "*Noach*". A daily service to Larne was now provided and this was further increased in October 1955 when the British "*Loch Linnhe*" made one round voyage. This vessel was to appear regularly in later years on other services. Trade was on the increase, for the mv "*Jonan*" (Netherlands, 500grt, 1954) replaced the "*Prior*" in October 1954. The "*Prior*" eventually returned to Preston with a cargo of wheat from Dunkirk a few weeks later and resumed the container service. This rapidly expanding route was joined by the Dutch coaster "*Bounty*" in November 1954, and the following month the "*Marie*" (after

the "*Queen Mary*" and the "*Normandie*" had been lying since the outbreak of war.

Theoretically the "*Queen Elizabeth*" had sufficient reserve of speed to take any evasive action, but she had never been to sea, nor had she run trials. Her builders and owners could not be sure of her performance. The risk had to be taken. There then remained the problem of getting the ship away with the maximum amount of security. Although movements of ships, their landfalls and departures, were rigidly censored it was impossible to move the "*Queen Elizabeth*" from her fitting-out basin and down the narrow waters of the Clyde without attracting attention. Moreover the proposed Atlantic crossing involved taking on oil fuel and stores, and signing-on a crew.

It was decided that a 'blind' should be provided, and what more logical and natural that following the precedent of the "*Queen Mary*", it should be arranged that the "*Queen Elizabeth*" should proceed to Southampton, there to be dry-docked. To give substance to this plan, considerable quantities of her fittings were sent to Southampton, ostensibly to be placed on board there. Arrangements were made for Southampton's King George V graving dock to be prepared for her reception, and a crew of some 500 men were signed on for the coastwise voyage. The Southampton pilot was brought to the ship.

At 12.30pm on Monday 26th February 1940 the "*Queen Elizabeth*" left her fitting-out basin escorted by six tugs and proceeded down the Clyde, arriving at the Tail of the Bank without incident some six hours later. There then followed short trials in the vicinity for testing the steering gear and

adjusting compasses. At 3.00pm the following day, 27th February, the Cunard White Star Company formally took delivery of the ship from the builders. At this point the crew were advised of the real destination and special terms agreed with them. With few exceptions they volunteered for the longer voyage. Large quantities of warm clothing had been specially bought for them to use on the longer trip as they would be away for many weeks rather than the expected few days.

As it was considered undesirable to write or cable to America of the plan, a special agent had been despatched to New York two or three weeks ahead of the ship's departure from Britain, and he was instructed to break the news to the Company's American organisation on the day prior to the arrival of the 'Queen' at New York.

Early on 2nd March 1940 the "*Queen Elizabeth*" set sail for New York with Captain J.C.Townley in command, and an astonished world heard of her arrival there five days later. She was berthed alongside the "*Queen Mary*". How completely the enemy were deceived may be gauged from the fact that at the time when it was assumed that the vessel would be in the vicinity of Southampton, enemy bombers were out in exceptional force over the Channel.

For nearly a fortnight the two ships lay immobile, side by side at their berths while New Yorkers speculated on their fate. On 20th March, the "*Queen Mary*" slipped down the Hudson followed by the QE three weeks later. Their work on Government service had begun.

ro-ro ferries. By the end of July 1957 only ACCS remained operating the "*Clipper*" and the "*Elisa*".

Atlantic Steam Navigation's new "*Bardic Ferry*" joined the ro-ro vessels and made her first commercial sailing to Larne on 2nd September. NITS recalled the "*Loch Linnhe*" in October 1957 and then there were no further changes until April 1958 when the "*Goodwill*" arrived for ACCS. This new Dutch vessel was the first of four purpose-built coasters chartered out by A.C.Hoff for container services on the Irish Sea.

In his report to the Ribble Committee of Preston Council, the Dock Traffic Superintendent Mr J.H.Hanna said that Irish Sea traffic now accounted for 30% of Preston's trade. He said that 21 sailings a week had operated in 1957, carrying a combined total of 476,000 tons of ro-ro and lo-lo cargo. These increasing fixed schedule services would demand adequate dredging of the Ribble channel. The report added that representatives from many other countries had visited Preston Dock to inspect and discuss the container terminals with a view to starting their own routes.

In early 1959 prolonged fog played havoc with sea transport in the north-west. In the local Preston paper for 27th January, a spokesman for ASN reported that they had transferred much of their business to a new overnight service from Liverpool trading as Link Line and utilising the Coast Lines' vessels "*Pointer*" and "*Spaniel*", which were later to operate for NITS. After 8th February, the Ribble services were reduced to just "*Goodwill*" and "*Elisa*" serving Larne. Following rapid expansion, Preston had now lost some of its business to other mainland ports but this situation improved in the '60s. The total cargo for 1959 was reported as 524,700 tons.

