

*The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

## THE BULLETIN

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 41, Number 1, Summer, 1997



The Chairman's Annual Report	page 1
The Good Old <b>Ranger</b> ( <i>James E. Pearce</i> )	page 4
The Halifax, N.S. Disaster of 6.12.1917 ( <i>John P. Light</i> )	page 9
Fortunes of a "Flat" ( <i>John Sutton</i> )	page 13
The <b>Royal Daffodil</b> at Dunkirk ( <i>Capt. G. Johnson</i> )	page 18
The Loss of the <b>Tayleur</b> ( <i>Arthur C. Wardle</i> )	page 22

# **The Liverpool Nautical Research Society**

## ***President***

## ***Vice-Presidents***

Mrs E.M.Summerfield Mr N.R.Pugh Mr H.M.Hignett

## ***Chairman***

Captain Graeme Cubbin

## ***Vice Chairman***

Captain M.D.R.Jones

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## ***Honorary Officers***

*Secretary* : P.J.H.Tebay    *Treasurer* : A.A.Williamson

## ***Membership and all Correspondence to :-***

Hon.Secretary, L.N.R.S.,  
Maritime Archives and Library,  
Merseyside Maritime Museum,  
Albert Dock, Liverpool L3 4AA

## ***Subscriptions are now due and are as follows:***

**Ordinary Membership £8, Family Membership £10.**

***It would be greatly appreciated if all Members would pay their  
Subscriptions before 1st September.***

**Your Programme of Meetings / Membership Card will be enclosed  
with the September *Bulletin*.**

**Details of the September and October Meetings are on page 3  
of this *Bulletin*.**

## THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT, 15TH MAY, 1997

To say that the financial year just ended has been a turbulent one would be an understatement. Faced at the outset by the resignations of our distinguished President and Treasurer, I, your new Chairman, was left feeling like a disabled ship wallowing in a shoaling sea of confusion. However, members of the Council rallied round, and, like a fleet of sturdy tugs, soon had me safely afloat again in deep water. It was agreed to defer the appointment of a President for the time being, and concentrate on seeking a new Treasurer as a matter of urgency. Several members were approached, and I cannot praise too highly the positive response received from Sandy Williamson, who, within a fortnight of the last A.G.M., had accepted responsibility for this all-important position.

No sooner had this problem been resolved than another was posed by the Museum authorities who announced in August that due to straitened financial circumstances, the doors of the Records and Archives Library would be closed to our Members on Mondays!

Despite the acknowledged concessionary nature of this privilege, we nevertheless felt it was too valuable a concession to give up without a fight. A Council sub-Committee was formed, and a series of urgent meetings with the Museum authorities, backed up by a voluminous correspondence with various dignitaries, was implemented. You all know the result : a compromise, whereby access to the Archives would be available exclusively to our Members on twenty-two Mondays of the year, for which privilege we agreed to pay the assistant curator in attendance. This arrangement is currently under trial, and will be reviewed in the Autumn.

Now, on a less contentious note, I am free to review the Society's activities during the year.

We are all indebted to our Meetings Secretary, Ron Dennis, for a wide-ranging and stimulating selection of speakers at our monthly meetings. From Sir Trevor Jones' amusing recollections of his post-war business enterprises in Liverpool's dockland, through Sam Davidson's erudite commentary on marine paintings by Liverpool artists which had found their way across the Atlantic to America, to Clive Guthrie's absorbing history of W.J. Yarwood & Sons, the Northwich shipbuilders. Sam and Clive, of course, are Members; the other speakers were all distinguished practitioners in their respective fields. Meanwhile, Ron Dennis assures me that he has another series of interesting speakers arranged for next season.

Throughout the year, our Members have been busily engaged on various research projects, many of them on behalf of, and in co-operation with the Museum authorities. In this respect I think especially of the work carried out by David Eccles, Norman West and Peter Kenyon, who are cataloguing photo negatives at the North Street dépôt; that of Dr. Rowson

on the Brocklebank papers; and also Captain Mike Jones' laudable efforts to sort out the records of the Liverpool Shipowners' Association.

Although we, as a Society, have not initiated a seminar this year, certain members have been closely involved with day-schools organised by other constitutions, as, for example, was Alan McClelland, who in February spoke on Irish Sea shipping at one of the day-school seminars set up by the N.M.G.M. and Liverpool University. It was Alan, incidentally, who late last year was invited to the studios of Radio Merseyside to broadcast his views on the L.N.R.S., its objects and attitudes. It was a task, I might add, which he undertook blithely, with masterly aplomb.

Of course many of our activities are co-ordinated by our Secretary, John Tebay, our link with the membership and the outside world. We are grateful to John for ordering our affairs so efficiently, and I owe him a personal vote of thanks for his support and guidance during this, my first year in office.

From the social aspect, the Christmas lunch at the Grange Hotel, organised by Harry Hignett, was an outstanding event enjoyed by many, and earlier, at the end of November, my wife and I were proud to represent the Society at the Red Ensign Dinner promoted by the Friends of the Maritime Museum at the Albert Dock and attended by many notables in various maritime occupations and enterprises. And whilst on the subject of sociable relations, I know how much we all enjoy that welcoming half-hour of conversation over coffee which precedes our monthly lectures. For this pleasant interlude I must thank, on your behalf, Gordon Wright and his band of helpers who organise the coffee and cope with the washing up! Moreover, it is Gordon and Mrs Wright whom we must thank for the Christmas comestibles which invariable appear at our eve of Christmas meetings.

Finally, I have one more solemn duty to perform (and here I anticipate somewhat Item 4 on the Agenda) and that is to thank Harry Hignett, whose retirement as Editor takes effect from today, for all the work and effort he has put in over the years to sustain and improve the Society's potential. A Member since 1974, Harry was elected Chairman in 1983, and a year or so later the Editor resigned, leaving Harry to take over. This was a time of great upheaval, for a fledgling Maritime Museum was making inordinate demands upon its new Keeper, Mike Stammers, who also happened to be the Society's secretary. Inevitably, something had to give, and Mr. Stammers resigned as Secretary. Thus, at this stage of his career, Harry Hignett found himself juggling the responsibilities of Chairman, Editor and Secretary, as well as carrying out a full time occupation piloting ships up and down the Manchester Ship Canal! The fact that we are still here today, and in even greater numbers, is ample proof of his success in piloting the Society through this painful crisis, and long may he continue to

*advise and guide us! It is with great pleasure, therefore, that in recognition of all he has done for the Society, I ask you, on behalf of the Council, to approve Harry's appointment as a Vice-President of the Society; and to mark the occasion I have great pleasure in presenting him with this inscribed tankard. Thank you, Harry.*

*And, in conclusion, as the summer season draws near, and you all prepare to embark on those exotic holidays you so hopefully booked during the winter months, may I wish each of you fair winds and fine weather, and a happy return, fully restored in health and spirits, to our renewed activities in September.*

*Graeme Kublin*

## **SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER MEETINGS**

**The Meetings will be held at the Maritime Museum at 12.30pm :**

*Thursday, 18th September*

A short Extraordinary General Meeting will be held at 12.30pm for the purpose of electing the Society's President, followed by

**BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC by F.O'Brian**

*Thursday, 16th October*

**AMERICAN BUREAU OF SHIPPING. HISTORY AND  
DEVELOPMENT.**

**by H.M.Hignett**

## **MEMBERS ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES . LIBRARY AND READING ROOM ON MONDAYS**

**This will resume in September and October as follows :**

**Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd September  
Mondays 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th October**

# THE GOOD OLD "RANGER"

by James E. Pearce

RANGER - Official Number : 102075, Signal Letters G K R L  
409 gross tons, 134 nett tons  
built by J.Elder & Co., Glasgow, 1880  
Engines : Workman, Clark & Co., Belfast  
Owned by The Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association  
Length : 157.5 feet, Breadth : 29.5 feet, Registered at Liverpool

*"On instructions from the owners, the salvage vessel Ranger has been despatched on 'no cure, no pay terms' .....".* With these, or similar, words, the departure of the **Ranger** from the Albert Dock at Liverpool to assist in the recovery of some unfortunate ship from a position of peril has been announced from time to time in the lists of marine casualties. The **Ranger** was a familiar sight on the Mersey and at ports around the British coast, but it is not generally known that the **Ranger** began her career as a composite gunboat.

The **Ranger** was a product of the Glasgow shipyard of J.Elder & Company which became the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company. She was commissioned in March 1881 on the East Indies Station, where she remained for about 11 years, after which she was placed on the sale list. She was purchased by the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association who found the vessel, with her strongly built wooden hull (the thickness at the turn of the bilge was about 11 inches), well suited to salvage work. The **Ranger** was not immediately fully modified for her new rôle and carried out a number of salvage jobs before she was sent to Belfast in 1901 to be reconditioned by Workman, Clark & Co.Ltd., who replaced her compound engine with a triple expansion engine.

The Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Associations were established (separately) in 1857. An early minute of the Liverpool Association stated : *"This Committee, composed of shipowners, merchants and underwriters, was formed in conjunction with a similar body in London, and one in the course of formation in Glasgow, to promote despatch and economy in the salving of ships and their cargoes, and to reduce to a minimum the loss in all cases of accident or damage, whether in this country or abroad."* It appeared there had been dissatisfaction among various parties interested in ships and cargoes which had suffered mishap, especially abroad, because of delays and losses resulting from the difficulty of co-ordinating conflicting interests, and the establishment of these Associations to represent all interests impartially, and to act quickly and decisively, was considered a practical solution.

In his book "Ship Ashore", first published in 1932, Desmond Young, the son of Commodore Sir Frederick Young, has this to say about the sturdy

old salvage vessel **Ranger** : "If you were on board her and gazed up for any length of time at her stumpy masts, with derricks almost as massive as themselves, describing a leisurely arc across the sky, you might find her roll a little trying, for she rolls slowly, steadily, comfortably enough - but unceasingly.

The cabin, abaft the companion way, is not very large, and the table, with three swivel chairs bolted to the deck on either side of it, takes up most of the floor space. Nor is there a great deal of headroom. But with its heavy mahogany sideboard, on which the bottles and glasses in their racks dance an unending jig at sea, its Turkey-red tablecloth and 'runners', its row of ferns in pots on a box-beam underneath the skylight, its brass clock with loud domestic tick and its blackleaded stove burning away steadily no matter what the weather on deck or how alarming the angle of the cabin floor, the **Ranger's** cabin has an air of solid mid-Victorian comfort and a certain snugness about it which make it a pleasant place to drop down into on a winter's night, when leaden seas are hurrying away astern and scurries of sleet are driving across wet decks. Indeed, if you were used to the roll of the ship you might almost forget that you were at sea, but for the rod of the steam steering-gear which runs through the cabin on the port side and turns and grumbles and chatters to itself whenever the helm is put over.

Leading off the cabin and separated from it by sliding doors painted white were six single-berth staterooms, three on each side. There was a deadlight and a porthole in each stateroom, but if a gleam of sunlight came through the porthole when the **Ranger** was at sea, it vanished at once, for the porthole was submerged at every roll. At the after end of the cabin was the bathroom, an awe-inspiring place for the landsman, for to draw a hot bath one had to put a steam pipe into the cold water and turn on high pressure steam, which came out with a terrifying roar. It was a mistake to fill the bath too full, for not only was the **Ranger** capable of rolling most of the contents on to the deck, but the bath was below the waterline and every drop of water had, therefore, to be pumped out laboriously by hand."

One of the **Ranger's** biggest salvage jobs before the First World War was that of the cruiser **Gladiator**, which sank off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight in 1908 after colliding with the liner **St.Paul**. The **Gladiator** was almost cut in half and she turned over so quickly when she touched bottom that one of the officers who was on the bridge when she capsized said that he actually saw the water pouring down the funnels before he could make an effort to get clear. The **Gladiator** turned over on her damaged side and was lying broadside on to the beach, with her decks facing it, in the full strength of a six-knot tide. The floating operations were divided into three phases - moving the vessel inshore, uprighting her, and pumping her out and floating her. She was subsequently safely docked at Portsmouth.

Another outstanding salvage case at which the **Ranger** was in attendance was that of the White Star liner **Suevic**, which went aground on

rocks near the Lizard. The after end of the liner was removed by cutting away the bow, which was fixed on the rocks, and towing away the separated portion to Southampton where a new bow section, built at Belfast and towed round, was eventually fitted to the remainder of the hull. Another case at which the **Ranger** was present was that of the liner **Minnehaha**. This also occurred before the First World War, and the scene of operations was off the Scillies, where the liner had grounded on the Scilly Rock, south-west of Hell Bay. Worth, with her cargo, £800,000, the **Minnehaha** was successfully refloated and beached in Crow Sound. She was the largest vessel ever refloated up to that time, the only vessel known to have been saved from the Scilly Rock, and also the first to be salvaged by the use of compressed air.

Moving on to the period of the First World War, perhaps one of the **Ranger's** most outstanding jobs was the salvage of the new submarine K.13, of 2,760 tons displacement, which sank while diving during her acceptance trials in the Gareloch. The **Ranger** was also present when the new submarine **Thetis** sank in Liverpool Bay during her trials in October 1939.

There were many demands on the **Ranger** during the Second World War when the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association rendered salvage assistance to more than 700 merchant ships, and of these over 360 involved major complex salvage operations. The outbreak of war produced a spate of shipping casualties and there was an average of two merchant ship salvage cases every five days during the war, contrasting with a peacetime volume of about two casualties a year to large ocean going merchant ships. An example of the conditions which had to be provided for occurred during one night in January 1942 when a convoy of five merchant ships, including **Lampart & Holt's Browning** and an escorting warship drove ashore on rocks north of Strangford Lough in a whole south-easterly gale and blizzard; and 16 other ocean going merchant ships were driven ashore on the West Coast of Scotland. In order to deal with this phenomenal spate of casualties, the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association had to withdraw all its salvage resources from the Bristol Channel, Milford Haven and Liverpool, leaving that area completely without cover for the time being. All the vessels were salvaged except for five which stranded on the Atlantic side of the Outer Hebrides, and these were demolished by the gale before salvage assistance could be brought into effect.

Referring at random to some of the cases attended by the **Ranger**, there was the stranding, during fog, in the early morning of 28th February 1940 on Maughold Head, Isle of Man, of the Belfast cross-channel passenger vessel **Ulster Queen** (2,791 gross tons). The vessel was driven broadside to high cliffs in a whole north-easterly gale and finished up beyond the reach of normal spring tides for refloating. She was 346ft long, and her fore section, over a length of 180ft from the bow, was entirely overhanging a reef upon which she was impaled for a length of 120ft abaft the overhanging fore part; and she was again unsupported for the remaining 46ft of her after part. The **Ulster Queen**



was completely high and dry at low water, and it was possible to walk erect under her fore part. Immediate action was taken to support the overhanging fore part by the erection of concrete blocks and shores, whilst many hundreds of tons of rock were shattered by explosives along her starboard side, so as to lower the starboard bilge. Much rock was also blown up and removed to seaward of the **Ulster Queen** so as to clear a track through which the vessel could be hove seawards by heavy salvage anchors and wires shackled to purchases. The **Ulster Queen** was refloated on the maximum spring tide on 25th March 1940 and towed to Belfast.

Then there was the case of the Holland-America liner **Volendam** (15,443 gross tons) which was torpedoed whilst on a voyage to New York with 400 evacuee children on board. When the Association's vessels (including the **Ranger**) contacted the liner, she was drawing 54ft forward and 14ft 6in aft, and in that trim her foredeck was submerged. Her hull in way of Nos 1 and 2 holds was badly shattered. The **Volendam** was beached in one of the Association's sheltered beaching places in the Firth of Clyde.

Another of the **Ranger's** cases was that of H.M. cruiser **Sussex**, which was bombed and set on fire in Yorkhill Basin, Glasgow, on 18th September 1940. The fire was extinguished by the warship's own crew, and on the arrival of the **Ranger** it was found that the bomb or mine had exploded in the engine room, and the vessel had taken a list of 30 degrees to starboard, submerging a large number of portholes which were open, as the glass had been broken. The **Sussex** would probably have capsized but for the fact that she had settled on the dock bottom. The **Ranger's** divers had problems because the stern of the vessel continued to settle into the mud bottom of the dock, making access to the various fractures almost impossible. Finally the **Sussex** was brought to a draft which was suitable for her drydocking.

A further task soon followed for the **Ranger** - in October 1940 - when news was received from the naval authorities that H.M. merchant cruiser **Cheshire** (10,552 gross tons) had been torpedoed and was being towed to the Western Approaches by rescue tugs. It was arranged that she should be taken towards Belfast Lough, and the **Ranger**, with a large assemblage of pumping and air compressing equipment, was despatched to meet her. The **Cheshire** was beached to the westward of Carrickfergus, where heavy ground moorings were laid by the **Ranger** to hold her position, and eventually she was delivered into Gladstone Graving Dock, Liverpool, on 1st December 1940.

A wartime tanker casualty to which the **Ranger** was called was the **Laristan** (6,401 gross tons) which, with a cargo of 8,000 tons of fuel oil, stranded on the north-west corner of Tiree where she was fully exposed to the Atlantic. She had been driven by a whole westerly gale broadside over rocks, and eventually settled in a gully in which she was so closely wedged on both sides that there were no means of access by divers to the side and bottom damage. All compartments were tidal and under normal conditions the

**Laristan** would have been treated as a constructive total loss, but having regard to the extreme shortage of tankers, the Admiralty and the Ministry of War Transport decided that she should be salvaged if possible. The vessel was floated and towed into Gott Bay, but as she became fully waterborne she slightly changed her form and opened fresh sources of leakage into the engine room, in consequence of which she became unstable. The **Ranger**, which was working on another case at Coll, was called to the scene, and her divers and other salvage personnel relieved those who had been working 72 hours without a break on the **Laristan**, and stability was restored.

The **Laristan** had stranded so close inshore, surrounded by pinnacle rocks, that a salvage vessel could not make a close approach and lie alongside, and in these circumstances operations had to be almost entirely conducted by means of an aerial ropeway rigged from the **Laristan's** forecastle to the land. This ropeway was supported at intervals along its length on the top of pinnacle rocks which submerged at high water. Heavy air compressors and other plant were transferred aboard the wreck at the commencement of the operation at the top of high water by a shallow draft auxiliary salvage vessel when smooth sea conditions permitted this limited occasional approach, and upon refloating, the **Laristan** had to be hove seawards by means of heavy ground moorings and purchases through a previously carefully sounded and plotted channel between outlying rocks. Having regard to the exposed position of the casualty, and the badly damaged condition of the vessel, the case was one of special merit from a professional salvage standpoint.

On completion of each job, the "*good old Ranger*", as her riggers and divers and stewards and firemen spoke of her, returned to her berth in the Albert Dock, Liverpool, to await her next call to duty.

#### *Editor's Note*

A spectacular photograph of one of the **Ranger's** salvage jobs appears on page 147 of the current *Ships in Focus Record*, volume 1, number 3. This shows the **Armagh** (12,269 gross tons) aground on the Taylor's Bank revetment in the Crosby Channel. She grounded on 15th December 1923 and shortly afterwards broke her back. The first task for the **Ranger** was to put a portable boiler on board so that cargo could be worked. By 22nd July 1924 the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association concluded that work on the **Armagh** was no longer worthwhile as the remaining cargo in the forward holds was now being buried in silt, and it was left to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board to cut down the wreck.

Graeme Cubbin reminds me that in February 1941, the **Ranger** was involved in vain attempts to salvage the *Whisky Galore!* ship, the **Politician**, aground on Eriskay, and the partial salvage of her cargo.

js

# THE HALIFAX, N.S. DISASTER OF 6TH DECEMBER, 1917

*by John P. Light*

It was one of the most unpretentious units of the French Line fleet which featured in what was probably the greatest maritime disaster of the First World War. She was the 3,121 ton cargo steamer **Mont Blanc**, a vessel built in 1899 at Middlesbrough by Sir Raylton Dixon & Company for E.Anquetil, of Rouen; and after a short period of ownership under G. Petit, also of Rouen, acquired by the C.G.T. in 1916. Inward-bound from New York with 5,000 tons of high explosives on board, the **Mont Blanc** was passing through the narrows leading from the outer harbour at Halifax into the Bedford Basin, the convoy assembly point, when she collided with the Norwegian tanker **Imo**, which at that time was operating under the auspices of the Belgian Relief Commission.