*to be continued .....*

## VESSELS CHARTERED BY ASN DURING THE SUEZ CRISIS

VESSEL	Flag	grt	bt	Owner	Arr Preston on charter 1956	Sailed Preston off charter to
Saint Kilda	Br	708	1955	Gdnrs	22/8 from Clyde(light)	21/9 to Garston(light)
Cliffville	Br	965	1944	Mks	22/8 from Lpl(light)	19/1/57 to Barrow(light)
A.R.Rawall	Ir	425	1948	Fzpk	27/8 from Larne(trlrs)	22/9 to Pt Talbot
Kapt Jan Reinecke	Ge	1489	1950	Rnke	15/9 from Hmbg(light)	24/1/57 to Garston(light)
Fidentia	Ge	998	1955	B S K	19/9 from Korsor(lt)	15/1/57 to Swansea(light)
Heinrich Lorenz	Ge	1866	1954	F/van Drnm	29/9 from Larne(trlrs)	22/1/57 to Swansea(light)
Mary Robert Muller	Ge	1598	1952	Mlr	19/10 from Antwp(lt)	24/1/57 to Swans(lt)

Owners: Gdnrs - J & A Gardner; Mks - John S. Monks;  
FzpK - D. Fitzpatrick; Rnke - J.A. Reinecke  
B S K - Bremen Schifffahrts Kontor (Brink & Co)  
F/van RDnm - Fisser & van Doornum; Mlr - Mary Robrt Muller

### *Details of Suez duty for the large ex LSTs*

EMPIRE DORIC 4291/1945 Sailed Preston for Liverpool 17/8, requisitioned by MOT. After Suez service transported army vehicles back to London (Tilbury), then sailed for Preston. She was reported sheltering from weather in Margate Roads 22/6/57, and then diverted to ASN's Tilbury - Continent service, for she did not re-visit Preston during the remainder of 1957.

EMPIRE GAELIC 4291/1945 Sailed Preston for Liverpool 17/8, requisitioned by MOT. After Suez arrived Preston from Malta with Army transport 11/3/1957, and resumed ASN service from Preston.

EMPIRE CEDRIC 4291/1945 Sailed Preston for Liverpool 17/8, requisitioned by MOT. This vessel was the first to return to Preston after Suez, arriving from Tilbury 'light' on 12th January 1957 to resume service.

EMPIRE NORDIC 4295/1945 Sailed Preston 28/8 (no destination given), having been requisitioned by MOT. Arrived back after Suez to resume service 16/1/1957.

## Port Health and the Port of Liverpool

A talk given to the Society on 16th November 1996 at the Maritime Museum by Mr. G. Davies, lately Chief Inspector, Port Health in Liverpool.

The speaker commenced by referring to the first quarantine regulations imposed by any port when, in the 15th century, Venice required ships coming from the Levant to be isolated for 40 days, that area being regarded as a reservoir of disease after the Black Death in the 14th century. However in the 17th century the plague spread to the Low Countries, leading to a Quarantine Act in 1710. Further regulations came into force as investigations considered how disease was actually carried by ships: the general conclusion being that it was "by air". Thus ships would be opened up and the cargoes "aired" before discharge. In the UK in 1825 a Quarantine Act was passed which was to be enforced by Customs officers employing a doctor.

Liverpool became the first port in the UK to have its own Sanitary Act in 1846, appointing the first Port Medical Officer of Health. Two years later a national Act was passed prompted by the spread of cholera causing 53,000 deaths. The next significant international step was the setting up, in Paris, of a permanent International Health Office, this specifically to deal with cholera, yellow fever and the plague. The last case of a 'home-grown' plague victim in the UK was at Liverpool in the 1920's, by which time it had been established that the bubonic plague was carried and transmitted by rats' fleas. This gave rise to an Act for Deratisation of Ships in 1929.



Mr Davies then spoke of the three methods of fumigation and pointed out that two of them were difficult to administer effectively and that the now most commonly used - cyanide - had problems in its administration under current Health & Safety regulations. Another notifiable disease referred to was smallpox, a deadly disease passed solely from man to man with no intermediaries and which was actually eradicated World-wide by 1980. Some incidents of outbreaks of more obscure infections appear to have arisen via monkeys from research establishments in Germany and the USA.

Overall, port health work was declining in the previously mentioned areas except in the case of malaria for which, in its various forms, medication was proving to be less effective..

Contrasting sea with air travel, it was pointed out that health problems were invariably revealed during long sea passages, whereas this was unlikely with air travel and, anyway, it would be impossible to deal with so many passengers passing through an airport.