The collision, the after effects of which developed into such a stupendous catastrophe, occurred at 8.45am on 6th December 1917, the weather being perfectly clear at the time. The ships had plenty of room to pass, but due to a misunderstanding they headed for each other. When the **Mont Blanc** first sighted the **Imo**, the former was proceeding in the direction of the Bedford Basin at half speed; the **Imo** being about two miles distant and heading towards the Dartmouth shore, which lies on the north side of the harbour. At this point the harbour is less than half a mile in width, and on each side the land inclines sharply upwards from the waterfront, forming what may be described as a great natural trough.

As the two ships approached each other and it became obvious that a collision was inevitable, the **Imo's** engines were reversed, which, as the ship was light, had the effect of bringing her head round slightly to port and towards the **Mont Blanc's** starboard bow. The forward hold of the **Mont Blanc** was loaded with picric acid, and behind a steel bulkhead lay the two holds containing T.N.T. As the picric acid would not explode through mere impact, whereas the T.N.T. probably would, the **Mont Blanc's** master, Captain le Medec, held his course so that his ship would be struck in the hold in which the picric acid was stowed.

A moment later the collision occurred, the **Imo** cutting into the French vessel to a depth of about one third of the way through the ship, which was what Captain le Medec had aimed to bring about. Unfortunately, however, on the forward deck were stored 20 barrels of benzol, which immediately flowed down into the picric acid and ignited it. As clouds of heavy black smoke rolled up from the gaping rent in the **Mont Blanc's** deck, the **Imo** backed away desperately in the direction of the Dartmouth shore.

The French crew immediately set to work fighting the fire until it was apparent that they could not check the conflagration; they then made efforts to

sink the ship. People on the waterfront and aboard other vessels in the harbour saw them as they laboured; being driven back step by step by the flames until, with hope abandoned, they made a wild rush for the boats and pulled frantically for the shore. The British cruiser **Highflyer** and fire fighting squads from the **Niobe** were rushing to the assistance of the **Mont Blanc** when she blew up.

The explosion, which occurred 17 minutes after the collision at 9.02am, was felt throughout Nova Scotia, even reaching Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, 120 miles away to the north, and almost completely destroyed the Nova Scotian capital. Windows were shattered for miles around, and the flying dagger-like glass fragments caused many casualties. Richmond, the northern and oldest part of Halifax, was completely obliterated and, to add to the colossal and indescribable carnage of the blast, fire swept the city.

In the harbour, five British ships were seriously damaged with two-thirds of their crews being killed outright, and a tug was lifted bodily out of the water and set on a wharf. A tidal wave was created which caused the water's surface to drop by 12 feet at one point. The **Imo**, with nearly all her crew missing and her superstructure wrecked, was driven fast ashore near Dartmouth. The **Mont Blanc's** crew, who had run into the woods for shelter when they reached the shore were knocked flat by the blast, but their gunner was the only one fatally injured. Gales, a blizzard, torrential rains and snowstorms succeeded each other to add to the torments of the stricken city and hamper the rescue parties which rushed in from other Nova Scotian towns and neighbouring provinces, as well as from Boston and New York. Throughout the British Empire and the United States relief committees were formed, and in a short time the sum of \$30 million was available for relief and reconstruction.

Five days after the explosion Halifax resumed its important wartime function with the sailing - only four days late - of an eastbound convoy of about 40 ships. The escorting cruiser, HMS **Highflyer** (which, it will be recalled, had 'liquidated' the German auxiliary cruiser **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** while she was coaling in Rio de Oro Bay [22°N, 17°W on the coast of Mauritania] on 27th August 1914), had been damaged and lost her commander, Comdr. Triggs, and had had 20 other officers and men killed or wounded when she was attempting to aid the **Mont Blanc**. Comdr. Triggs was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal.

The blame for the disaster was laid by each master upon the other, and the C.G.T. filed a suit in the Admiralty Court against the **Imo's** owners. When the case was heard, however, it was adjudged that the fault had been entirely with the French ship, and it was against the **Mont Blanc's** owners that damages were assessed. The Government Commission which investigated the circumstances of the collision decided that the blame belonged to Mr. McKay, the **Mont Blanc's** pilot, and to her master, Captain le Medec, who were held

to have disregarded the Rule of the Road. Both men were arrested and charged with manslaughter, but the pilot was later discharged on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to establish criminal culpability in his case. The Commission further recommended the French authorities to cancel Captain le Medec's certificate and to deal with him according to French law.

No accurate return of the loss of life and material damage sustained could be given, but after a few days and due allowance had been made for errors, the following figures were issued and accepted as official : killed 1,500; missing 2,000; injured 8,000; dwellings destroyed 3,000. The loss of property was computed at \$30 million. The dockyard had been very severely damaged and six piers completely destroyed, but two new piers in the southern part of the city were almost untouched.

The *Imo* was refloated, repaired and in due course put back into service. She was originally the White Star Line's first *Runic*, a vessel of 5,043 tons, and built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast in 1889. In 1895 she was sold to the West India and Pacific Steamship Company and renamed *Tampican*. She became a Leyland liner when the West India Company was taken over by Leylands in 1899. In March 1912 she was purchased by H.E.Moss & Company, who in May 1913 sold her to the South Pacific Whaling Company, of Christiana. Without altering her external appearance, her new owners fitted her as a tanker for the carriage of whale oil, and renamed her *Imo*.

*Note :*

History almost repeated itself at Halifax in April 1942. The Turnbull, Scott steamer *Trongate* caught fire after an explosion, and had to be sunk by gunfire to prevent a further disastrous explosion. At the time the information was regarded as a war secret, and after the necessity for secrecy was over there were so many more important items of news to be considered that the incident passed almost un-noticed. The *Trongate* was abandoned as a total loss, but was eventually taken over by British salvage interests who thought that she might be a profitable proposition. Apparently the prospects were not as rosy as had been at first supposed, for the Canadian Department of Transport issued an order in May 1951 to the effect that the remains were to be moved forthwith "*to the satisfaction of the National Harbours Board*".

The *Trongate* was built by the Northumberland Shipbuilding Co.Ltd. at Newcastle as the *Snowdon* in 1924. Her gross tonnage was 3,979. As the *Trongate* she was owned by the Redgate Steamship Co.Ltd. (Turnbull, Scott & Company - Managers).

## PAINTINGS FOR EXPORT

*A Talk by Mr A.S.Davidson*

Society Member Mr A.S.Davidson gave his talk to a well attended meeting held at the Maritime Museum on 20th February 1997. Mr Davidson is a respected author and acknowledged expert on Liverpool marine artists. His talk, illustrated by excellent colour slides, was based on his 1995 lecture tour of the United States dealing with paintings by Liverpool artists of 19th century American vessels.

These paintings generally had a Mersey background and many had been commissioned by the ship's master to take back home to the States. All seemed to be of a consistently high quality. Mr Davidson's background knowledge of the paintings was supplemented with his own experience as an offshore sailor which brought an extra dimension and understanding to the talk. He drew particular attention to the slide of one painting of the *Huntress* which in the background showed the contemporary entrance to the Old Dock, Liverpool. Perhaps the most atmospheric painting was that of the *Castillian*, scudding along under some very black and threatening storm clouds.

The talk was obviously enjoyed by all present.

*P.J.H.T.*

Mr Davidson's latest book - "*Across the Western Ocean (American Ships by Liverpool Artists)*" has just been published.

## WRITING FOR "THE BULLETIN"

All Members of the Society are invited to submit manuscripts for possible inclusion in "The Bulletin". These articles could perhaps be personal reminiscences or details of members' research. Ideally, manuscripts should be typed, and a good length is between two and three sheets of close-typed A.4.

In the interests of accuracy a proof will be sent to the author for checking, *before* the article appears in "The Bulletin".

*J.S.*

## NOTES AND QUERIES

According to the 1997 Liverpool Tide Tables, there will be three occasions during 1997 when 10.4 metre (34.1 ft) tides occur at Liverpool. These are 12.04 GMT on 10th March, 00.38 BST on 18th September and at 01.22 BST on 19th September.

However, the Tide Table also states that the Highest Astronomical Tide possible at Liverpool is 10.3 metres. Can any Member explain this apparent anomaly?

# FORTUNES OF A "FLAT"

*from an original article by John Sutton*

The **Protection** was built at Connah's Quay in 1887 and registered at Liverpool. Her dimensions were 73.1 ft x 18.1 ft x 7.6 ft. When she was first built, I was told by someone who sailed in her as a boy, she carried one mast and a bowsprit, and had a tremendous mainsail, foresail and staysail. She was noted for her heavy rig and the weight of the cargoes she carried. She is supposed to have brought as much as 150 tons of stone from the Welsh quarries into Liverpool, the trade for which she was built. It was a common sight to see the **Protection** coming in from sea loaded, her decks invariably awash; sometimes in fact the bulwark boards had to be hammered off to allow the heavy seas she shipped to run off aft. That was in the days before she carried Board of Trade marks.

The **Protection** must have carried thousands of tons of stone in her day from Penmaenmawr. Often she would run alongside the loading jetty, dry out on the ebb tide and be loaded whilst she was dry. Sometimes the weight of cargo must have been miscalculated, for it was a common experience for the decks to be awash before she lifted, and frequently the cargo was man-handled and dumped overboard in a frantic hurry to get her to lift! That was a frequent occurrence in the days before these wooden flats were marked with loadlines. Occasionally when she had been on the beach waiting to load in bad weather, the heavy seas made her pound the bottom with her sternpost enough to make one think that she was going to break up.

In later years the **Protection** was fitted with a new mainmast and also a mizzen and sailed as a ketch, and was remembered as one of the old jigger flats; trading between the quarries, Fleetwood and Widnes and Runcorn carrying limestone, soda ash and other chemicals. In 1929 she was fitted with a two-cylinder hot-bulb *Kromhout* oil engine of 44 b.h.p. which gave her, under power alone in favourable conditions, a speed of as much as eight knots.

After a long career the **Protection** was laid up at Sankey Bridges, to which place she used to bring slates. She used to come up the Mersey under Runcorn bridge and lock in at Wooden Lock, Widnes. There half of her cargo was discharged into a lighter, and then she would proceed on to Sankey Bridges, towing the lighter with her as there was not enough water up the canal for her to go up at loaded draught. Sankey was as far as she could go inland as there was nowhere higher up where she could swing to make the return journey.

At this point in her career the **Protection** was owned by Claire and Ridgeway of Warrington, who used her for carrying the slates from the Welsh quarries for their business as builders' merchants. She was laid up at Sankey

Bridges in 1936 as she was due for a Board of Trade survey. Owing to the high cost of putting a wooden-built ship of her age through a survey, she lay idle until November 1937 when Captain S.Kirby, of Hale Shoal, bought her, and he ran her in the river trade, for which a Board of Trade certificate was not needed, until March, 1948.

Her job during the eighteen months prior to the Second World War was carrying grain, loaded in Liverpool or Birkenhead and taken to a mill at Frodsham. The route taken was up the Mersey to Weston Point; a run which is noted for being "tricky" at any time, owing to the channel through the banks shifting about so often. It was a common sight in the old days to see the sailing flats high and dry on the ebb tide. Many a flat has been broken up and washed into the bank with the strong run of tide which is encountered in the upper reaches of the Mersey.

After the **Protection** had locked in at Weston Point (this was always done at high water, with the journey having been timed to reach there just a little before), we would proceed up the narrow river to Frodsham. It was very shallow there, though wide in places, with a very narrow channel, sometimes running close to the bank on one side, then running over close to the other side, twisting and turning all the way to Frodsham - a risky business on a dark night. Often the **Protection** ran aground and had to wait for a big tide in the Mersey to overflow into Frodsham river before she could float clear.

Freights were very low in those days and the **Protection** being rather deep draughted, and the river being so shallow, the amount of cargo she was able to carry hardly paid her way. In 1939 and during the war she did a good job carrying chemicals from the I.C.I. works at Northwich and discharging them into large vessels at Liverpool, Birkenhead and Manchester. She also carried a lot of general cargo, including heavy cargoes of copper, lead and different kinds of ores, a trade to which she was suited owing to her having been strongly built.

There are a few well-remembered incidents from the war years. During the severe weather of January 1940, the old flat was left lying one weekend in King's Dock, Liverpool, loaded with a cargo of gunny bales for Northwich. When the crew returned on the Monday morning she was level to the bulwarks with snow. It took all day to shift enough snow so that she could be worked and she did not sail that day!

During the 1940 Christmas *blitz*, the **Protection** was lying in Canada Dock when a number of incendiaries landed on board and set her alight. All hands had a hectic time extinguishing the flames. Some of the incendiaries, in fact, went through the hatches into the cargo. She was loaded with bicarbonate of soda in bags at the time, and quite a number of these were destroyed and the soda ran out and smothered the fire below. This saved the ship from total destruction.

It was during the early part of 1940 that it was decided to take all the



rig off the **Protection**, as it was often in the way when she was loading and discharging. Most of the time she was under motor power alone and a lot of weight was being carried about to no purpose. Moreover, the motor always did its work well, invariably being driven at full speed and never giving any trouble. She was taken up to the Old Quay dockyard at Runcorn and the masts, booms and gaffs, in fact all the gear, stripped off her. What a long time it took getting used to seeing her without the rig! Still, she proved much handier for the job she was doing, but the art of sailing her about had gone. At the time, the **Protection** was the only Mersey flat left with her rig, and also she was the only one left run by an owner-skipper.

Early in 1948, William Adams & Company, of Newport, became very interested in the **Protection** for a job they had working in the River Severn, and in March they bought her. Now the question was : Would she be granted a Board of Trade Certificate to allow her to make the trip down to Newport? Well, she had had a fortune spent on her over the years, and she really was in good condition in spite of her age (now 61) and all that she had been through. She was put into Wellington Graving Dock for a survey and two months were spent fitting her out for the trip. No masts or sails were fitted to help her on the run down; she was going to rely on the motor alone, the same motor which had been fitted new in 1929. The **Protection** was given a new port of registry; the old taffrail which she had carried around all the years with 'Liverpool' cut into it was taken off, and a new rail aft with 'Newport' cut in was put in its place.

I was persuaded to go along as the engineer, and three more hands were signed on for the trip to Newport, and if I had known as much then as I do now, I would never had stepped aboard her! The old flat was given a light loadline certificate just for the run down, with the stipulation that she must only sail during daylight hours. Well, with 50 tons of granite chippings as ballast, we locked out of Canada Dock on the noon-day tide of 25th May, 1948. That night, about 10.00pm we were anchored in Red Wharfe Bay, and after a meal turned in. We were all soon turned out again, for just after midnight it came on to blow very hard from the north east. The **Protection** was on a lee shore and the anchor was dragging. There was only one thing to do, get the engine started, heave up and put out to sea. Why we hadn't gone through the Menai Straits, I don't know. Anyway, here we were, and we had to make the best of it. There was one thing the **Protection** was good at, and that was rolling. She could roll the rails under with no effort. Another thing she would never do, and that was drive on to a heavy sea. She would ride the first one all right, but the next one "*would catch her with her head down*" and would come aboard and flood her fore and aft. The only way was to meet the sea with the port bow; no sea would come aboard worth talking about, but she would certainly jump around. It was quite impossible to go from aft to forward without the assistance of the lifeline which had been fitted round her, above

the bulwarks. She lay off Point Lynas the rest of the night, and all the next day until evening, the engine "all out", and still the flat made no headway. The power just wasn't there; she was having about as much as she would take and getting nowhere. Eventually the wind eased a bit and we began to make headway. We reached the Skerries and stood in for Holyhead. We came in before a following sea, riding each wave like a duck, a wonderful relief after the punishment she had taken. Holyhead breakwater couldn't be seen for spray when we ran in, and we were all thankful to get into calm water and have a meal and a rest before starting on the next leg!

The following morning, Thursday 27th May, it dawned fine and clear and we had a short run to Bardsey Island and let go the anchor in a little bay to the south'ard, in case the wind came hard from the north again. Two fishermen came off in a small boat and we bought half-a-dozen live lobsters and half-a-dozen large crabs; also we were able to get some fresh bread, eggs and milk, which were very welcome. We spent the evening boiling the crabs, and thoroughly enjoyed our meal. The next day we had a good run to Milford Haven, and then up the Bristol Channel to Newport, arriving there at 10.00am on Sunday 30th May, much to the relief of everyone.

The **Protection** returned to the stone trade, the purpose for which she had been built in 1887. She would sail up the River Wye on the flood and load block stone at a small jetty. Up to 100 tons could be loaded in half-an-hour. After loading the old flat sailed back down the Wye on the ebb and let go the anchor at the river mouth. On the next tide she proceeded up the Severn and her cargo was discharged as and where necessary to repair and fortify the sea wall. When the **Protection** had dried out as many as twenty men came on board and man-handled the block stone out of the hold on to the deck and then over the side, placing it in position to form a breakwater to strengthen the sea wall.

The **Protection** continued in this trade until around midnight on 4th October 1948. She left her berth after discharging the stone well up the River Severn at a place called Longney Crib. Thick fog descended, and the Severn Bore put her high and dry on top of a breakwater made of stout wooden piles, and there she stuck. As luck would have it, she stranded on the top of high water on the biggest tide of the year. There were ten inches less water on the next tide and with blocks and tackles rigged to haul her off, and the engine going full astern, she would not even budge. And there the old flat remained, with her bow stuck high in the air, listing over about 15 degrees across those huge wooden piles. It was a sorry and freak end for the old **Protection**.

*Note :*

The **Protection** was successfully refloated on the next spring tide, a month after she stranded. She appeared to have suffered no damage, but

her troubles were not over. As she came astern off her uncomfortable berth, the bight of a line fouled her screw, and so she had to be beached again on the ebb. When she refloated on the flood there was insufficient air in her bottles to start the engine, and so another tide was missed. A portable compressor was rushed to the site and an air line taken aboard, but this failed to produce sufficient pressure. Eventually the **Protection** was found to have serious engine trouble and was moved a mile downstream to Baldwin's Brook, near Framilode, where she was lying in January, 1949.

This is the last news I have of the **Protection** - can any reader assist with details of her eventual fate?

*This Article originally appeared in Sea Breezes, December 1948, and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor, Captain Andrew Douglas.*

## FIVE NAMES IN FIVE YEARS

The Norddeutscher Lloyd liner **Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm** was built at Geestemünde in 1907 by Joh.C.Tecklenborg. A two-funnelled, twin-screw steamer of 17,282 gross tons, she had a speed of 18 knots and until 1914 was mainly engaged on the Bremen - North Atlantic service.

At the end of the war the vessel was ceded to Great Britain by the Reparations Commission, and sold by the Shipping Controller to the Canadian Pacific, then trading under the title of Canadian Pacific Ocean Services Ltd. The **Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm** made several trips across the Atlantic for her new owners and also for the Cunard Line before being temporarily withdrawn to undergo a costly refit at Liverpool.

Pending availability of new tonnage for Canadian Pacific's Vancouver - Hong Kong service, her owners intended to use her on that run, and for the purpose her name was changed in July 1921 to **Empress of China**, but before she moved from her berth her name was altered to **Empress of India**. She made two trips under this name for the Cunard Line to New York, deputizing for the old **Mauretania**.

The Canadian Pacific changed their plans about her Pacific service, because the **Empress of India** made a voyage from Glasgow to Istanbul during the Turco-Grecian trouble, and shortly after her return to Glasgow in October 1922 she was renamed **Montlaurier** prior to resuming Atlantic service.

About a year later her owners deemed a further change necessary, so she became the **Monteith**. One could barely have become accustomed to the latter name when it was obliterated from her bows and stern and replaced with the name **Montnairn**.

All these changes were effected within five years, and still more remarkable, all under the same houseflag! Surely this must be a record?

# THE "ROYAL DAFFODIL" AT DUNKIRK

by Captain G. Johnson

*Many ships of the General Steam Navigation Company took part in the Dunkirk evacuation. Some were lost but all acquitted themselves nobly and with great honour. The following account, written by the Master of the Royal Daffodil, is typical of the entire fleet :*

At 6.30am on 27th May 1940, we left Dover under escort bound for Dunkirk. On approaching the French coast, our escort ordered us to return to the Downs owing to enemy shelling and air activity on the route. On arrival at the Downs we were ordered back to Dunkirk on what was the 'Y' route which took you over past the West Hinder and Middelkerke buoys. Five vessels left together. A very heavy air raid was in progress when we arrived off Dunkirk and we were attacked outside the harbour. I decided to enter, having chosen the Inner West Pier.

Whilst mooring, a bomb dropped between the bow and the quay, demolishing part of the quay; other bombs dropped in close proximity to the vessel. After lying alongside for about ten minutes the air cleared, ambulances drove down the quay and the crew assisted in getting on board, in addition to the walking wounded, some 40 stretcher cases. All troops that were available were embarked before we were ordered out, an approximate total for 27th May being 950. These troops were taken to Dover and after being disembarked, the vessel was anchored at 1.00am on the 28th May.

At 5.30pm on the 28th we left Dover for Dunkirk *via* the 'Y' route, but on arrival found that it proved impossible to approach the berth used on our previous voyage. I swung the vessel and moored to the eastern breakwater. Raids were in progress, but no direct attack was delivered on the harbour; visibility was bad owing to the dense smoke from the shore tanks and one ship which was on fire. There was a breach in this breakwater and on instructions the chief officer, Mr A.S. Paterson, left the ship's gangways to help fill in this gap. We left Dunkirk each voyage on the instructions of the R.N. Commander in charge. The number we evacuated on this trip we estimated to be in the region of 1,800 men. We returned to Margate.

At 8.30am on May 29th we left Margate for Dunkirk *via* the 'Y' route; no untoward incident occurred on our outward passage. On our return journey, having embarked 1,700 troops, heavy shelling was experienced from the shore battery at Nieuwpoort, shells falling over and short of us as the range was being found. At this period a destroyer, after overtaking us, laid an efficient smoke screen which undoubtedly saved the ship. We returned to Dover, arriving there the same evening.

At 7.45pm on May 30th we left Dover with orders to proceed to De Panne beach, arriving there during very poor visibility caused by smoke and mist on the coast. We cruised around for three hours, during which time shore batteries were very active. After grounding and being unable to attract attention we were obliged to return to Margate, arriving at 5.10am on the 31st and anchoring in the roadstead.

At 4.00pm on 31st May we left Margate and returned to Dover with 2,500 French troops. This voyage was without undue incident.

At 3.00pm on 1st June we left Dover by a new route, which was between minefields, taking us over towards the Ruytingen bank, west of Dunkirk. On nearing the French coast we were met by the **Royal Sovereign** and a French destroyer, who ordered us to return owing to heavy fire from shore batteries at Gravelines. We returned to Margate.

At 10.00pm the same evening, we left Margate *via* the aforementioned route. I experienced difficulty approaching Dunkirk owing to uncharted wrecks and smoke, eventually berthing well inside the western breakwater, having found the outer end breached in two places. We embarked 1,900 British and French troops, returning to Margate early next morning.

On the evening of 2nd June it was arranged that the troopships and destroyers should proceed to Dunkirk at 20-minute intervals. The **Royal Daffodil** was the first to leave at 5.30pm, so as to arrive at Dunkirk at 9.00am. At 7.50pm six enemy bombers attacked us with bombs and machine-gun fire, scoring one hit with a delayed action bomb which holed the ship's side at the waterline, exploding clear of the stern. The machine-gun attack caused one fatality and two casualties. An efficient barrage was put up by the ship's machine guns, otherwise without doubt the ship would have been more successfully bombed.

Several bombs dropped close to us, the concussion of one causing switches to jump out at the main switchboard which made the engines temporarily stop. We were then 17½ miles SE x E from the North Goodwin light-vessel. Before the commencement of this trip a R.N. Commander with ratings boarded to assist with the embarkation. The Commander said we had been holed. The chief officer came to the bridge and informed me that the damage was below the waterline on the starboard side. I then gave orders to have all moveable gear shifted to port. I left the bridge and went to the saloon deck where I met the chief engineer, who informed me that water was making in the engine room. I told him what measures were being taken to try to stop it, and he said that he could also help by transferring the fuel oil from the starboard tank to the port tank. Beds were jammed into the hole and tommed down. Hoses in the port lifeboats, already swung out, also helped to give the ship a further list. The vessel was stopped for about ten minutes, during which time she was drifting to the northward with the N.E. spring tide.

The chief engineer informed me that he could now move the engines,

so we proceeded at about half speed. After going at this speed for some time, the chief engineer stated that he must reduce speed further as water had entered the fuel system. I had, during this time, refused the assistance of two tugs as I saw that the hospital ship **Paris** had been bombed and was sinking, and I told them to go to her assistance, knowing that we could take to the boats in ample time if required. I found on approaching the North Goodwin light-vessel that we were driving fast to the northward, which area was mined. I asked the chief engineer if he could increase the speed, and he said that now they had got the water from the sump, he could do so.

We arrived off Ramsgate at 10.30pm where a tug was sent to take off casualties and R.N. ratings. The following day (3rd June, 1940) the vessel was berthed for temporary patching. As regards the number of troops carried, difficulty was experienced in obtaining an exact check owing to so many men boarding over rails and ladders. Our estimated total was 8,850, although a shore official told me that the number was greater.

*Note:*

Readers may be confused by the name **Royal Daffodil** borne by the General Steam Navigation Company motorship, and the Wallasey ferry steamer **Royal Daffodil II**. Before the 1914-18 War a ferry steamer called **Daffodil** plied on the Mersey between Liverpool and Wallasey. Other vessels belonging to the County Borough of Wallasey also bore flower names such as **Rose**, **Lily**, **Pansy**, **Snowdrop** and **Iris**. This last-named took part in the attack on Zeebrugge with the **Daffodil**, and the memorable part played by them on St. George's Day, 23rd April, 1918, is now a matter of history and was recognised by the addition of the prefix "Royal".

After the war the **Royal Daffodil** was acquired by the New Medway Steam Packet Company for pleasure cruises in the Thames estuary, later being employed for dock trips under the management of the General Steam Navigation Company. She was broken up in 1938, but permission was given to perpetuate her name in a twin-screw motor vessel built by William Denny & Bros., Dumbarton, for the summer pleasure services of the General Steam Navigation Company between London, Tilbury, Southend, Margate and Ostend and other Continental resorts.

The G.S.N. was entitled to use the name **Royal Daffodil** in perpetuity, whilst Wallasey Borough had to add the numerical distinction "II".

### **THE LENGTHIEST SHIP'S NAME**

In the 1949 "*Berne List of Ship and Coast Stations*" (a publication used by radio operators) is shown a Russian warship named :

**TCHETYRNADTSATAIA GODOVSTCHINA OKTIABRSKOI  
REVOLIOUTSII**

(52 letters !)

## THE "LADY KILLARNEY" AT WAR

*The Lady Killarney, 3,220 tons, sailed on her first British post-war cruise on 20th June, 1947. However, she will be remembered by many travellers over the B. & I. Line route from Liverpool to Dublin as the Lady Connaught. She had many wartime adventures, as the following extracts from her Master's report show :*

**20th December, 1940 :** Due to sail from Prince's Landing Stage at 18.15 with some 550 passengers and general cargo for Belfast. Air raid warning sounded as about to cast off. All lights out, so decided to remain alongside. Hundreds of incendiaries suddenly fell on the stage and sheds. One fire started close by. Five or six near misses within an hour. One bomb fell about 100ft ahead. "Jerry" could no doubt see us, so I decided to cast off and anchor opposite Canning Dock.

Passengers behaved splendidly. They stayed below although at times it seemed that the bottom was out of the ship with bombs bursting in the river. Fires had started all around so I decided to proceed outside the Bar Lightship. Passing the Rock Lighthouse low anti-aircraft barrage developed from both sides of the river. Just "hell" for five minutes. Passing the Crosby lightship, the 3rd officer reported aircraft close. Two big "Jerry" bombers coming in on either bow at bridge level. Gave them bursts of machine gun fire. One let go a heavy bomb on the quarter, but it missed. No damage.

Proceeded to Belfast without further incident.

**26th December, 1940 :** Sailed from Prince's Dock with 120 passengers and general cargo for Belfast. Night clear. Light NW'ly breeze. Passed the Bar Lightship at 23.30. Left the bridge about midnight. Second Officer on watch. Just sat down to a cup of tea when a terrific explosion shook the vessel from stem to stern. All lights went out. Engines stopped. Whole ship seemed smothered in steam. Ordered boats ready for lowering and passengers mustered. Sent S.O.S., also asked Seaforth for tugs.

Had all passengers in boats when steamer Greypoint arrived in answer to S.O.S. Passengers and stewards transferred in about one hour. Chief Engineer said vessel would last a few hours. He reported eight feet of water in No.3 hold, and five feet in the engine room. Vessel listed about 20 degrees to starboard. Asked Greypoint to tow us as we were drifting with degaussing out of action and likely to be blown up again if we got over a magnetic mine. The tug Crosby arrived and took over. Water gaining. Heavier starboard list. Asked for salvage pump to meet us at the Bar lightship. Got salvage pump on board. Managed to keep water in check until we entered Langton Dry Dock - only just in time!

## THE LOSS OF THE "TAYLEUR"

A year or so ago, a paper was read to the Society entitled "*Charles Tayleur - a Man of his Time*". Reference was made in this paper to the emigrant ship *Tayleur* which was lost on her maiden voyage. This short article looks at the circumstances surrounding "The Loss of the *Tayleur*" :

*by Arthur C. Wardle*

One of the most tragic stories in shipping history is that of the emigrant ship *Tayleur*. Built by *Tayleur & Company* at Warrington in 1853 for the Liverpool firm of *Moore and Company*, the *Tayleur* was a full-rigged ship of 1,750 tons, the largest iron ship of her day. She measured 225 feet in length, 39 feet beam and 28 feet depth, and had accommodation for 680 passengers. After fitting out she was chartered to *Pilkington & Wilson* for their *White Star Line* of clippers to Australia, and towed down the Mersey to Liverpool for loading. She left that port on 19th January, 1854 for Melbourne, under the command of Captain Noble, and was towed out by the steam tug *Victory*. At the time of sailing she was drawing 17 feet forward and 18½ feet aft.

An unusual incident occurred before the *Tayleur* parted with her tug. Whilst the tug was alongside taking off the ship's visitors, an Irish passenger on board the *Tayleur*, during the noise and bustle, thought something was wrong and jumped on board the tug. It was dark when the tug cast off, and when it was nearing Liverpool, a person was noticed standing on the paddle-box. He asked where the tug was bound for, and upon being told that it was returning to the landing stage, the Irishman became most distracted and said that he wanted to get to Melbourne, whereupon the tug put about and tried to overtake the *Tayleur* without success, and so the Irish passenger was compelled to return to Liverpool minus clothing and baggage which was on the clipper ship.

Meanwhile the *Tayleur* was making such good progress that the pilot did not hesitate to call her the fastest ship afloat, and stated that she answered her helm and steered 'like a fish'. He reckoned that, after leaving the tug, she was making 13 to 14 knots. Soon after leaving the Mersey, however, the *Tayleur* encountered heavy weather, and seems to have been beaten about somewhat, for on the third day out she found herself off the island of Lambay on the Irish coast, some seven miles NNE of Dublin Bay.

At noon on that day it became apparent that she was rapidly approaching land. The captain tried to wear ship, but she could not pay off and continued to drift towards the rocky coast; the mizzen staysail and spanker were set, and the helm kept hard down. The anchors were also let go, but the



chain 'snapped like glass'. Panic seems to have ensued as the ship drove straight for the rocks, and so closely did she strike that several men, including Chinese and Lascar members of the crew, jumped ashore and climbed up the rocks without staying to aid others to get ashore.

A rope was run out to the land, and a small proportion of those on board managed to get ashore that way, but a large proportion were lost in the attempt, including women and children. The *Tayleur*, going down stern first, sank in thirty minutes and became submerged except for her topmasts, to which some survivors clung hopefully.

On leaving the Mersey the *Tayleur* had 496 passengers and a crew of 80 on board. Of these 297 lost their lives, and the survivors who landed on the Lambay rocks spent a harrowing time before they were finally rescued. After the sinking, allegations were made against owners and master. It was stated that the compasses were in error; that she had not had any experimental sailing trial as a new ship, and that she would not answer her helm.

At the inquest, the judgement held the owners responsible by their 'culpable neglect', and that the master did not take sufficient care by rounding to after he found the compasses to be in error. The jury considered, however, that after sighting land, Captain Noble did everything, by his coolness and courage, to save the ship and passengers.

## RACING ON THE CLYDE

One evening in September 1893, the Clyde steamers *Duchess of Hamilton* and *Glen Rosa* made an evening cruise from the Arran piers to Rothesay to view the illuminations. The *Duchess of Hamilton* left Whiting Bay at 6.30pm and called at Lamlash, while the *Glen Rosa* left at 6.40 but was not scheduled to call at Lamlash. Both were advertised as calling at Brodick, and as the *Glen Rosa* was off the northern entrance to Lamlash Bay, the *Duchess* was approaching Claughlands Point. Both refused to give way, and the distance between them rapidly diminished, and for a time it appeared that the *Duchess* would strike the *Glen Rosa*, which was maintaining a straight course, amidships. To secure the inside position the *Duchess* rounded Hamilton rock with little space to spare, and by now the two steamers were racing '*neck and neck*', not more than 15 feet apart, and on the *Glen Rosa* passengers were asked to stand amidships to keep her on as even a keel as possible.

At first passengers on both steamers were inclined to cheer, but the position became so alarming that several women fainted and others became hysterical. At last the *Glen Rosa*, belching out black smoke, gained a little, and edging outward, got the backwash of her port paddle to play on the starboard side of the *Duchess* and made Brodick Pier first. Here, 200 of her passengers left the steamer, their nerves so badly shaken that they preferred the long walk home, rather than face continuing on to Rothesay!

## W.J.YARWOOD & SONS LTD.

Clive Guthrie presented this illustrated talk to the Society on 20th March. He began by detailing the early life of William James Yarwood who was born in Northwich in 1851, the son of bootmaker Thomas Yarwood and his wife Eliza. The young Yarwood was apprenticed to W.Bates & Sons, ironfounders in Northwich, and then joined the staff of the River Weaver Navigation. He rose from a position of blacksmith to being in charge of the hydraulic equipment at Weston Point docks, and later became foreman and boiler inspector at the Navigation's headquarters in Northwich.

The talk went on to cover the establishing of 'the Dock' in 1840 by John Thompson of Macclesfield. He retired in 1885 and the barge building yard was taken over by John Woodcock, who had worked at the boatyard under the previous owner and latterly became a journeyman at 'the Dock'. In 1896 Woodcock secured an order from Brunner Mond for the construction of a steel steamship at 'the Dock', but he died when the vessel was only partly built. With no *heir apparent*, William Yarwood agreed to complete the steamship which was launched as the *Hibernia*. Yarwood resigned from his post with the River Weaver Navigation in December 1896 and took ownership of 'the Dock' and was joined in the business by his four sons Albert, Enoch, Sydney and Douglas.

William Yarwood died in 1926 and the sons continued to run 'the Dock' on a sound financial basis throughout the Depression. In 1938 Albert Yarwood (the eldest) bought out his brothers and ran the business through the war years eventually selling 'the Dock' as a going concern to United Molasses in 1946. This company eventually closed the shipyard in 1965 after the completion of over 1,000 vessels. The company sold ships and tugs to such diverse countries as Aden, Australia, India, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, South America and the West Indies, as well as building for the U.K. market. Vessels built by Yarwoods consisted of steam and motor coasters, tugs, dredgers, barges, narrow boats and even lock gates and navigation buoys. Survivors from Yarwoods can be seen at the Albert Dock at Liverpool, the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum, Caernarvon and regularly plying the narrow canals of England.

C.G.

### **LIVERPOOL TO PARIS**

*Does anyone remember the two French-flag, flat bottomed, light-draft steamers St.Denis and St.George, 14 knot ships of about 1,000 tons deadweight, which used to load at the south side of Brunswick Basin, Liverpool, about the turn of the century? Each carried 10 or 12 passengers at a return fare of £8-8s-0d and took them direct to the heart of Paris. The pair were built at Antwerp for this trade and could lower their two masts and single funnel in the Seine.*

**LESLIE HARRISON, DIED APRIL 1997**

*WITH GREAT SORROW*

Former L.N.R.S. member Leslie Harrison died in Arrowe Park Hospital in April 1997, aged 84. He was for a long period General Secretary of the Merchant Marine Service Association, administering what we knew as the Mariners' Home at Egremont.

His early days as a cadet in Federal Steam Navigation Company ships were a useful prelude to this onerous post in later life.

From 1958 and in retirement, Leslie Harrison's premier task was his effort to clear Captain Lord's name when it was alleged in the film "*A Night to Remember*" that the *Californian* was the nearest ship to the tragic sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912. Our Members will be conversant with this terrible disaster as the so-called '*unsinkable ship*' sped through an icefield with insufficient lifeboats. Over 1,500 passengers and crew perished in the icy sea. The *Californian* was stopped in the icefield all night, some twenty miles from the scene of the tragedy. There were reports of rockets low on the horizon - not thought to indicate distress.

This writer has a special interest in the case, as his close pal at Wallasey Grammar School (1920-1925) was Stanley Lord (Junior), who died in 1994. I was frequently in the Lord household up to the War years and had great admiration for the Captain, his obvious integrity and kindly manner.

Leslie Harrison pursued his aim with diligence, wrote two books and had many interviews, but did not consider the expenditure involved. Hearing that some new evidence was forthcoming, I phoned Leslie at Raby Close, Heswall, to congratulate him, only to hear that he was in hospital following a stroke. He died two days later. Our sincere sympathy goes to his two daughters.

**N.R.PUGH**

**PROFESSOR J.R. HARRIS, DIED MARCH, 1997**

Before succeeding W.H.B. Court in the Chair of Economic and Social History at the University of Birmingham in 1970, John Harris was a Reader in the University of Liverpool. He encouraged the development of economic and social history in the widest sense, taking into full account relevant technological discoveries and applications. During his time in Liverpool, John Harris took much interest in nautical research and put great value on his contacts with people from a wide variety of backgrounds who shared his enthusiasm for rigorous inquiry. He was much involved with members of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society in the 1960s, and frequently attended the Society's meetings at which he made some excellent and stimulating contributions.

BOOK REVIEW  
**"SERPENT IN PARADISE" by DEA BIRKETT**

*reviewed by Jim Cowden*

I would like to draw Members' attention to Dea Birkett's latest travel book **"Serpent in Paradise"** which tells the story of the descendents of the Bounty Mutineers on Pitcairn. Much has been said, written and filmed about the Mutiny on the Bounty which, even to this day, continues to hold intense fascination, despite the fact that it happened over 200 years ago. I must say that once I started reading **"Serpent in Paradise"**, I simply just couldn't put it down because it truly brings to life not only the atmosphere of Pitcairn, but the way in which the remaining 38 descendents of the ill-fated mutiny live.