Finally, Mr Davies dealt with regulations from 1908 to the present day controlling the import of food. (As a personal comment one had the impression that the 1993 Common Market regulations have not been the most helpful.)

This, an informative and interesting talk, was followed by a short but lively question and answer session.

PJHT

## METAMORPHOSIS

by A.H. McClelland

In spite of problems with labour relations and shortages of materials the volume of ship repair and conversion work being undertaken on the Mersey in the first half of 1947 constituted a record for the region. Taken together with shipbuilding activity the tonnage handled eclipsed that of any comparable period - not excluding the war years. Driving through the Liverpool dock estate on frequent occasions with my uncle during that period I was fascinated by the evidence of industry aboard vessels of every conceivable size and type, including the ex-German whale factory ship "*Kosmos IV*". However one ship really caught my attention; the diesel-engined tramp "*Derryheen*" converted from an aircraft carrier by Harland & Wolff Ltd. Launched in 1943 by Wm Denny & Bros as the "*Empire Macandrew*" and designated a Merchant Aircraft Carrier (MACship), she had flown four aircraft.

The "*Empire Macandrew*" as completed had a flight deck running for most of her 448 ft length, surmounted by a minuscule bridge structure. She was fitted with an elevator to enable planes to be moved between the flight deck and a hangar situated on the second deck. Cargo spaces for grain on her east-bound North Atlantic voyages were restricted to the lower holds, part of which were arranged as deep tanks for water ballast when westward-bound. There was no conventional cargo handling gear.

Work undertaken by Harland & Wolff for the ship's post war owners, Messrs McGowen & Gross Ltd of London, included not only the removal of the flight deck and lift, but all the

accommodation and much steelwork in the lower holds. Five new cargo hatchways were created with the requisite underdeck stiffening. Masthouses together with deckhouses amidships and aft were fitted, plus a conventional funnel. Two masts and two sampson posts were set up to support 10 derricks served by electric winches. New accommodation was provided amidships and aft with appropriate services as well as provisions compartments.

The general cargo motorship "*Derryheen*", as I eventually saw her, was a flush decked vessel with two hatches forward of the bridge, one aft of it and two aft of the other midships deckhouse. To my youthful eyes the transformation was dramatic! McGowen & Gross also consigned the merchant aircraft carrier "*Empire Macalpine*" to Harland & Wolff in Liverpool for a similar conversion to become the "*Derrynane*".

In all six grain-carrying MACships were built: "*Empire Macalpine*" and "*Empire Mackendrick*" by the Burntisland Shipbuilding Co Ltd; "*Empire Macandrew*" and "*Empire Macdermott*" by Wm Denny & Bros Ltd,; and "*Empire Macrae*" and "*Empire Maccallum*" by Lithgows Ltd. Plans for a basic diesel-engined two-deck tramp were taken by the Burntisland yard's naval architects and remodelled to create these carriers at the height of the German U-boat offensive. They flew the Red Ensign and apart from Royal Naval aircrews and maintenance personnel, were manned by the Merchant Navy. The MACship concept was also applied to a tanker hull form without provision for a hangar deck and four vessels were built - one, the "*Empire Maccoll*", by Cammell Laird & Co. Ltd which became the "*British Pilot*".

A talk prepared by J.E Cowden and presented to members at the meeting on Thursday, 18th January 1996

## ELDER DEMPSTERS IN WWII

Regrettably, the author of this talk, co-author of the definitive history of Elder Dempsters, was unwell on the day. However, armed with the lecture notes and accompanying slides, Alan McClelland was able to stand in.

Commencing with a little of the early history of the company some excellent slides exemplified the cargoes carried and the trading patterns to the West African ports and cross trades to the USA: these leading up to the main subject.

In the course of the War the company lost 26 out of the initial fleet of 45 motor and steam ships, taking with them 478 crew members and an aggregate gross tonnage of 144,465 tons. Some 32 gallantry awards and commendations went to individual seafarers.

Slides were shown to identify each of the twenty-six ships and with them a short description, history and a graphic account of how each one met its end. Many were potential epics in their own right, their loss usually a result of U-Boat attack (with some bombed). Each submarine was named, its commandant identified, and what ultimately happened to them. All well researched and attention-holding. Amongst the usual good attendance were a number of ex-Elder Dempster seafarers; one of them had actually been torpedoed on three of the ships featured in the talk.

The ships listed and featured were:

Accra, Apappa, Adda, Mattawin, Kwaibo, Ilorin, Sangara, Abosso, Swedru, Seaforth, Alfred Jones, William Wilberforce, Mary Slessor, Henry Stanley, Edward Blyden, Boma, Bassa, Bodnant (clsn), Bereby (grounded tcl), New Brunswick, New Columbia, Dunkwa, Dixcove, Daru, Dagomba

There was also short note re "*Aba*", built as '*Glenapp*'. '*Aba*', served as an hospital ship. Finally in 1947, as '*Matrona*', she capsized in Bidston Dock, Birkenhead and was subsequently scrapped.