Thousands of paradise seekers apply for entry into Pitcairn every year. Virtually all are refused. However, after two years of persistence and resourcefulness, it came as no surprise to me when Dea informed me that the Foreign & Commonwealth Office had finally granted her a licence to land on Britain's last colony deep in the South Pacific which would allow her to fulfil an ambition to write about the Pitcairn Islanders. The only way in is by sea and after negotiations Dea got passage aboard mv. N.C.C.Najran, one of the Norwegian Odfjell Line chemical tankers *en route* from Houston, Texas to Australia via Pitcairn, a sea passage of some 4,000 miles. On arrival the N.C.C. Najran anchored off to allow Dea to transfer to a Pitcairn longboat.

Pitcairn has no cars, no crime, no doctor and no regular contact with the outside world. For two centuries Fletcher Christian's children, whose culture and language is still a bizarre blend of Polynesian and 18th century English, have lived out a unique social experiment. Dea soon settled in with Ben and Irma Christian and quickly learned the skills necessary for island life. Pitcairn is a close-knit and closed community with no means of escape from its tiny confines; therefore Dea soon found herself caught up in a web of intrigue, decades-old disputes and thwarted desires, and quickly discovered that all is not as she imagined on '*paradise island*'.

Dea Birkett has also writted **"Jella - a Woman at Sea in a Man's World"**, in which she describes her voyage from Lagos to the U.K. in the **Menestehus**. Dea is an accomplished broadcaster but Jella was her first travel book for which she was shortlisted Travel Writer of the Year, and won the Somerset Maugham Award.

**"Serpent in Paradise"** is published by Picador hardback at £16.99p.

**NOTICE BOARD**

The Inaugural Seminar of Women and the Sea Network is to be held in the Boardroom of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich on Saturday 28th June 1997 between 1pm and 5pm. Women and the Sea Network co-ordinator Ms Jo Stanley can be contacted via the Research department at the National Maritime Museum.

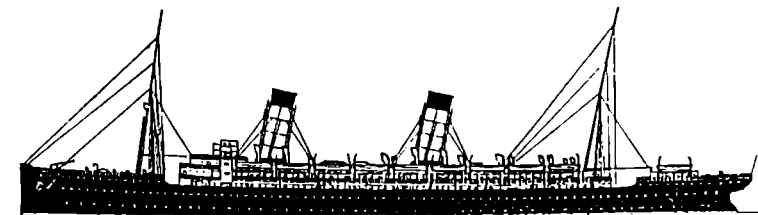
*J.E.C.*

*The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

**THE BULLETIN**

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 41, Number 2, Autumn, 1997



Captain Charles Fryatt and the "Brussels" ( <i>Charles Dawson</i> )	page 27
An Extraordinary Letter ( <i>Mike Stammers</i> )	page 34
The "Campania" and "Lucania" ( <i>T.E.Hughes</i> )	page 36
Elder Dempster's "Oxford" and "Knowlton" ( <i>Jim Cowden</i> )	page 43
The "Jeddah" Incident	page 44
Letter from Ray Pugh	page 46
Short Sea Vessels at Preston ( <i>Peter Kenyon</i> )	page 49
In Command ( <i>Captain T.P.Marshall</i> )	page 52

# **The Liverpool Nautical Research Society**

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## ***Forthcoming Meetings***

**Thursday, 16th October:**

**American Bureau of Shipping : History & Development (H.M.Hignett)**

**Thursday, 20th November:**

**“Buenaventura” Incident (D.Eccles)**

**Thursday, 18th December**

**Christmas Social and Quiz**

# CAPTAIN CHARLES FRYATT AND THE "BRUSSELS"

*by Charles Dawson*

BRUSSELS Steel Twin-Screw Steamer, 1,380 gross tons, 523 nett.  
Built in 1902 by Gourlay Bros. & Company, Dundee  
Owners : The Great Eastern Railway Company  
Triple Expansion Machinery of 350 NHP  
Length : 285.3 feet. Breadth : 34.0 feet. Registered at Harwich.

Born on 2nd December 1872, Charles Fryatt entered the service of the Great Eastern Railway at an early age as an ordinary seaman. In 1904 he became chief officer, obtained his master's certificate in 1905 and was promoted to command in 1913. The outbreak of the First World War found him master of the twin-screw, 15 knot passenger steamer **Brussels**; one of the Great Eastern Railway steamers operating between Parkeston Quay, Harwich, and the Hook of Holland, a service which was maintained for many months after the outbreak of hostilities. The **Brussels** was sailing as an unarmed passenger steamer, subject as all others to the usual international sea law of search and capture. It was a trying time for masters who were faced with the added threat, to which the world had never before been subjected, of being torpedoed by a German U-boat without warning.

There is no doubt that the continuation of this service, which so vividly exemplified the spirit of the unarmed British Merchant Navy whose personnel were determined to sail the seas despite ruthless enemy submarine attacks, did much to inspire a confidence at home and in neutral countries which the military situation at that time hardly justified. It may not have been possible for the Admiralty to give protection to the ordinary merchant ships, but they did give instructions and advice, and in February 1915 Captain Fryatt procured a confidential paper that had been issued to shipmasters (with the injunction that it was not to be allowed to fall into the enemy's hands under any circumstances) in which suggestions were made as to what steps should be taken if they encountered an enemy submarine.

They were told never tamely to surrender, but that they should do their utmost to escape, and were advised that if a submarine came up suddenly ahead with obvious hostile intention, they were to steer for it at top speed, altering course as necessary to keep the submarine ahead. This would force the U-boat to dive and remain submerged until it could surface again astern. The time thus gained would create an opportunity for the steamer to escape.

An attempted attack on the **Brussels** on 3rd March 1915 was frustrated by the steamer's speed, but shortly afterwards Captain Fryatt was called upon to put the Admiralty's instructions into effect. Leaving Harwich on

28th March, the **Brussels** was steaming at full speed on the approved Admiralty course, bound for Rotterdam. When about eight miles west of the Maas lightship, Captain Fryatt observed a large U-boat approaching on the starboard bow.

The submarine, the U-33 (at that time one of Germany's latest craft, and one which did considerable damage to merchant shipping in the Channel and Mediterranean), under the command of Cmdr. Gausser, signalled the **Brussels** to stop. Ignoring this order, Captain Fryatt alerted the engine room and altered course to take the **Brussels** astern of the submarine. This alteration of course on the part of the **Brussels** was countered by one on the part of the submarine, and Captain Fryatt then realised that the U-boat was manœuvring into position to torpedo his ship. By this time both vessels were converging at full speed.

Captain Fryatt then altered course again, bringing the submarine right ahead. This forced the U-33 to dive. She travelled blindly under water for some minutes before her periscope broke the surface just yards away from the **Brussels**. Captain Fryatt and chief officer Hartnell saw the periscope emerge by the port bow, but it swiftly re-submerged and the **Brussels** steamed ahead at full speed. When the U-boat re-surfaced the steamer was four or five miles away and out of danger.

Captain Fryatt duly recorded the incident in his log, and it was on this evidence that he was subsequently condemned. The entry read : "*1.10pm : sighted submarine two points on starboard bow. I altered my course to go under his stern. He then turned round and crossed my bow from starboard to port. When he saw me starboard my helm he started to submerge and I steered straight for him. At 1.30 pm his periscope came up under my bows, port side, about six feet from the side and passed astern. Although a good look-out was kept, I saw nothing else of him. I was steering an E x S course at the time of sighting him, and brought my ship to a north-easterly course when I was over the top of him. The latitude was 51°08' N, longitude 3°41' E.*" Gausser's report of how he had been forced to submerge thereby enabling the **Brussels** to escape angered the German naval authorities, and orders were issued that no efforts were to be spared to capture or destroy the **Brussels** and her master.

From then on the steamer was a priority target, but she managed to evade the enemy until 11th June, 1915, when speed and skilful navigation alone saved her. Another attack on 15th June, when she was off the Sunk lightship, was also successfully countered, and 14 days later a fifth attempt to sink her was made east of the Sunk. On 20th July, the **Brussels** was twenty miles south of the inner Gabbard buoy when Captain Fryatt observed a torpedo coming straight for his ship. He immediately put his helm hard over and again escaped. On innumerable occasions Captain Fryatt matched his wits successfully against the guile and missiles of the U-boats whilst playing a leading part in



maintaining the link with Holland. This goaded the Germans into staging a minor naval operation to achieve the result they desired.

On 22nd June 1916 the **Brussels** left Rotterdam with passengers and mails including a sealed diplomatic bag containing confidential documents from the British Consul General at Rotterdam. Another batch of mail had to be collected at the Hook of Holland, to which port the vessel proceeded. It was 11.00pm when she cast off from her berth at the Hook, and as she was leaving harbour bound for Tilbury, a rocket was observed to soar skywards from the shore. Nearly an hour after passing the Maas a small vessel, which neither the master nor the chief officer could identify, was detected in the darkness. After the **Brussels** passed her she was seen to send out the letter 'S' in Morse code by signal lamp. Captain Fryatt's suspicions were aroused by these two unusual incidents and he at once ordered the passengers below and had all lights extinguished. The **Brussels** then proceeded on her course at top speed.

Following the same course was another 'blacked out' steamer which could not be located by Captain Fryatt or Mr. Hartnell. Both officers had their night glasses constantly in use. The possibility of collision was causing considerable concern, so at 12.30am it was decided to switch on the port and starboard lights for a minute or so to warn the other vessel of the **Brussels'** proximity. Fifteen minutes later the **Brussels** was hemmed in on all sides by a flotilla of German destroyers which had made a dash from its Zeebrugge base to bring off the *coup*. They threatened to open fire if the **Brussels** did not stop immediately.

In order to save the lives of his passengers, Captain Fryatt was forced to abandon any idea of making what would have been a suicidal attempt to escape, but before the Germans closed in to board, he rushed to his cabin for his confidential papers and the diplomatic bag, which he took down to the engine room and flung into the furnace to ensure that they did not fall into enemy hands. The Germans, with revolvers and grenades in their hands, were soon swarming all over the **Brussels**, whose crew was rounded up and transferred to one of the destroyers. Captain Fryatt and the chief officer were kept on board the ship.

The German officers went on the bridge and rang for full speed ahead, but there was no response. Infuriated at this, they levelled their revolvers at Captain Fryatt in their belief that he was responsible, and threatened to shoot him if the order was not obeyed at once. After some effort, Captain Fryatt succeeded in convincing them that the engine room was deserted. The engine room was then manned by Germans, who wasted no time in getting their capture under way, heading for the German-occupied Belgian coast. With the German colours flying and her escort of destroyers, the **Brussels** arrived at Zeebrugge at daylight on 23rd June, and as she passed up to Bruges, both banks of the canal were lined with German soldiers.

The crew of the **Brussels** was sent to the notorious Ruhleben camp,

but a few days later on 2nd July Captain Fryatt and chief officer Hartnell were transferred to a prison in Bruges where the former was kept in solitary confinement and subjected to an inquisition for three weeks. With the object of intimidating other British shipmasters, the Germans made it known he was to be court-martialled. On receipt of this knowledge, the British Foreign Office requested Mr Gerard, the American Ambassador in Berlin, to take every possible step to ensure that Captain Fryatt was adequately represented, but the Ambassador's written approaches were ignored by the Germans until less than 24 hours before the proceedings began. On 27th July, 1916 on the charge - based upon his log entry previously quoted - that he *"was strongly suspected of having attempted to cause injury to the forces of Germany"*, Captain Fryatt had to face a bitterly hostile court. He was defended by a German officer, a Major Neumann. He faced his accusers with calm dignity, and remained stubbornly silent regarding the Admiralty instructions. The brief proceedings terminated with the court condemning him. Two hours later he was taken out of his cell into the prison yard where he was tied to a post and shot. The next day the German official telegram received in Holland contained the following announcement:

*"On 27th July, 1916, at Bruges, before the Court Martial of the Marine Corps, the trial took place of Captain Fryatt, of the British steamer Brussels, which was brought in as a prize. The accused was condemned to death because, although not a member of a combatant force, he made an attempt on the afternoon of 28th March, 1915 to ram the German submarine 'U-33' near the Maas lightship. The accused as well as the first officer and the chief engineer of the steamer received at the time gold watches from the British Admiralty as a reward for their brave conduct on that occasion, and the action was mentioned with pride in the House of Commons. On the occasion in question, disregarding the U-boat's signal to stop and show his national flag, he turned at the critical moment at high speed on the submarine, which escaped the steamer by a few metres only by immediate diving. He confessed that in so doing he had acted in accordance with the instructions of the Admiralty. The sentence was confirmed on 27th July and carried out by shooting".*

Condemnation of this barbaric action was world-wide. The matter was considered by a German commission of inquiry in April 1919, and while it upheld the sentence, it expressed regret for the haste with which it had been carried out. Captain Fryatt's remains were brought back to England in HMS **Orpheus** in July 1919 and, after an impressive memorial service at St.Paul's Cathedral, were taken to Dovercourt for interment.

In his official history, "The Merchant Navy", Sir Archibald Hurd states: *"Captain Fryatt's innocence is alike attested by British history, by British laws and by British privileges at sea. He upheld a right which is vital to those who go down to the sea, and defended it with constancy, loyalty and*

*unflinching courage*". A fund was established in Captain Fryatt's name for the relief of officers and their dependents, and is now administered by NUMAST.

The **Brussels** was used as a depôt ship by the Germans for a submarine flotilla based at Zeebrugge, and in the course of the attack on the port on 23rd April 1918, it was believed that she had been torpedoed and sunk by Coastal Motor Boat 32A, but this was proved later not to be the case. Before the Germans evacuated this coastal area, they sank everything they could in the harbour. The **Brussels** was sunk off the head of the mole to serve as a breakwater and boom defence. After the war the work of clearing the harbour was undertaken by the Admiralty, and the raising of the **Brussels** was one of the most difficult jobs tackled by Cmdr. G.J.Wheeler, who had charge of the operations.

Divers found her settled on an even keel in 18ft of mud with two holes in the starboard side, both about 5ft in diameter, and one near her bilge keel about 5ft x 6ft on the port side, all caused by internal mining. Considerable clearance work on and around the steamer had to be done before the **Brussels** was cradled on 16 nine-inch cables slung from four lifting craft. The first stage of the lift was successfully accomplished on 4th August 1919, and she was taken to Heyst and beached. On the next day she was carried further inshore and this procedure was repeated on 6th August. She was then patched up, and when pumped out, refloated. Overgrown with barnacles and weed she presented a sorry spectacle. As she had been abandoned by the enemy in Belgian waters, legally she was a Belgian prize, but in the belief that Britons would cherish her with national pride, the Belgians restored her to Britain. In due course she was put up for auction and was in danger of going to foreigners when the Admiralty Marshal intervened.

The **Brussels** was eventually purchased by J.Gale & Company of Preston, and in March 1921 she was sent to Henry Robb of Leith to be adapted for service in the Irish cattle trade to operate between Preston and Dublin. When she left their hands in September her livestock carrying capacity was 600 cattle and 1,000 sheep. The **Brussels** docked in Preston for the first time on Monday 5th September 1921, and an object of considerable interest, fixed near the captain's quarters, was a framed copy of the death sentence on Captain Fryatt, signed by Admiral von Schroeder.

Under Captain D.I.Ronayne, the first trip of the **Brussels** was made on 7th September 1921 and for 7½ years she maintained this service with occasional visits to the Mersey, especially during the period August 1927 until April 1929. There was however, a change in her ownership. In 1923 she was taken over by the British & Irish Steam Packet Company, for whom Henry Tyrer & Company acted as agents at Preston, and in conformity with other units in their fleet, her name was prefixed by "*Lady*".

Apart from a collision with the lock gates at Preston on 30th July 1926, to which the **Lady Brussels** did extensive damage, her cattle-carrying career

was more or less uneventful, and she made her last crossing from Dublin on 19th April 1929. An atmosphere of sadness prevailed when she passed out of the life of Preston, and as she steamed out of the dock on her way to the shipbreakers' yard at Port Glasgow, the sirens of the ships in port accorded her an impressive farewell. The plate recording the sacrifice of Captain Fryatt which had been affixed to the deck of the **Lady Brussels** was a treasured memento in the Mercantile Marine Institute in Brussels before the Second World War, and very probably is still resting there.

*By way of conclusion, L.N.R.S. Member Peter Kenyon has extracted some details about the Brussels from the Port of Preston Arrivals and Sailings Books. These books are deposited in the Lancashire County Records Office, Bow Lane, Preston.*

*Sources:*

1. David Masters, *Captain Fryatt and the Brussels*, article in "Shipping Wonders of the World".
2. Joseph Conrad, 'Tradition', in *Notes on Life and Letters*, London, 1924
3. *The Murder of Captain Charles Algernon Fryatt* (London, 1916)
4. John P.Light, "An Immortal Shipmaster", *Sea Breezes*, Vol.9, Jan/June 1950, page 180.

*Editor's Note:*

Members may recall the following incident when another British cross-Channel steamer attempted to ram a German U-boat.

On 6th February, 1917, the paddle steamer **Mona's Queen** (2) left Southampton under the command of Captain Cain with 1,000 troops on board, bound for Le Havre. Some twenty miles from the French coast a German U-boat surfaced, almost dead ahead. The *Queen* kept on course, despite a torpedo being fired at her, and the U-boat's conning tower was struck by her port paddle box, the steel paddle floats inflicting severe damage. Despite diving immediately, the U-boat (UC.26) was not fatally damaged and arrived at Ostend two days later for repairs and overhaul. UC.26 was finally sunk in the Thames estuary by the Royal Navy on 30th April, 1917.

The **Mona's Queen** was disabled by the incident, but managed to steam slowly into Le Havre. After discharging her troops she steamed back to Southampton for repairs by Harland & Wolff, and resumed her trooping duties on 17th March.

*js*

**ss BRUSSELS, Owner : J.Gale & Co. (Preston)**

Arrival (1921)	Draft	From	Cargo	Sailed (1921)	Draft	For	Cargo/Bunkers & Bunkering Agent
5.Sept. pm	14'06"	Leith	Light	7.Sept	14'10"	Dublin	Light. Bk.61t,16cwt, Settle Speakman
9.Sept. pm	15'06"	Dublin	Cattle 434/ Sheep 473 Pigs 60	13.Sept	14'08"	Dublin	Light. Bk.42t,12cwt, Settle Speakman
15.Sept. pm	15'10"	Dublin	Cattle 465/ Sheep 811	16.Sept	14'06"	Dublin	Light. Bk.52t.14cwt, A.Willets & Son
23.Sept. am	15'09"	Dublin	Cattle 502/ Sheep 856 Pigs 43	24.Sept	15'06"	Dublin	Woodpulp-200tons,18cwt,1qtr. Bk. 26t,17cwt, Settle Speakman
30.Sept. am	15'10"	Dublin	Cattle 399/ Sheep 804 Pigs 15/ Gen.1t.1cwt	4.Oct	15'00"	Dublin	General-4tons,7cwt. Bk. 34t, Settle Speakman
7.Oct. am	16'00"	Dublin	Cattle 477/ Sheep 1114 Pigs 57	8.Oct	14'09"	Dublin	Light. Bk.40t,12cwt, Settle Speakman
9.Oct. am	14'08"	Dublin	Cattle 124/ Sheep 357 Pigs 45/ Gen.40t	11.Oct	14'06"	Dublin	Paper-6t,8cwt
14.Oct. am	16'00"	Dublin	Cattle 535/ Sheep 920 Pigs 74, Gen.29t,3cwt	14.Oct	14'08"	Dublin	Light. Bk.28t,14cwt, Pigot & Smith
16.Oct. am	14'06"	Dublin	Cattle 147/ Sheep 201 Gen.33t,3cwt	18.Oct	14'05"	Dublin	General-10t,18cwt,3qtr Bk.46t,15cwt, Settle Speakman
21.Oct. am	15'08"	Dublin	Cattle 548/ Sheep 955 Pigs 91/ Gen.46t,16cwt	22.Oct	14'06"	Dublin	General-2t,3cwt,2qtr Bk.39t,7cwt, Settle Speakman
23.Oct. pm	16'00"	Dublin	Cattle 621/ Sheep 508 Pigs 164/ Gen.50t.17cwt	25.Oct	14'05"	Dublin	General- 12t. Bk.41t,2cwt, Settle Speakman

## AN EXTRAORDINARY LETTER

by Mike Stammers

Edward ‘Bully’ Bates was an important shipowner in Victorian Liverpool. He moved to Liverpool in 1848 and, over the next 22 years, built up a successful merchant house and shipowning business. He handed over business to his sons in 1870 and retired to a large estate in Hampshire, and then pursued a parliamentary career. Bates had a fierce temper and his overbearing manner earned him much dislike in Liverpool. He was, however, a major shipowner and an early proponent of iron ships. Alan Rowson remarked in his talk about Bates in April 1991 : “*There are no statues to Sir Edward Bates, no memorials, no plaques. He wrote no autobiography and left no volumes of personal letters*”. In fact, Lloyd’s Registers’ archives contain four pages of letters written by Bates between 23rd February and 7th April 1858. They are printed for circulation and concern his dispute with Lloyd’s surveyors over his new iron ship, the **Flying Venus**. I did not have the time to transcribe all the letters, but the quotation below shows, I think, just why Bates earned his nickname. This is an extract from a letter sent to the Liverpool Underwriters’ Association:

*“I decline to commit an important matter into the hands of those who are utterly incompetent to manage it. After classing wooden ships with more or less success for a considerable period, the Register’s Committee have taken it upon themselves to class IRON SHIPS in the same manner and with the SAME MEANS. Their first attempts, about five years ago, were characterised by extraordinary ignorance of the subject; they have since obtained a second-hand knowledge of past experience in iron shipbuilding, upon which they have issued rules, part of which have some value, but their action is entirely empirical, and will never be otherwise than a drag on improvement in building ships in this material. There are not, I believe, four men on the Register Committee that know anything practically about an iron ship and the bulk of them, I believe, never saw one.*

*Since the death of Mr Creuze, they have no surveyor in London who has any pretensions to be called a man of science, and their abortive attempts to survey and classify iron ships with the aid of men educated only in practical work of building wooden ships, is one of the greatest anomalies the commercial world ever witnessed.*

*None but regularly educated engineers are fit to be trusted with the building and surveying of iron ships, and as the Underwriters of Liverpool have set an example in this respect, I call upon them to extend their system so as to provide for the classification of all iron ships by keeping and publishing a Register either of iron ships only, or of wooden ships also, as*

*they consider most advisable. I feel sure that the shipowners and shipbrokers of Liverpool and the outports would respond to their call and support them in whatever action they would take in the matter.*

*I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant.*

*Edward Bates"*

Bates withdrew his ships from Lloyd's classification, and his protest appears to have contributed to the growing differences between Liverpool and the Lloyd's General Committee. The Visitation Sub-Committee made several visits to Liverpool to resolve the problem. The Liverpool shipping community (or at least some influential sections of it) were prepared to defy the mighty Lloyd's Register and set up a separate Iron Ship Register in 1862. But that is another story.

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### AT SEA ON THE SABBATH

The Burns Line's first steamer, the **Glasgow**, built in 1828 and of 280 tons, made her first voyage from the Clyde to the Mersey in March, 1829. A year later a sistership, the **Ailsa Craig**, of almost identical proportions, was also placed on the station.

Unexpected difficulties arose and had to be overcome. Friday was the most suitable sailing day from an economic view-point, but not from that of superstitious sailors. To sail on a Saturday would mean breaking the Sabbath, to which George Burns was equally averse. Further, the Company's Liverpool agent, Mr. Mathie, pointed out that the Friday sailing would not synchronise with the canal traffic. In desperation he wrote that it would be better to sail on Saturday and to provide chaplains, in which case every objection would be satisfied. To his consternation, Burns took the suggestion seriously and went so far as to say that he and his brother would share the whole expense of the experiment. The wits of the Broomielaw jeered at Captain Hepburn and his "*steam chapel*", but the custom became firmly established and remained in place until 1843 when the secession of the Free Church from the Established Church of Scotland created such a dearth of ministers that ships' chaplains could no longer be obtained.

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### THE ST. LAWRENCE SPANNED

The Quebec Bridge, the longest cantilever bridge in the world, was opened to traffic on 3rd December 1917. It had cost £4,623,000 and 87 lives. Work began in 1899, but in 1916, just as the 640-foot central span was being secured, it fell into the St. Lawrence, killing 13 workers.

## TWO GREAT VICTORIANS - THE "CAMPANIA" AND "LUCANIA"

by T.E.Hughes

When the **Campania** and the **Lucania** were first commissioned, they were very much 'the ships of their day'. They succeeded the **Umbria** and **Etruria** as the leading ships of the Cunard North Atlantic fleet and in fact restored the company's prestige, the directors having been severely criticised for their slowness in not providing a tangible reply to the new and fast ships put into service by the White Star Company and the Inman Line in 1888 and 1889. From the inception of the Cunard Line it had never been the policy of the original partners and later the board of directors to be 'rushed' into decisions.

The contract for the building of the two liners was placed with the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Govan in August 1891. This was the first time that Cunard had gone to the Fairfield yard, although since the building of the Guion liner **Arizona** in 1879, many famous North Atlantic liners had been constructed there.

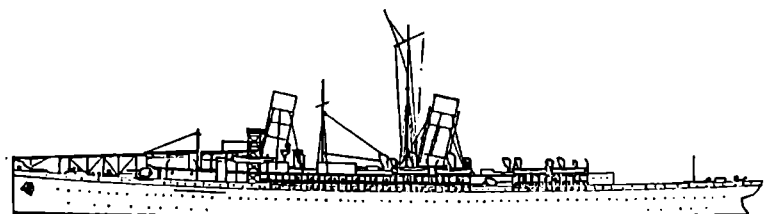
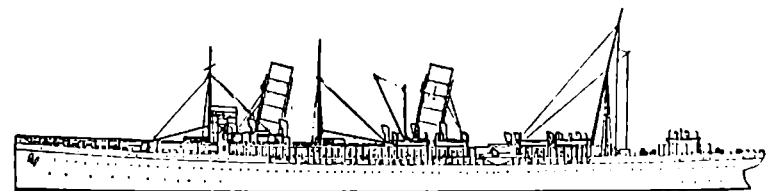
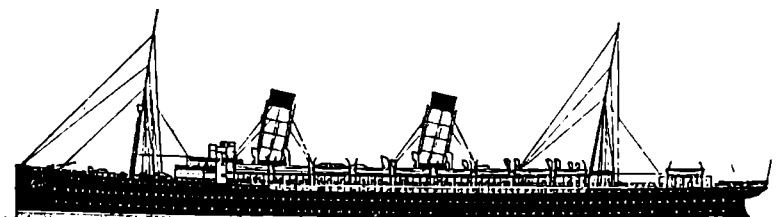
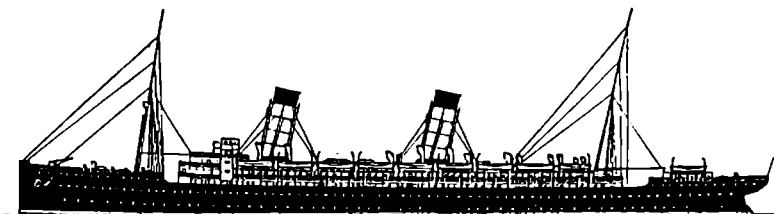
The **Campania** was launched on 8th September 1892 - the naming ceremony being performed by Lady Burns - and the **Lucania** was waterborne five months later on 2nd February 1893. With the exception of the **Great Eastern**, they were the largest liners yet built and there was considerable public interest and national pride in the two ships.



On 1st April 1893, after completing successful trials during which she achieved a mean speed of 23.18 knots - nearly one and a half knots more than her designed service speed of 21.88 knots - the **Campania** arrived in the Mersey. She went into dock at Birkenhead where final preparations were made for her first voyage. The cost of each ship was £650,000, considered to be a tremendous amount, but one which pales into insignificance when compared with the £4 million to £5 million expended on their descendents, the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth**.

The **Campania** and **Lucania** were the first Cunarders to be fitted with twin screws. Dealing with this innovation in the **Campania**, the official description had an interesting note : "*Although fitted with twin screws, there is an aperture in the stern frame similar to that in a single screw steamer. This is provided so that the propellers may work freely though they are fitted close to the centreline of the ship in order to prevent damage to or from the quay walls*".

Cunard's official brochure enthused as follows : "*The **Campania**, the most magnificently appointed passenger vessel in the world, has been fitted up with a view to the greatest possible luxury combined with comfort, strength, durability and perfect sanitary arrangements. The grand saloon, drawing room, library and smoking rooms are noble in their proportions and*





Paired   
Funnels 

- Four illustrations showing the **Campania** :*
- 1. As she emerged from the Fairfield yard*
  - 2. After the extension of her forecastle and poop*
  - 3. As an experimental aircraft carrier in 1915*
  - 4. In the same rôle, further modified later in the war*

*suggest the stately chambers of a palace rather than accommodation within the steel walls of a ship. It is worthy of special notice that comfort has been supplied in every detail and perhaps nothing exemplifies this more than the fact that in all the principal rooms there are coal fire grates, the first that have ever been used in steamships". Whilst much space was devoted to extolling the glories of the first-class accommodation, the **Campania's** second-class was dismissed as "equal to the saloon accommodation in many other ships", and the steerage accommodation was summarily described as being "in every respect excellent and far in advance of that usually provided".*

Under the command of Capt. Haines, the **Campania** sailed on her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York, via Queenstown, on 22nd April 1893. She left Queenstown at 1.25pm on 23rd April and arrived at Sandy Hook lightship at the entrance to New York harbour at 5.24pm on 29th April, having covered the distance of 2,865 miles in 6 days, 8 hours and 34 minutes, which although not an Atlantic record was the fastest maiden voyage ever made by a vessel.

On her homeward run she did still better. Leaving Sandy Hook at 11.40am on 6th May, she arrived at Queenstown at 9.42am on 12th May, after covering a distance of 2,899 miles in 5 days, 17 hours and 27 minutes - the fastest eastbound voyage made to that date - the previous best being that of the **City of New York** in 5 days, 19 hours and 56 minutes in August 1892. On this voyage the **Campania** also made a record run from Queenstown to the Mersey, landing her passengers at Liverpool on the sixth day after leaving New York - a valuable 'selling point' which the company was not slow to recognise.

The **Lucania** was not commissioned until the autumn of 1893, and the experience gained with the **Campania** enabled the Cunard company to effect improvements in the second ship which may have had something to do with her slightly better turn of speed. At any rate, the **Lucania** was the faster of the two vessels and on her maiden voyage, which, under the command of Capt. Horatio Mackay, began from Liverpool on 2nd September 1893, she wrested the mythical "blue riband" from her sister ship, making the passage from Queenstown to Sandy Hook in 5 days, 15 hours and 47 minutes. For four years, until the commissioning of the Norddeutscher Lloyd liner **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** in 1897, the **Campania** and **Lucania** between them held all the Atlantic records, and even after the advent of the German 'greyhounds', continued to give a good account of themselves.

Two years after her commissioning, the **Campania** figured in an event of considerable importance to liner companies operating services from Liverpool. The growing importance of Southampton as a passenger port - particularly in relation to the North Atlantic trade - had drawn attention to the urgent need at Liverpool for improved facilities for the embarkation and

disembarkation of passengers and the handling of baggage. This was still done by means of tenders - the liners lying at anchor in mid-stream - a system which had been in operation since the first steamships had sailed from the port 55 years previously. Accordingly, arrangements were made for the liners to berth alongside Prince's Landing Stage, adjoining which new Customs sheds for the examination of baggage were built. But what was perhaps the greatest benefit was the construction of the Riverside Railway Station on the Prince's Parade which was linked by way of the new Waterloo tunnel to the main Liverpool and London railway line.

By the middle of 1895 everything had been completed and on 12th June the first liners berthed alongside the stage. They were the **Catalonia**, inward from Boston, and the **Germanic**, outward for New York. This was in mid-week, and from the public point of view the most interesting event took place on the following Saturday, 15th June when the **Campania**, with Pilot Gore on the bridge, came to the stage to embark her passengers. In "Gore's Annals of Liverpool", the event is recorded as follows :

*"June 15th - the Cunard steamer Campania embarked her saloon passengers at the landing stage. The vessel drew an average of 28ft. The actual time fixed for the arrival of the noon express from London was 4.15pm. At Edge Hill station a stop was made, and an engine specially adapted for use in the Waterloo tunnel was coupled on in place of the locomotive. Great interest was centred on the embarkation of passengers and the transference of their luggage to the liner. The vessel left the stage to the cheers of a vast concourse of people. Later in the evening the Umbria arrived from New York with some 600 passengers. A long train with twenty or more cars was awaiting the arrival of the boat in Riverside Station".*

On 26th July 1897, the **Campania** took part in the Naval Review at Spithead arranged in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. On that occasion she carried among her guests Members of Parliament, who with Cunard directors, watched from her decks the entirely unexpected and certainly 'not on the programme' performance of a small vessel which streaked through the assembled lines of naval units at a speed which eye-witnesses at the time estimated at 40 knots.

The name of that interloper was the **Turbinia** - Sir Charles Parsons' first turbine-driven vessel - and her exact speed was 34½ knots. His method of demonstrating this new power unit was certainly not appreciated at the time! Indeed it is doubtful if those who saw the performance realised that the **Turbinia** was to provide the answer to the German challenge to supremacy on the North Atlantic. Just six weeks later the four funnelled **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** began her maiden voyage to New York. Very soon afterwards she crossed from Cherbourg to New York in 5 days, 17 hours and 27 minutes, her average speed exceeding 23 knots. This was a sad interlude in the record of British North Atlantic shipping in that for ten years - until the advent of the

**Lusitania** and **Mauretania** - the Blue Riband of the Atlantic with its undoubted prestige value was in the hands of the enterprising German companies.

The **Campania** and **Lucania** participated in the early development of wireless telegraphy, and the **Lucania** took part in what was described as "*an interesting telegraph experiment*" when, on 15th June 1901, she left Liverpool for New York equipped for the first time with an installation of Marconi's system. On this occasion an installation had been put on board H.M. schoolship **Conway** - then moored in the Mersey - and for a distance of 30 miles the two vessels were in constant communication. In October 1901 the **Campania** and **Lucania** passed each other in mid-Atlantic and "*for the space of five hours*" the two ships were in wireless communication, some 75 messages being exchanged.

With the advent of the **Lusitania** and **Mauretania** it was inevitable that the **Campania** and **Lucania** should gradually become less active and be placed on the reserve list. So it came about that by August 1909 the **Lucania** had made only one voyage during the year and was not scheduled to make another until October. In this period she was berthed in Huskisson Dock, Liverpool and at 7.00pm on Saturday 14th August an outbreak of fire was discovered. Efforts at controlling the fire were unsuccessful, and finally the **Lucania** submerged and lay upright on the dock bottom with her superstructure above water level. Salvage work followed, but after survey and inspection it was decided that she was no longer fit for service and she was sold to Thomas Ward for breaking up. The **Campania** remained in the fleet for some years longer and after the start of the First World War made two voyages to New York with Americans anxious to return home. Her last voyage began on 26th September 1914 when she left Liverpool for New York and made the crossing in 7 days, 8 hours and 36 minutes at an average speed of just 17.01 knots. She left New York on 7th October and arrived in Liverpool on 15th October, 1914.

The **Campania** was then sold to Ward's, who re-sold her to the Admiralty. She was taken to Cammell Laird's shipyard at Birkenhead where her engines were overhauled. Later it was decided to convert her into a seaplane carrier, for which purpose her forward funnel was removed and replaced by two small funnels abreast. Throughout the war, as **HMS Campania**, she performed useful service and was the only naval unit of her type to be present at the Battle of Jutland. Lying to anchor off Burntisland, in the Firth of Forth, on 5th November 1918, she broke adrift during a storm and sank after being in collision with **HMS Revenge**. With her passing, the name **Campania** slipped out of North Atlantic shipping.

Twenty six years were to elapse before the name **Campania** was again given to a British vessel. On the outbreak of the Second World War, the Admiralty, as in the First World War, was faced with an urgent need for

aircraft carriers to supplement the regular naval units. Accordingly, they took over a vessel still on the stocks at the Belfast shipyard of Harland & Wolff, and converted her into an escort carrier. She was commissioned in 1944 and given the name **Campania**.

At the end of the war **HMS Campania** proceeded to the Clyde where she was laid up in the Gareloch. In June 1949 it was announced that in connection with Festival of Britain in 1951, the Admiralty had consented to make the ship available to the Festival Office. It was stated that the **Campania** would be converted to hold a travelling exhibition, the theme of which would be the same as that of the South Bank Exhibition in London, namely to tell the story of Britain's contribution to world civilisation, past, present and future.

In April 1950, it was announced that the conversion work would be carried out by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead. A few weeks later the **Campania** made the coastwise voyage under tow, and after arrival in the Mersey on 10th May she was berthed in the Bidston Dock for the work to be carried out. The **Campania** was painted white and the Festival symbol - Britannia's head on the compass points - was displayed on the ship's side. The **Campania** was operated on behalf of the Festival authorities by Furness, Withy & Co.Ltd.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

*In the Summer "Bulletin" reference was made to the unusually high 10.4 metre tides predicted for Liverpool this year. Mrs Joyce Scoffield of the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory has provided the following additional information :*

The exact predicted heights of the large 1997 tides are as follows:  
March 10th : 10.36 metres, September 18th : 10.40 metres and September 19th: 10.42 metres.

The next occasion on which a Liverpool tide is predicted to exceed this year's values will be on 30th September, 2015 when the height will be 10.44 metres.

The highest astronomical tide possible at Liverpool has been increased to 10.5 metres in the 1997 edition of the Admiralty Tide Tables.

Public 'Open Days' at the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory (Bidston Observatory) take place every three years, and the next ones are likely to be in early June, 1998.

***Items for possible inclusion in what is intended as a regular "Notes and Queries" feature should be sent to the Editor.***

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*Greasby, August, 1997*

*Not without due cause do we sometimes refer to this period as the "closed season". That description has applied recently with more than usual pertinence to the M.M.M. Library, where structural alterations have kept the door closed for several weeks! However, whatever the general public - including the season's visitors from abroad - may have thought, I believe our Members have maintained a dignified and stoical silence! "Que sera!"..... Many of us were probably on holiday anyway; I certainly was for a couple of weeks. This year we resumed our love affair with the Isle of Man. She revealed herself as beautiful as ever, despite a rather bland crossing on the new-fangled catamaran. Swift as a bird she is certainly, but where are the broad decks for vigorous ambulatory exercise, or where the comfortable lounges and well appointed restaurants? Gone, I'm afraid; sacrificed on the altar of progress. So, instead of indulging those traditional facilities, I found myself jammed into a narrow seat, with a collapsible 'table' wedged into my ample stomach, with nowhere to go except the shop, the toilets, or the functional buffet-bar. Come back, **Lady of Mann**, all is forgiven!*

*I wish I could say how we improved our holiday with visits to the excellent museums and galleries in Douglas and Castletown, but the ladies of the party had other ideas. ("Save that for a rainy day", but of course it didn't rain, so the project was edged off the itinerary as time ran out.)*

*Many of you will be aware that Thos. & Jas. Harrison, a company with which I still keep in touch, have established a Museum on the top floor of Mersey Chambers, their head office. It is packed with records, artefacts and pictures etc., going back to Harrisons' early days, and is an 'Aladdin's Cave' for researchers into that company's history, or indeed 19th and 20th century shipping generally. It was my pleasure and privilege last July to entertain a party of our Members on those premises, and I believe all enjoyed the experience. I hope that another visit can be arranged in the near future.*

*Well, another quite glorious (but for some quite cataclysmic) summer is drawing to its close, and autumnal activities beckon. I look forward to meeting you again at our first Meeting of the new season on 18th September.*

Yours sincerely ,



## ELDER DEMPSTER'S "OXFORD" AND "KNOWLTON"

*by Jim Cowden*

The Canadian Great Lakes produced some of the strangest looking ships to be found anywhere, but they were perfect for their specialised trades. Two of these 'Great Lakers' came under the wing of Elder Dempster.