PJHT

## SAFE SPEEDS IN FOG

A decade ago I wrote an article for BULLETIN "Commodore of the North Atlantic". The subject being Captain C.H.E. Judkins, (Feb 1985) first Commodore of the Cunard Line, who, despite a haughty appearance and abrupt manner, was a very understanding person, careful and caring in his handling of people. He handled his ships with the same careful actions. Stories about him abounded which appeared to be as apocryphal as they were popular. One story most people then and now find amusing. Passing through the fogs of the Banks of Newfoundland he is said to have been approached by a passenger who asked, "Why do you go so fast in this fog?". To which he is said to have replied "The faster we go through it, the faster we are out of it!".

I always thought the story was untrue and merely illustrated the popular idea of Judkin's abruptness. I knew that Charles MacIver, the manager of the Line, required the Cunard vessels to be constructed with safety and comfort in mind. Even the printed voyage instructions from MacIver to his masters demanded caution and prudence to be observed at all times.

Recently I was reading a section of the "Minutes of Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships" 1874. The Chairman of the Cunard Line, John Burns, appeared before the Commissioners on 24th April that year. His father, George Burns, had been one of the founders of the Company and the Burns family were operators of independent shipping companies both ocean-going and coastal.

Three questions were put to him:

Question no 15,108: We have been told that when vessels pass through the fogs of Newfoundland, they go at the same speed as they do in the rest of their voyage ?

John Burns: Yes the letter I have just read is a letter addressed by Messrs Burns to the captains in the coasting trade. It would be unwise and impossible to lay down a similar rule in the ocean-going trade, for the reason that many times our ships in crossing the Atlantic, have had fog the whole way across, and therefore we could never carry mails at all under those circumstances if we had such a rule, but it can be laid down for the coastal trade.

Question no 15,109: We have been told in evidence that it is safer not to relax the speed, that the vessel is less under command when the speed is relaxed, and that it is safer to proceed at the same speed as she was proceeding as before in the North Atlantic ?

John Burns: I believe that it is so; but circumstances alter cases in this respect, that upon an Atlantic voyage you have not the element of the land until you make the land. The danger is when you come close to the land, but in mid-ocean it does not affect you.

Question 15,110: That you consider to be one of the great causes of accident ?

John Burns: I do !

In short Judkins was not being smart, rude or even facetious when he stated " The faster you go through it, the quicker you are out of it.

Anyone interested ship-operations of mid-19th century the Minutes of Evidence given to the Royal Commission of Unseaworthy Ships 1874 is an un-paralleled source of information. All sections of the shipping industry from all over Britain were represented; sea-going officers deck and engine room, shipowners and builders, pilots etc. Almost 30,000 questions and answers are a superb fount of knowledge. They were printed with others under the general title of "Parliamentary Papers".

H. M. Hignett

## Local News

Late October, a fishing vessel, caught its nets on an underwater object somewhere north of Rhyl. An amateur diver went out to assist clearing the nets and discovered a large object, which appeared to be something which had recently been in the news - "*Resurgam*" the first wholly mechanically operated submarine, lost in 1880 during a temporary call at Rhyl. The crew were ashore overnight and the vessel drifted away on the ebb just after high water and was never seen again.

Over the past decade there have been many attempts to find the submarine. The actual find was kept quite secret until December. The position remains secret for security reasons. Now there is much discussion as to where the sub should be permanently displayed. The Submarine Museum at Portsmouth ?? or in Birkenhead Docks ??

## Notes from, the Archives

When invited to make a contribution to the Society's publications, I thought that as Curator responsible for processing archival acquisitions at the Maritime Archives & Library I would take the opportunity of informing members of some of the most notable items acquired over the last few months. We aim to collect original documents and volumes relating to maritime history with a particular emphasis on the port of Liverpool, the Merchant Navy, slavery and emigration.

Many of our acquisitions over the last few years have been additions to existing major collections such as Mersey Docks & Harbour Co, and Ocean Transport & Trading Ltd both of which have grown substantially over the past few years, as the need to "rescue" records before the closure of the Port of Liverpool Building and the transfer of Ocean's main operations from India Buildings respectively. Latest instalments were the Ocean Publicity material, including photographs of vessels of the last Ocean fleet in the 1980's, and most recently, quantity of photographs from the Engineering Dept at MD&HCo., mostly early dock construction photographs, including Canada and Gladstone Docks, and dating from the early 1900's to the 1970's. The need to sort, document and store these larger acquisitions is a major part of our department's work programme.