On the cessation of hostilities after the Second World War, Elder Dempster set about re-establishing its position in the West Africa trade. Part of this programme was centred around its former inter-colonial trade and main line feeder services which operated out of Lagos (Nigeria) and were commonly referred to as the 'Branch Service'.

Coal had been mined at Udi colliery in the Eastern Region of Nigeria for many years. Both the Gold Coast (now Ghana) Harbour & Railway Board and the Ijora power station at Apapa (Nigeria) relied on this coal for their existence. Coal from the Udi mine was transported by rail to Port Harcourt, which is situated some 25 miles up the Bonny River. At that time the river entrance had a draught limitation of 22.06ft. As Elder Dempster wished to re-enter this lucrative trade as soon as possible, all suitable second-hand tonnage on the market was examined which would allow for the best possible use of the Bonny River draught limitations.

When war broke out in 1939 the two Great Lakes traders **Oxford** and **Knowlton** were approaching the end of their useful life. They were both unlovely looking, coal burning, smoke belching steamers with high bows and their bridges perched on the forecastle head, as was the fashion for vessels of this type. Aft the forecastle, there was no break in the main deck until the after accommodation reared up at the stern.

When the Mulberry Harbour idea was conceived, expendable ships were needed to serve as foundations and breakwaters for the venture. For this purpose the **Oxford** and the **Knowlton** appeared ideal candidates and they both voyaged across the North Atlantic and were prepared for flooding and scuttling at the appropriate time. For some reason, however, they were never used in the Mulberry Harbour scheme, and it seemed certain that they would both end their days at the hands of shipbreakers. However, a chronic post-war shortage of tonnage fortuitously extended their working lives.

On 24th October 1946, Elder Dempster acquired both these vessels at a cost of £5,000 each. The names were retained, but the port of registry was changed to London.

The **Oxford** and the **Knowlton** were immediately placed on the Company's inter-colonial trades where they proved more than useful in lifting large tonnages out of the restricted draught ports situated within the Niger Delta such as Burutu, Warri, Sapele, Calabar and Port Harcourt.

In 1950 both ships were withdrawn from service and offered for sale.

The **Knowlton** was towed back to the U.K. and broken up by Thomas Ward & Company at Milford Haven. No buyer was forthcoming for the **Oxford** and so she was partially dismantled and then towed out some twenty miles southeast of Lagos Harbour and scuttled.

The **Knowlton** had originally been laid down and completed in August 1922 for George Hall Coal and Shipping Corporation of Montreal who operated her under the name of **N.H.Botsford**, registered at Montreal. She was built by Fraser Brace Limited at Three Rivers, Quebec. The **N.H.Botsford**'s gross tonnage was 2,066 and her dimensions 251'02ft x 43'00ft x 18'01ft. Her triple expansion engines and boilers were provided by the Worthington Pump & Machinery Corporation of Buffalo, New York. Two single-ended boilers with a working pressure of 180 lbs/sq.in. gave the **N.H.Botsford** a speed of 8 knots.

During 1926 she was sold to Canada Steamships Limited and renamed **Knowlton** (a township situated in Cowensville, Quebec).

The **Oxford** was a very similar vessel to the **Knowlton** and was built by Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson Limited of Sunderland. She was launched in May 1923 for the Glen Line (J.Playfair - Manager) of Midland, Ontario and originally named **Glenorvie**, registered at Montreal. Her triple expansion engine was built by McColl Pollock Limited of Sunderland and two single-ended boilers gave her a speed of 8 knots. In 1925 the **Glenorvie** was acquired by Canada Steamships Limited and renamed **Oxford** (derived from the county of Oxford, Ontario).

## THE "JEDDAH" INCIDENT

*Many Members will be familiar with Joseph Conrad's novel 'Lord Jim' and will recall how Jim deserted the pilgrim carrier Patna. This incident is founded on the steamer Jeddah, abandoned by her master and some of the officers when on fire off Cape Guardafui.*

*This short article has been abridged from a feature which appeared in 'The Sunday Times', shortly after Conrad's death on 3rd August, 1924.*

It was on 19th July, 1880, that the **Jeddah**, of Singapore, left Penang for Jeddah with about 600 tons of cargo on board and 953 pilgrims on their way to Mecca, under the command of Capt. Joseph Clark, who had with him his wife and child. On the passage the **Jeddah** encountered a great deal of bad weather, and on 6th August owing to very heavy rolling her boilers broke adrift and the engine room became untenable. The **Jeddah** began to leak very badly and by the evening of 7th August the position was serious, even though the pilgrims were helping the crew in pumping and bailing to keep the water down.

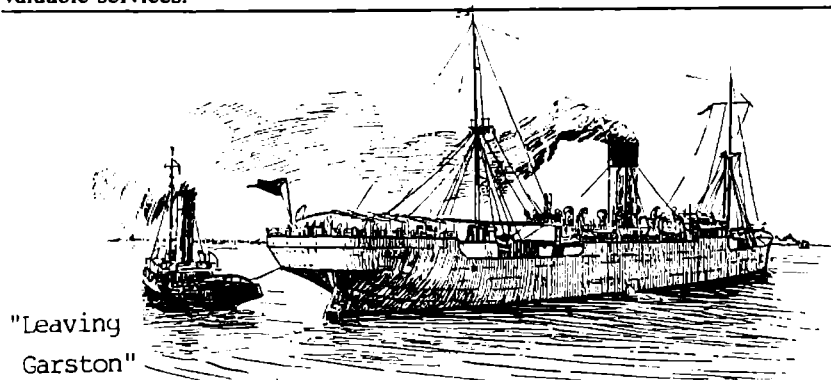


That night the master ordered a boat to be made ready for launching. The mate, a man named Williams, suggested to Capt. Clark that his life and those of his family were in danger, so, with the chief engineer, they got into the boat which was then lowered. The pilgrims had become rather disorganised and, seeing the white men on whom they depended about to leave, attempted to stop the boat, but only succeeded in pulling the mate off the rail. He jumped overboard and was picked up by the boat. Then the second mate, with a few others, tried to get away in another boat, but the pilgrims cut the falls, capsizing the boat and causing the occupants to fall into the sea where they were all drowned.

The next afternoon the helpless **Jeddah** was sighted by the homeward bound Blue Funnel steamer **Antenor** (Capt. J.T.Bragg), who sent his mate, Mr R.S.Campbell, with a boat's crew to board her. His prompt and efficient measures saved the **Jeddah** and she was made fast astern of the **Antenor** and towed into Aden. The master of the **Jeddah** and his companions were picked up by the steamer **Scindia** and were also taken to Aden. There a rather dramatic meeting took place, for as Capt. Bragg of the **Antenor** was entering the shipping office at Aden to report the salving of the **Jeddah**, he met Capt. Clark, who was just leaving after reporting the loss of this steamer with all hands except those who, with him, had abandoned her. The inquiry into this matter was fully reported in "*The Merchant Shipping Acts Investigations*", 1880-1881, no:896, s.s. **Jeddah**, and it resulted in Capt. Clark having his certificate suspended for three years.

In confirming the sentence, the then Governor of Bombay, Sir James Fergusson, remarked that the sentence was quite inadequate for a man who had shown himself entirely unfit to be entrusted with life and property at sea. It is rather surprising to read that the certificate of the mate, Williams, was not affected. At the inquiry he was found to have aided and abetted the master in abandoning the **Jeddah**. The court considered it very probable that, but for the mate's officious and unseamanlike behaviour, the master would have done his duty and remained in the **Jeddah**. There is no mention in the report of the **Jeddah** being on fire.

The **Antenor** received a substantial salvage award for her very valuable services.



"Leaving  
Garston"

## LETTER FROM RAY PUGH

*Birkdale, August, 1997*

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company has taken a gamble on running the **Lady of Mann** from Liverpool to Dublin every day except Wednesday. On the 2nd August, for instance, she carried 600 passengers and because of the heavy loadings the crew has been increased from 51 to 61. The previous day she had 672 passengers and 120 cars. **SeaCat Isle of Man** left Liverpool at 11.00 on Saturday 2nd August with 438 passengers and 20 crew. At 11.45 she overtook the **Arklow Viking** and the **Mastik** in the channel and cleared the Q.2 Buoy at 11.50. This was rather later than usual, but there were many yachts around.

The ship I take great delight in tracking is the **Polarstern**, a large German research ship. I have followed her since her trip to the North Pole in 1991. She carries about 80 scientists and they are away for about three months. Last summer she was in the Laptev Sea, north of Siberia, 120° East. At the beginning of August this year she was more or less drifting in the area 80°30' North, 10°18' East in fog and ice. The noon temperature on 2nd August was 1.7°C. I am also watching the Canadian Coast Guard cutter **Pierre Radisson** which has recently been in the northern area of Hudson Bay, but by noon on 2nd August had withdrawn to 60°24' North, 65° 00' West, north of Ungava Bay.

Last summer, the big Swedish icebreaker **Oden** made her second cruise to the North Pole, and I received her signals from the Pole! The Swedish Government sent me a fine colour photograph of her at the Pole in 1991. Her normal place of work is the southern Baltic.

Readers may wonder how I track the vessels in the Arctic. Well, the Meteorological Office has a list of selected ships which it requests should send in weather reports every six hours if possible. These ships have SATCOM and their reports are sent via the nearest of the four satellites which are positioned over Liberia, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean. Ground stations then pick these up, and retransmit the data on teletype (known as RTTY). I receive these reports from Frankfurt on short wave, 7646 khz, pass them through a decoder and on to a small display showing the ship's call sign and met. code groups of five figures. The British Meteorological Office at Bracknell also transmit the data, but their transmitters cannot compare with the German ones. It's all very simple really if one is prepared for the outlay for a good communications receiver, and the teletype equipment which is very small and works on only 12 volts DC. For shipping, there are three 45-minute periods per day for reception purposes. The teletype transmissions go on right round the clock, giving a vast amount of information and making weather maps possible. I know of no other amateurs involved in this hobby, but I have found the staff at Deutsche Wetterdienst, Frankfurt, most co-operative - they even

send me Christmas cards!

Change of name ..... Ellerman's City of Plymouth is now City of Lisbon.

An amateur skin diver named Dave Copley phoned me about some research I did a few years ago on a wreck between three and five miles south west of Port Erin Bay, Isle of Man. Dave often visits the wreck, which is in fact the remains of the well known coaster **Mary Summerfield** which used to carry stone from the North Wales quarries to the Mersey. Evidently in the late 1930s she was sold to a Dublin company and renamed **Ringwall**. She was on passage from Dublin to Silloth in January 1941 and took the route to the west of the Isle of Man and passed through an area which had been mined by the Germans on the assumption that ocean convoys would divide there, with one portion going to Liverpool and the other to Bristol Channel ports. The **Ringwall** was mined on 22nd January 1941 and her side is completely blown away. The mines would probably have been dropped by parachute and have been of a moored type, as the depth of water would not have been suitable for magnetic or acoustic mines. So there are a lot of 'ifs' and 'buts' about the loss of the **Ringwall**, but there were no survivors to tell the tale. Had she gone east of the Chickens, then in all probability she would have survived.

During my time on HMS **Evadne** during the war, we sighted many floating mines. We hoped that they were British as their horns would become inoperative once they were adrift. We used to sink them by rifle fire, which was not at all easy, and never had one explode. On 20th December 1940, the **Evadne** was following the Isle of Man steamer **Victoria** towards the Bar when two mines exploded in her wake. A week later, on 27th December, the **Victoria** was outward bound to Douglas and off the Zebra Flats when she detonated another mine which severely disabled her. The **Evadne** was west of the Great Orme's Head at the time and I received the coded message to proceed to her. She was drifting motionless when we arrived and her 200 passengers had been taken off by the trawler **Michael Collins**. I coded and sent a report to Liverpool, and we had to stand by her until HMS **Hornbeam** and HMS **Doon** arrived to take her in tow. The Isle of Man passenger service was transferred to Fleetwood immediately after this incident, and it was not until 16th April, 1946 that it returned to Liverpool.

We were plagued with enemy mines at that stage of the war, and I remember the trawler minesweeper **Relonzo** being blown to bits off Hightown, when sweeping for a known mine just outside the buoyed channel. She was working with her mate **Restrivo** in blizzard conditions. The **Evadne** had been keeping ships back at 4 degrees west whilst the sweep went on. Our first officer complimented me on the idea that the magnetic mines were pulsed, that is to explode after a set number of times activated, perhaps five, six or nine. The **Restrivo** and **Relonzo** (ex Aberdeen trawlers) worked on that one with magnetized loops and bow hammers.

Ray Pugh.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

by Alan McClelland

### THE BRITISH MERCHANT FLEET IN 1997;

Since the beginning of 1997 British owned and registered tonnage has slumped to its lowest level ever. According to Department of Transport statistics, there were just 12 additions to our fleet in the first three months of the year and 26 deletions, giving a nett decrease in total tonnage of 436,000dwt. In total terms the U.K. owned merchant fleet has slumped by 1.3 million dwt (10 per cent) in just one year. Meanwhile, the world's trading tonnage has increased by 25 million dwt (3.5 per cent) in the same period. The U.K. merchant fleet now comprises 230+ ships, compared with 1,614 in 1975.

Dr. Gavin Strong, the Transport Minister, has declared that the Labour Government wishes to safeguard Britain's maritime future. He has been quoted as saying: "*As an island people with a long and proud maritime heritage, we must ensure that we share in the burgeoning of international seaborne trade.*" The informed observer can only hope that effective policies to achieve such a desirable end will be formulated without delay!

Meanwhile, Scandinavian shipowners are set to benefit from a range of supportive measures. The Swedish government plans financial assistance to encourage seafarer training and the registration of vessels under the national flag. The European Commission has given its approval because it wishes to counter '*flagging-out*' and to promote the employment of Europeans at sea. Norway and Denmark have instituted corporate tax concessions which have brought about growth in their merchant fleets. The Dutch government has also continued to encourage investment in shipping by practical measures. It may be further noted that Japan is increasingly concerned about the declining competitiveness of its merchant fleet and the Council for the Rationalisation of Shipping Industries established in March has already commenced making recommendations.

### THE PANAMA CANAL

Almost a century of United States control of the Panama Canal will be brought to an end in 1999. Under a \$1 billion improvement scheme marking the new arrangement, widening is to be undertaken to allow the two way transit of 'Panamax' ships, and port facilities at the canal terminals will be improved. Although assurances have been given by the Panamanian authorities under a decree signed in June, 1997, that the waterway will be controlled '*in a responsible manner*', misgivings have been expressed by the International Chamber of Shipping about considerable increases in canal tolls already in train - 8.2% this year, and 7.5% in 1998.

## SHORT SEA VESSELS AT PRESTON DURING WORLD WAR II

*by Peter Kenyon*

During the war years of 1939 - 1945 Preston Docks were visited by many vessels which were trading away from their usual routes. Amongst these were several of the railway companies' cross-Channel ferries and cargo vessels which were requisitioned for naval and military operations.

The Port of Preston was selected as a stand-by or lay-up port for some of these vessels when they were not in use, and also for loading and discharging cargoes covered by the term '*Government Stores*'. When on Government service ports of loading or discharge were not shown in the Dock Arrival or Sailings book, but the term "O.H.M.S." was entered.

The first vessel to arrive at Preston was the LNER steamer **Sheringham** (1,088/26), and she arrived from Weymouth on 6th July 1940, where she had been landing evacuees from the Channel Islands. At Preston she became a 'store ship', making her first 'OHMS' voyage on 11th July 1940, when she sailed with 463tons 15cwt of Government stores. The **Sheringham** returned light from Belfast on 13th July, and made another voyage with stores on 17th July, before returning from Belfast on 23rd July to lay up until 6th November when she left Preston for the Clyde. The next time Preston saw the **Sheringham** was in 1944 when she made several round trips to Belfast for Coast Lines Ltd. with general cargo between April and July.

The **Felixstowe** (892/18), another LNER cargo steamer, arrived light ship from Weymouth on 7th July 1940 and sailed on 10th July with nearly 500 tons of Government stores. This was her only visit to Preston.

The first passenger ferry to visit Preston during World War II was the Southern Railway's **Isle of Thanet** (2,701/25), arriving light from Milford Haven and she remained in Preston for 25 days until she sailed 'OHMS' on 8th August for the Mersey where she was converted for further military use.

The Great Western Railway's **St.David** (2,702/32) which had been renamed **Hospital Ship 27**, arrived from Barrow for lay-up on 27th July 1940 and was in port until 11th September when she sailed 'OHMS'. She visited the Mersey for drydocking in December 1940.

The twin-funnelled **Dinard** (2,291/24) was one of the Southern Railway's overnight vessels from Southampton to the Channel Islands. Now as **Hospital Ship 28** she arrived at Preston on 17th August 1940 to lay up. She made one voyage to Belfast on 7th December, returning on 12th December, and then spent 109 days in the port until 1st April 1941 when she sailed for service with the Royal Navy in Scotland.

The **Maid of Orleans** (2,384/15) visited Preston briefly between 2nd October and 12th October 1940, making one voyage between 8th and 10th October.

The very well known **Canterbury** (2,912/29), which operated the prestigious first-class only '*Golden Arrow*' service between Dover and Calais, was laid up in Preston Dock from 27th October until 8th December 1940 when she left for trooping duties in the Irish Sea, but not from Preston.

Between 3rd November 1940 and 6th September 1941 two Isle of Man Steam Packet Company favourites made a series of voyages to and from Preston, mainly with troops. The vessels were the **Lady of Mann** (3,104/30) and the **Ben-my-Chree** (2,586/27). The **Lady of Mann** was the first to arrive on 8th October 1940, after which she made a further eight visits up to 19th May 1941. During her period of operating from Preston she had several periods laid up in the port for three or four weeks at a time.

The **Ben-my-Chree's** first arrival at Preston was on 22nd April 1941 and she made five more visits until her final departure on 6th September 1941. The **Ben** also spent periods of lay up at Preston between the above dates. In his book '*Short Sea - Long War*', John de S. Winser states that on one of the **Ben-my-Chree's** voyages to Preston she carried Merchant Navy survivors from Reykjavik, whose ship had been sunk in the Denmark Strait.

The **Biarritz** (2,495/14), a sister of the **Maid of Orleans**, arrived at Preston on 6th March 1941, sailing on 27th March.

Three Southern Railway cargo vessels, the **Hythe** (685/25), the **Ringwood** (755/26) and the **Whitstable** (687/25) made a series of voyages to and from Preston as Government store carriers between 8th May and 24th September 1941.

The last railway ferry to use Preston Docks during World War II was the **St.Julien** (1,885/25), which was built for the Great Western Railway's Weymouth - Channel Islands service. This steamer had become **Hospital Ship 29**, and first arrived at Preston on 16th December 1941, and apart from a voyage between 21st/28th January 1942, she remained laid up until 7th April 1942.

After the war years there continued to be ferry visits to Preston but on a much smaller scale. On 9th August 1949, the Isle of Man Steam Packet's **Manxman** (2,030/04) arrived for breaking up by T.W.Ward Ltd, and she lay in the S.E. corner of the dock for a while looking very jaded after her war work. She was eventually taken round to Ward's grid iron for demolition.

In 1969 the Atlantic Steam Navigation Company was operating RoRo/ Passenger ferries between Preston and Larne and Belfast. The Company chartered one of the Townsend Thoresen ferries **Viking I** (3,671/64). She arrived from Felixstowe on 21st December 1966 and made 15 round trips to Belfast with vehicles and passengers to cover the A.S.N.Co's own vessels' annual overhaul periods.

British Rail's **Dover** (3,602/65) arrived at Preston on 31st May 1969 and loaded a cargo of Ford cars (237tons 2cwt) and sailed for Boulogne on 2nd June.

In 1972 (Preston Guild Year), the Preston Lions Club arranged a cruise to Douglas from Preston Dock in conjunction with the IOMSPCo. The steamer used was the **Mona's Isle** (2,491/51). The cruise was a great success and 1,863 passengers were carried. The event was repeated in 1973 and 1974 using the same vessel.

The last arrival of a short-sea passenger vessel at Preston was the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Manxman** (2,495/55). She arrived on 3rd October 1982 for use as a floating nightclub in the port. Regretably, all her beautiful saloon panelling was stripped out and burnt on the quayside and she was given a 'jazzy' livery in place of the usual IOMSPCo. colours. The **Manxman** left Preston under tow for Liverpool on 5th November 1990.

So ends the passenger ferry story at Preston. All the arrival and sailing dates are taken from the Port's official Arrival and Sailing Books which are deposited at the Lancashire Records Office, Bow Lane, Preston, under reference DD/PP. Full accounts of the ferries mentioned in this article are recorded along with all the other World War II ferry military duties in John de S. Winsor's excellent book "*Short Sea - Long War*", published by the World Ship Society.

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### TIME RUNS OUT FOR THE "CONWAY"

On 14th April, 1953, the 114-year-old 'wooden wall' H.M.S. **Conway** went aground on the Caernarvonshire shore, near the Menai Suspension Bridge, and became a constructive total loss. She was being moved from her anchorage off Plas Newydd, Anglesey, to an anchorage at Bangor before being towed to the Mersey for drydocking at Birkenhead.

Hundreds of people who had gathered on the suspension bridge to see the **Conway** pass under on the first stage of her journey saw the mishap. The old ship had negotiated the most dangerous part of the difficult Swellies Channel when she met the flood tide which it had been estimated would be five knots but, in fact, turned out to be about eight or nine, probably due to the north-westerly gale which was blowing in the Irish Sea and Liverpool Bay at the time. The forward tug **Dongarth** of Liverpool - herself capable of ten knots at best - could not pull the **Conway** against the tide, and the stern tug **Minegarth**, which had been steering the rudderless ship, cast off to go to the **Dongarth's** assistance.

At this point the **Conway** took a heavy sheer which the two tugs acting in concert, the **Minegarth** being fast to the **Dongarth**, could not control, and the training ship swung around to the shore where she came to rest a few feet away from the steep bank. At low water in the afternoon of the same day, 14th April, the **Conway** was inspected and it was found that she was badly strained, and at the next high water she flooded aft and was abandoned.

## IN COMMAND

by *Captain T.P.Marshall*

RIBSTON Official Number : 119895 Call Sign : H G N K  
Steel Single Screw Steamer : 3,048 gross tons, 1,962 nett  
Built in 1906 by Irvines' Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co., West Hartlepool  
Owned by the Ribston Steamship Co.Ltd. (R.Sargeant & Sons, Managers)  
Length : 325ft, Breadth : 47.1ft, Registered at West Hartlepool

My first command was the **Ribston**, the only steamer of the Ribston Steamship Co.Ltd; a father and two sons (R.Sargeant & Sons) being the managers. Mr Sargeant Snr. and his son Harry were wholesale fruit merchants and operated from 5 Charles Street, West Hartlepool. The other son, Robert, was with Furness Withy & Co., and became, I think, one of the directors of that huge shipping concern. Robert was the only one of the Ribston Steamship Company who knew anything at all about ships.

My interview for the appointment was primarily with Mr Sargeant Snr., although both sons were present. After my appointment was confirmed Mr (Bob) Sargeant, the real business man on the shipping side, took me to another room for a talk, addressing me thus : *"Captain Marshall - this ship has been ashore or has had some form of accident on every voyage she has made. She is at the moment in the drydock with most of her bottom out. We are very disturbed and discouraged, more particularly as the underwriters have raised our premiums consequent on having to pay out so much so frequently. The ship is now over four years old. In this period she has not made a penny profit. If this cannot be stopped, we are pulling out from this business!"*

This was not very encouraging for a young man to hear on the eve of his first command. Next day, I went to the drydock (Gray's, I think) to look over the **Ribston**. I went on to the lower bridge, and thence up to the small deck formed by the wheelhouse and chartroom. Here I found the standard compass. Whilst looking at this, an engine room worker (shore gang, I think) came up the fiddle ladder from the stokehold. It was very hot. He turned the stokehold ventilator to improve the air below.

The funnel and bridge were rather close together. As the ventilator turned, I noticed a very considerable deflection of the compass. I instructed this man to turn the ventilator back, in fact in many directions. Each time the compass needle was repelled or attracted. Funny! Ship ashore every voyage! Could this be a contributory cause? Next morning I called upon Mr Sargeant and told him of my conclusions. *"Mr Sargeant"*, I said quite firmly, *"the reason that this ship has been so unfortunate is, I am convinced, due to the faulty siting of the standard compass and the near proximity of the funnel ventilators, and the fact that it is not possible to move the standard compass further*



*forward, away from local disturbances. I suggest, especially as the ship is incurring heavy insurance expenses, that you spend just a little bit more. Build an upper bridge, over and parallel to the lower bridge, extending from side to side. The standard compass could then be moved some fifteen feet forward, thus ensuring immunity from disturbance."*

Mr Sargeant agreed to my suggestion, and put it into effect immediately. Repairs completed, I got my crew together. With a cargo of coal, I set out on my first voyage in command to Leghorn, Italy. Sailing day was not inviting as visibility, which had not been good for days, became worse. Hardly had we cleared the lock gates when it became forbidding indeed. The pilot was dropped. The fog was getting thicker. In a few minutes Hartlepool and every other part of the coast disappeared. The first sight of land or any lights which I had after leaving Hartlepool was at the entrance to the Straits of Gibraltar. My first voyage in command was a huge success from every point of view, so much so that my owners, unsolicited, gave permission for my wife to sail with me on the next voyage. Further, these appreciative owners sent a load of good and special 'eats', marked : *"For Mrs Marshall. Not to be opened until the ship is well out to sea"*.

During my second voyage in the Ribston in 1913 I encountered a situation as unusual as it was disconcerting and worrying. We had loaded a cargo of coal in the Bristol Channel for Las Palmas. When the discharge of cargo was nearly completed I cabled my owners acquainting them of this fact, and asked for orders. Evidently they were on a rising freight market and consequently hanging on until the last minute before finally 'fixing' the ship for her next cargo. My orders came: *"Proceed Huelva, Spain"*, nothing more. On arrival at Huelva the representatives of The Rio Tinto Company boarded and informed me that I was 'fixed' outward to load iron ore, but as the charter had been negotiated by cable, there had not been time to get the charter party signed and my copy sent out. This, then, left me 'in the air' as to the conditions under which I had to load, the amount of freight agreed upon, and more important to me, the port to which I had to deliver my cargo. We moved under the tips and loading commenced.

Very soon we were almost loaded, and still no charter party or port at which to deliver the cargo. I cabled my owners stating that we were nearly loaded and received a cable in reply *"Proceed to Cartaret"*, which was a bit cryptic! Where was Cartaret? Worse, I could not find anyone in Huelva who did know this port! I discovered that there was a little place in France called Cartaret (on the western side of the Cherbourg peninsula), but obviously the Ribston could not go there because there was not enough water. Somewhat annoyed, I again cabled the owners, asking for the position of Cartaret. I had expected to receive the latitude and longitude, or some more definite information. Instead, I received the reply : *"Cartaret, New Jersey"*.

I knew of course of New Jersey, U.S.A., so, without a charter party

copy, I set off as directed. The barometer was falling and all the indications were for westerly gales. They arrived, at once, and stayed all the way across the Atlantic. Deep-laden with iron ore, a single deck ship, westerly gales - could fate have dealt me a more unkind hand? The Ribston rolled so badly we really thought the funnel would go overboard - it has been known! Day after day the coal was going without anything approaching commensurate results in the way of progress. At one stage I wondered whether it was wise to pass Bermuda, which was on our lee. The chief engineer grew restive about the rapidly disappearing bunker coal, and I grew worried with his often repeated question : "*How far are we off, Captain?*"

The Ribston eventually made Sandy Hook about the same time as the chief engineer informed me that his coal supply was down to about six hours - in fact he was sweeping the bunkers. When the pilot boat came alongside he hailed us "*Where are you bound to, Cap?*" "*Cartaret*", I replied. His reply shook me somewhat "*Where the hell is that place, Cap?*". I shouted "*My instructions are Cartaret, New Jersey.*" "*Say, Cap,*" he shouted, "*Go in to the inner pilot boat, maybe those guys have heard of it; we haven't!*"

Here we were, without much more than a bucket full of coal, having crossed the entire Atlantic, only to find that the local pilot boat had never heard of Cartaret! I had visions of the sack. The Ribston proceeded to the inner pilot boat, and we were again told that there was no such port as Cartaret. After a few moments' silence - it seemed like weeks - the pilot in charge said "*Cap! There is a smelting works at the back of Staten Island called Cartaret, maybe it is that. What is your cargo?*" "*Iron ore,*" I replied. "*Makes sense!*" he said, "*It must be Cartaret smelting works. I'll give you a pilot.*" We had two tugs, one ahead and one astern, to help us move up this narrow and very winding tributary. When we arrived and made fast, an official from the works came alongside and hailed "*Glad to see you Captain, we've been expecting this ship for a very long time!*" So this was the place, after all.

My agents were Simpson, Spence and Young, Battery Point, New York. I proceeded there as speedily as possible, after which, as is customary, their shipping clerk accompanied me to the Custom House to 'enter the ship, inward', and deposit the Articles etc, with the British Consul. The Customs officials calmly returned all my ship's papers, saying "*We can't enter your ship here, Captain, as this place (meaning Cartaret) is outside our boundary.*" I asked where I should enter the ship. "*Don't know, Captain; maybe the Custom House at Chrome, which is quite near to where your ship is lying.*" After consultations with the agents, it was decided that Chrome must be the place to enter the ship.

The officials at Chrome Custom House refused my ship's papers, also disclaiming any jurisdiction over a vessel at Cartaret. Furthermore, they could not help. Incredible as it may seem, the fact remains I arrived, discharged a full cargo, and then sailed from an American port, within a few miles of New

York itself, without ever having been entered or cleared!

Before twelve months had elapsed my owners informed me that for the first time in her life, the **Ribston** was making money. The story of my command of this ship is one of extreme happiness, of good luck, good fortune and not a little success. Were it possible to be offered a choice of command, the **Ribston** or the **Queen Elizabeth**, my choice, without hesitation, would be my old ship **Ribston**.

*Note:*

*The Ribston sailed on until 23rd April 1916 when she was torpedoed by a German submarine in position 47°55' N, 6°32' W. At the time of her loss she was commanded by Captain R.T.Marshall, the author's brother.*

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### **BOOK REVIEW - "MERSEY ROVERS" by Roy Fenton**

*The coastal tramp ship owners of Liverpool and the Mersey*

This newly published book is the work of a respected author and Member of our Society. Bearing in mind that the contents are directly in line with the constitutional objectives of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, it is most warmly welcomed and of considerable interest to the membership.

To allow for a better understanding of the emergence and growth in coastal trade from the Mersey, the author first outlines briefly the histories of the ports within the Basin and their trading links based on local commodities and industries. This leads on to the major part of the book; the coastal shipping companies, their histories, ships and trades. Some thirty-three companies are covered, often with a deal of human interest and financial detail. With each company there is a fleet list covering in total some 300 steam and motor vessels, all fully detailed and with many an interesting career to relate. There are 400 well-presented ship photographs.

Some of the smaller companies are included in a short 'miscellaneous' section, and the only omissions are those already covered in previous publications of the World Ship Society (the publishers), or those about to be covered.

The author is to be congratulated in the detail encompassed within this research undertaken over a number of years, and the interesting and informative way he has presented this undoubtedly valuable addition to the history of Merseyside coastal tramp shipping.

The appearance and quality of this production by the World Ship Society are most attractive, and copies are available at £33\* plus £3 postage and packing (UK), or £4 elsewhere from:-

W.S.S., 18 Durrington Avenue, Wimbledon, London SW20 8NT  
(\* £25, plus p. & p. for W.S.S. members)

**P.J.H.T.**

**“SHORT SEA - LONG WAR” by John de S. Winser**

The World Ship Society has produced another record of World War II Allied shipping activities. This new book is written by John de S. Winser who is well known for his greatly detailed record of “The D-Day Ships”.

In his latest book “Short Sea - Long War” he details the World War II histories of 119 cross-Channel ferries and other short sea vessels including the railway owned train ferries, which in peacetime flew the Belgian, British, Dutch and French flags. The book concentrates on the vessels switched from their pre-war routes to world-wide naval and military operations.

The author states in his introduction that the World War II voyages of these vessels stretched from Nova Scotia in the west to Indo China in the east, and from Archangel in the north to Capetown in the south.

The book opens with a two page display of photographs of a selection of ferries in their peacetime guise. This is followed by a 1938 - 1946 Chronology listing the operations in which the vessels were involved. The main section of the book follows detailing the World War II histories of all 119 vessels. There are eleven sections, each one covering vessels of one flag, route, or pre-war company. These histories are illustrated by 130 excellently produced photographs, each with its source and reference number, and many are dated. These photographs range from a few pre-war views to photographs taken in distant ports, with the vessels thousands of miles away from their usual routes. How different these vessels appear in silhouette after their wartime alterations and in camouflage painting! Photographs of vessels in drydock under repair of war damage appear with those unfortunate enough to have fallen into enemy hands, such as the *Côte d'Argent*, converted by Germany into the minelayer *Ostmark*. Evacuation scenes at the fall of France depict such vessels as the *Lady of Mann* embarking troops at Brest on 16th June 1940. Then there are ‘D-Day’ photographs taken at Arromanches.

This excellent book concludes with a full index of all the vessels under review, and also all the other vessels mentioned in the text.

“Short Sea - Long War” runs to 160 pages and is produced to the usual high standards of World Ship Society publications. It will appeal to the Maritime researcher, the World War II naval buff, and the cross-Channel ferry historian.

**“Short Sea - Long War” is available now at a price of £21.00p P.B.K.**

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“Serpent in Paradise” by Dea Birkett was reviewed in the September “Bulletin”. Dea has advised Jim Cowden that L.N.R.S. Members might like to order a copy at the discounted price of £14.99p (free postage in U.K.) from Picador Direct Mail on 0181-324-5707.

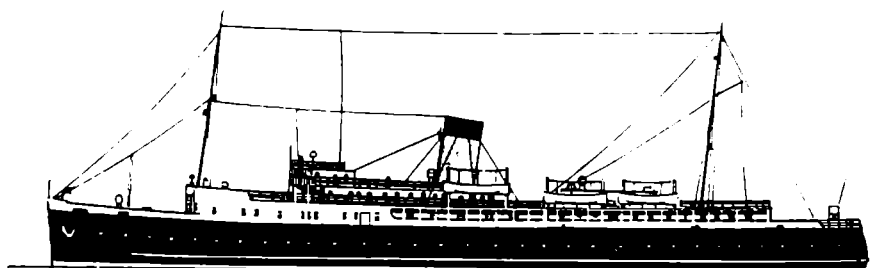
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*The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*  
(Founded 1938)

**THE BULLETIN**

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 41, Number 3, Winter, 1997



Coal to Kilkeel ( <i>Richard England</i> )	page 57
The "Princess Victoria" Remembered ( <i>Alfred Locke</i> )	page 62
Sources of Marine Illustrations ( <i>Nina Jenkins</i> )	page 70
A Database of Early Steam Vessels Registered at Liverpool	page 76
Shipwrecked on Vatersay ( <i>Charles Dawson</i> )	page 77
The "Buenaventura" Incident ( <i>David Eccles</i> )	page 82
P. & O.'s Brindisi - Port Said Shuttle Service	page 84

*plus Readers' Letters, Notes and Queries, and Reviews of  
the Society's Meetings*

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***Thursday 15th January, 1998***

**Visit to Cammell Laird**

***Thursday 19th February, 1998***

**Time and Tide ( T.Williams )**

***Thursday 19th March, 1998***

**Safety at Sea, A Brief History of Government Involvement (D.J.Pickup)**

***Front Cover : The "Princess Victoria" of 1946 - article on page 62***

## COAL TO KILKEEL

*The topsail schooner "Via" of Brixham, 99 tons register, 210 tons burthen, was built by J.Upham at Brixham in 1864. From 1927 she was owned and commanded by Captain James Doyle of Kilkeel, County Down, Northern Ireland, who employed her in the trade between Ireland and West Coast ports until her loss off Carlingford Lough in 1931. Captain England, former owner/ master of the schooner "Nellie Bywater" served as boy in the "Via" almost up to the time of her loss. In this article he gives a vivid account of the everyday life of the "Via's" crew of four in the late 1920s.*

*by Captain Richard England*

The October afternoon was cold and grey, with a bitter easterly wind blowing across the Mersey, as the schooner *Via* towed up to Garston to load coal for Kilkeel. Close inshore in the Garston channel we skirted the park, a welcome patch of green. Smoke from the tug, blowing back over the *Via*, made it difficult to see ahead so that Weddock, the schooner's mate, was compelled to lean over the bows in an effort to sight the dock entrance. As the stone piers loomed up through the murk, the tug sounded a warning blast and rounded to. One of her crew hailed us : "*Schooner ahoy! Let-go!*"

"*Let-go!*" repeated the mate. John, the A.B., slipped the tow-rope which splashed overboard. The *Via* glided silently towards the pier where a little group of piermen huddled in the lee of the watch-house, waiting for her to drift within range of their heaving lines.

"*Will you be all right now, Captain?*" inquired the tugmaster, leaning out of his wheelhouse window. "*Aye, we'll do nicely, thank you,*" replied our captain. We heard the tug's telegraph ring; there was a violent thrashing alongside as her screw churned the water into foam, then she was scurrying away down river at full speed, in quest of another tow. The piermen threw us a line and hauled ashore our warp. "*All fast, Captain! Take in the slack. Berth alongside the Goldseeker.*" The captain waved an acknowledgement to the dock-master's instructions as we pulled in the slack of the warp and took it to the dolly winch. The sound of the pawls rang out as we hove the *Via* into the dock.

The old dock was crowded with ketches, schooners and a few steamers. They lay three and four abreast against the West Wall. All the loading berths under the tips were occupied. It was my job to run out the warp afresh. I jumped into the punt towing astern and sculled ahead of the schooner, reading the names of the regular Garston traders as I passed under their long bowsprits: Solway Lass, Bengullion, Nellie Bywater, Baltic, Lochranza Castle and many others were there, waiting to load. A couple of men jumped aboard the *Via* to help John and the mate on the handles of the dolly.

Greetings from old friends, scraps of news and a good deal of banter were shouted to us as the schooner warped down to her berth alongside the **Goldseeker**. The *Via* was snugly moored by the time dusk set in. Sitting in the tiny galley cooking supper, I watched the dockside lights come on. Every now and again, between the wails and shrieks from the coal tips, I could overhear bits of news and gossip being exchanged by John and the mate with the crew of the **Goldseeker**. It was good to be back in Garston again.

Four days passed before a loading berth was available for the *Via*. The weather was glorious for the time of year and Weddock kept us hard at work. I was up and about before daylight. My first task was to light the galley fire and put the kettle on to boil. After helping the others wash the decks, I cooked the breakfast and set the cabin table. The meal was followed by chores, then, armed with a scraper, I was hoisted aloft to scrape the topmasts. John and I scraped both masts from the trucks to the deck. On the third evening after our arrival, Captain Doyle informed the mate that he had bought a cargo of house coals and had arranged for us to go under the tips the following day.

Early next morning, the *Via* was made ready to receive her cargo. The booms were guyed out and the yards braced hard against the backstays. The outboard braces were unrove, and after stripping the hatches, the hatch boards were laid across the decks and galley top as a protection against the avalanche of coals which would soon be shooting down on us from the tips. We got up old tarpaulins from the forepeak and draped them over the cabin skylight and the companions. After dinner we were told that the loading berth was clear. I ran a line across the dock and we warped the schooner under the tips. There was much shouting from the quayside as we moored. Somebody wanted the ship further ahead, but someone else required her moving astern. The gang of trimmers, waiting to join us, joined in the general hubbub. At length the *Via* was made fast to the satisfaction of all.

The trimmers disappeared down into the hold just before the first truck of coal cascaded partly through the main hatch and partly on the deck. The *Via* listed over and was enveloped in a choking cloud of coal dust which turned our spotless little vessel into a filthy shambles. Throughout the afternoon and evening a stream of coal poured down from the tips. A great heap extended from rail to rail over the main hatch with its peak subsiding every now and again, as the invisible trimmers shovelled the cargo into the wings of the hold. How those trimmers could work down below will always remain a mystery to me. The ring of their shovels and the steady disappearance of truck-load after truck-load of coal into the black depths were the only indications of their presence on board.

Above, the busy staithes presented a fantastic sight after nightfall, when the lights went on. Ships listed drunkenly in all directions, some down by the head, others by the stern; their tall masts reeled and swayed to each fresh onslaught of coal. Clouds of choking dust rose into the air. The noise was



continuous and deafening. It was impossible to sleep with the screech of the tips and the thunderous roar of the falling waggon-loads of coal. From below in the *Via*, the scrape of steel shovels added to the din. Long into the night and until the early hours of the next morning loading continued.

The last truck-load teemed down, with the welcome shout: "*Here's the one you're looking for*", from someone on the tip. Shortly afterwards, the trimmers crawled out one by one, through a mere rathole in the centre of the filled main hatch and trooped wearily ashore. Banging impatiently on the fo'c'sle scuttle, Weddock interrupted our all too brief rest. It was just breaking dawn as we warped the heavily laden *Via* back to the West Wall. As we struggled to start her moving the mate found fault with everything we did. Even John, who was usually bubbling over with good humour, barely spoke a civil word. We moored up in our old berth.

Things were not so bad when the hatches had been battened down and the surplus coal cleared off the decks. Clad in oilskins and seaboots we gradually got rid of the coal dust, beginning on the booms, house tops and rails, and finishing with the decks. Every drop of water we used had to be lifted from the dock in a draw-bucket. How I envied the steamboatmen their powerful deck hoses for washing down. The worst of the job was done before I was allowed to get the breakfast ready.

The *Via* was due to sail the following morning, but a thick fog on the river and the absence of wind kept us made fast in dock. I was in the punt alongside, cleaning the hull, when the master of a steamer which was leaving the dock hailed me: "*Will you run some wires out for me, boy?*" When I had laid the wires out to his satisfaction, he shouted for me to scull under the wing of his bridge. "*Hold you cap out, son,*" he said. I could hardly believe my good fortune when I saw that he had dropped two half crowns into my outstretched cap. I hastened back to the *Via* and tumbled aboard. "*Look what he's given me, John. Here! You have one of them*". But before my shpmate could take the proffered coin, a great hairy paw came swiftly from behind me and grabbed both half crowns. In the twinkling of an eye, they disappeared into the mate's trouser pocket, without so much as a word being spoken. How we hated old Weddock and his mean spiteful ways.

The next day dawned fine, but chilly. As I lit the galley fire the captain came on deck and took a turn up and down. He glanced aloft to the main truck, where the wind sock fluttered gently, now and again, in the light early morning airs. It gave every indication of a fair breeze from the south-east later on. At a word from the 'old man', Weddock rolled up to the galley door. "*Hurry up with the breakfast, Dick*", he said, "*We'll be sailing at tide time*". After a hurried meal, the *Via* was warped down the dock close to the entrance. We hoisted the punt, stowing it on its chocks on the main hatch and then flaked all the running gear in readiness for making sail as soon as the lock gates were opened.

I could see far down the Mersey, past the New Ferry Stage and the Conway training ship. A nice steady south-easterly breeze ballooned the clewed-up topsails as we freed them from the gaskets. We regained the deck just as the lock gates started to open. Slowly gathering steerage way, the *Via* glided out of the lock into the yellow, swirling waters of the Mersey. We were all out of breath by the time the mainsail was set. A Woodside ferry, packed with city workers, swept fussily past. Liverpool landing stage, with its liners, packets and ferry boats dropped astern. We had the *Via* under full sail by the time we were abreast of the Rock lighthouse. The first of the ebb tide began to give us its powerful aid as the *Via* joined the long procession of outward-bounders making for the open sea.

After dinner, Weddock sent me over the bows to give the bowsprit a coat of linseed oil. Out on the footropes, hidden from sight by the square foresail, I took my time over the job. From the extreme end of the bowsprit, I had a grand view of the *Via* sailing towards me. "*Thought you'd fallen overboard*", grumbled Weddock, as I put my gear away in the lamplocker aft. After supper watches were set, John and the mate going below until midnight. I kept a lookout but the sea around us was deserted. Gradually a mist closed in reducing visibility to about half a mile. "*Better get the foghorn out of the locker, Dick!*" called Captain Doyle from the wheel, as a blanket of thick fog drifted down like smoke and shut us in completely. There was a rattle of gear from aloft and the low thunder of slatting canvas as the breeze failed us altogether. The watch passed slowly, with the *Via* idly rolling to the swells without steerage way. I sounded the horn at regular intervals and listened for other ships. I was very cold and drowsy. The fog saturated the sails and rigging and big drops of moisture pattered down on deck. The booms kept up a monotonous creaking as they chafed against their saddles to the movements of the ship.

It must have been nearing midnight when the captain suddenly asked: "*Can you hear anything, boy?*" We both listened for some moments, but I could only hear the usual noises of the ship and the sea. "*Sound the horn again!*" As the order was given, the bows of a large vessel loomed out of the fog and bore swiftly down on us. Her great side, agleam with lighted ports, towered above us as she surged past, then she was gone again, swallowed up by the clammy mist. Her wash set the *Via* rocking so violently that the sea splashed and gurgled through the washports, and John and the mate rushed on deck alarmed by the sudden commotion. "*It was the bloody mail boat. They never even saw us,*" raved the 'old man', startled out of his habitual calm by the narrowness of our escape. We had certainly been close to complete disaster and it made me realise how swiftly a ship could be lost in fog, despite every seamanlike precaution.

The fog cleared as the *Via* rounded the Chickens and a moderate breeze from the south picked up. As soon as it was daylight, we all turned out

with the usual routine of scrubbing the decks and a short spell at the pumps. By the time I had cooked the breakfast of bacon, eggs, potatoes and onions I was ravenous. Thank goodness there was always plenty of good food in the *Via* and you could eat your fill.

Vague, shadowy outlines of the Mourne Mountains were first sighted when they were barely distinguishable from the banks of cloud. As we closed the land, it slowly revealed itself as a vividly coloured patchwork of mountain, fields and bog, dotted here and there with little white houses. A mile or so offshore, we put about and stood off and on to await the tide. At a word from Captain Doyle, Weddock commenced taking in sail. By the time it was half flood we had flaked down the warps, put out fenders and cockbilled the port anchor in readiness for entering harbour. *"There should be enough water for us now, Jim"*, said the captain, *"Stand by to go about!"* The *Via* sailed up into the wind and as the headsails backed, we hauled them over. We could see Kilkeel harbour entrance, with a little cluster of ships' masts behind it and as we got closer to the piers, a crowd of men and boys put off to the *Via* in small boats. They swarmed over the rails and took possession of our decks. It was great fun to see the boisterous mob warp the *Via* into Kilkeel harbour, turning the labour into a light-hearted frolic.

We were not allowed to do anything except furl the topsails aloft. By the time we had regained the deck, the *Via* was snugly moored up with sails furled and coated, running gear coiled down and decks tidied up. Our helpers had even ranged the port cable in the waterways and guyed out the mainboom to list the *Via* towards the quayside.

*"That'll do Jim,"* said the 'old man' as he stepped ashore. *"Be ready to start at eight in the morning."* A few moments later, I watched my two shipmates hurrying up the harbour road, bound for their homes.....

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## LOCAL NEWS

### **SUPERSEACAT FOR LIVERPOOL TO DUBLIN SERVICE**

Sea Containers has announced that a SuperSeaCat will operate the Liverpool - Dublin service from March, 1998. The service is presently operated by the **Lady of Mann**. Sea Containers ordered six SuperSeaCats from Fincantieri in 1995 on the condition that it could cancel its order for four of them if the first two didn't meet performance expectations. Sea Containers said in a statement : *"The first two SuperSeaCats have now been in service for three months and performance has exceeded all expectations in terms of speed and ride quality. Indeed, Sea Containers is of the opinion that the single hull SuperSeaCat has superior performance characteristics to twin-hulled vessels of similar size."* SuperSeaCats travel at 38 knots fully laden, and have seating for 774 passengers on two decks. There is accommodation for 175 cars.

## THE "PRINCESS VICTORIA" REMEMBERED

*by Alfred Locke*

*31st January, 1998 marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the loss of the Princess Victoria whilst on passage from Stranraer to Larne. This article looks at the four vessels which have carried the name Princess Victoria on the North Channel route.*

In 1861 the railway link from Castle Douglas to Portpatrick and Stranraer was completed, and the following year the short sea route between Portpatrick and Larne was inaugurated by the steamer Briton of the Glasgow and Stranraer Steam Packet Company. Some £500,000 was spent on improving Portpatrick harbour, this work being finished in 1865. In 1867 this service ceased and the mail contract was refused because of the irregularity of the sailings due to the exposed conditions at Portpatrick in stormy weather. In 1871 a new company was formed as the Larne and Stranraer Steamboat Company. The approach to Stranraer up Loch Ryan is shallow, and the first vessels built for the new company were, for this reason, paddle steamers. In 1874 Portpatrick was abandoned altogether and by Parliamentary consent the mail contract was obtained for the Stranraer route.

In 1885 the Portpatrick and Wigtownshire Railway Company was bought by a consortium of five railways, and from 1890 the ships were operated under the style of the Portpatrick and Wigtownshire Railways Joint Committee. The first Princess Victoria was built in 1890 by William Denny & Bros. at Dumbarton. She was a paddle steamer of 1,096 gross tons, 369 nett, and had a length of 280' and a beam of 35-5'. Her 2-cylinder compound diagonal engines gave her a speed of 19 knots. The Princess Victoria (1) was basically a cattle carrier - passengers were, in the main, better served from either Glasgow or Liverpool, and thus the space was limited to a few first-class cabins plus space for the drovers accompanying the cattle. It is interesting to note that the order was intended for Harland & Wolff, but they were unable to guarantee delivery within the desired time scale and so Dennys were asked to build her. The Princess Victoria (1) was launched on 23rd January 1890 and achieved 19.77 knots on her trials. The total cost was £47,237. She lasted until September 1910 when she was laid up in Loch Ryan, and then sold for scrap.

The second Princess Victoria also came from Denny's Dumbarton yard in 1912 and was launched on 22nd February. She was a sister of the earlier Princess Maud of 1904, the vessel which had introduced turbines to the North Channel route. The Princess Victoria (2) had a gross tonnage of 1,678, 702 nett, and an overall length of 312'. She cost £70,689 and achieved 20.4 knots on her trials. In October 1914 the Princess Victoria (2) was requisitioned as a cross-Channel troop-ship and served throughout the war in

this capacity, mainly between Southampton and France. In December 1919 she was decommissioned and returned to the Stranraer-Larne route without any reconditioning due to the urgency of getting her back quickly into service. In 1922 she returned to her builders and was modernised, and on 1st January 1923 she was transferred to the ownership of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, along with her running mate, the Princess Maud. The Princess Victoria (2) lasted until March 1934 when she was sold and broken up in Norway.

Wm. Denny & Bros. of Dumbarton launched the third Princess Victoria on 21st April 1939. She was a pioneer car carrier with stern shore ramp loading, accommodating about 50 cars. Cattle could be carried on the lower deck, forward. The passenger accommodation was greatly increased and she had a certificate for 875 first-class and 542 second-class passengers. The Princess Victoria (3) had a gross tonnage of 2,197; 1,032 nett. She had a length of 322' overall and two Sulzer type engines gave her a speed of 19 knots.

The Princess Victoria (3) had hardly settled down on her designed route when the Second World War broke out. On 8th September 1939 the ship was requisitioned as an auxiliary minelayer and, after fitting out, was commissioned as HMS Princess Victoria at Greenock on 2nd November. Two days later she was off Land's End heading for Portsmouth in westerly force 10 conditions when her starboard main engine broke down, and it was with extreme difficulty that she was turned head to wind to enable repairs to be carried out. HMS Princess Victoria's minelaying work continued until 18th May 1940 when she laid two 6¼-mile parallel lines in the East Coast Barrier. After completing this task she set a course for Immingham, and just after passing the Humber Light Vessel at 23.15 a massive mine explosion occurred forward of her bridge. The Princess Victoria began to settle by the head, listing heavily to starboard, but within a short time she had settled on the bottom on an even keel, with her masts, funnel and bridge exposed. The Princess Victoria was officially paid off as lost on 19th May 1940.

The Princess Victoria (4) was a post war duplicate of the third holder of the name. She was launched by Dennys on 27th August 1946 and was identical to her earlier sister apart from minor ventilator differences. The new ship ran her trials on 28th February 1947 and achieved 19.38 knots, and on 8th March was delivered to her owners, the London, Midland & Scottish Railway Company, Stranraer section.

On 31st January 1953 the Princess Victoria (4) left Stranraer at 07.45 in stormy conditions with 127 passengers and 49 crew. The weather rapidly deteriorated into a strong northerly gale. At 09.46 the ship radioed that she was hove-to off the mouth of Loch Ryan and needed assistance as she was no longer under control. She next reported that she was attempting to make for the shelter of the Irish coast. The salvage steamer *Salveda* and the destroyer

HMS Contest put out from Greenock and estimated a rendezvous at 13.00.

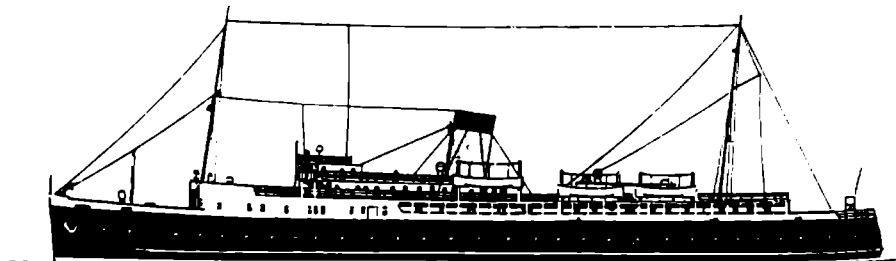
However, at 10.32 the **Princess Victoria's** stern doors were smashed in by heavy seas, and the water on the car deck caused a list to starboard. The **Princess Victoria's** hull was divided transversely into 9 watertight compartments, and the ship was designed to float with two flooded. She could heel to 45° with safety (but it was not known what would happen to the metacentre of gravity if the vehicles fell into the scuppers at this angle). In fact this is what was about to happen. By noon the list was 35°, and by 12.45 it had reached 45° and was made worse by the loose pile of vehicles. At 13.58 the last message from the **Princess Victoria** was that she was lying on her side with the engine room flooded. The distress rockets were not reaching sufficient height to be seen. She had also drifted south of her estimated position so that Portpatrick Radio placed her in a different position.

When the **Princess Victoria's** distress calls were picked up the **Pass of Drumochter** (Bulk Oil), the **Orchy** (Wm.Sloan), the **Lairdsmoor** (Burns & Laird) and the Fleetwood trawler **Eastcotes** (J.Marr) left the shelter of Belfast Lough in the appalling conditions. The destroyer **Contest** was delayed by the heavy seas, and her radar was blanked off by the height of the waves. The salvage vessel **Salveda** was proceeding slowly in precipitous seas.

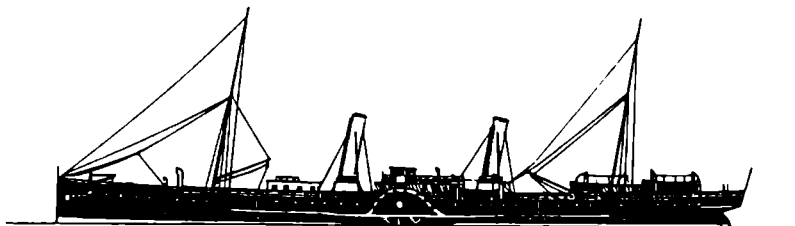
At 14.05 on 31st January 1953 the **Princess Victoria** sank, five miles off Copeland Island.

At 14.45 the **Orchy** sighted wreckage and, moving to windward, pumped oil into the sea and directed the searching **Donaghadee** and **Portpatrick** lifeboats to the scene where they rescued 33 people. In all 43 survivors were found, although one died later. 133 of the **Princess Victoria's** passengers and crew drowned.

The subsequent Court of Enquiry blamed the inadequacy of the half-height stern doors and recommended that full height outer opening watertight doors be introduced on all ferries.



*PRINCESS VICTORIA (III), PRINCES VICTORIA (IV)*



*The paddle steamer Princess Victoria (1) of 1890*

By way of conclusion, the log of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's King Orry for 31st January, 1953 is reproduced. Note the overall berth to berth passage time of eleven hours. Normally the turbine steamers made the passage in a little over three and a half hours.

Log of Steamship *King Orry* Master. *P.T. Anderson*  
From *Liverpool* To *Douglas* Sat. 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1953.

Lighth, Headlands, &c. Passed on Passage.	Time.	Courses.		Wind.	Remarks as to Weather, Anchoring, Tacking, Detention, &c.
		Star'd Compass.	Star'd Compass.		
S. Stage.	1055				Whole gale N.W. wind, very severe at times.
Rock.	1114.				Embarked 120 passengers & sailed.
Cowley.	1155				Very heavy broken sea, fierce rain & sleet squalls.
Formby.	1200				Vessel pitching & pounding heavily, shipping much water at times.
Bar St. V.	1245		N 20 W.		Visibility good.
Douglas Hd.	2150				Berthed N° 1 Victoria Pier & discharged.
N° 1 Vic. Pier.	2155				Securely moored. Parcels kept on board until Monday.

Time on Passage hrs. min. 11 - 0 Distance Run 42 miles  
Received Mails 1005 Ship's Draught Ford. 10 - 10  
Landed Mails 2215 of Water. 13 - 2  
Time of High Water 1215 Height 24.9  
Passed on Passage Co's S.S.

Names of Seaman	From	To
On Look-out	Watches	
During Passage	Kept.	
Night Watchman	Cowley.	
Regulation Lights exhibited		

M. D. 1230.

Signature J. A. Collier.

Mate.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

### **THE "RANGER'S" RETIREMENT**

An article about the career of the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association's **Ranger** appeared in the Summer, '97 *Bulletin*. The 73-year old vessel was finally withdrawn from service in February 1954 and was scrapped by the Liverpool scrap metal firm, Henry Bath & Son Ltd. This was the firm that bought the **Great Eastern** in 1889 and broke her up on Tranmere beach.

In his book 'Ship Ashore', Desmond Young, son of Commodore Sir Frederick Young, makes the following comment on the sturdy old salvage vessel: *"She has had a hard life. Deliberately, she has been put into situations of great danger, into places that were 'no place for a ship' but into which she has had to go because, by accident, another ship has gone there before her. Through many anxious days and nights she has lain grinding and bumping against the side of a wreck. Not infrequently she has taken the ground. Once at least she has been 'pinned down' with greenheart logs across her, and carried the weight of a sunken vessel in the lifting wires. Her decks, teak though they are, bear the marks of the boilers and pumps that have had to be landed on them 'with a run' as she surged alongside."*

The **Ranger's** last salvage job was the refloating of the Lamport & Holt cargo liner **Raeburn**, which went aground in the Bristol Channel on 3rd September 1953.

The replacement for the **Ranger** was the **Dispenser**, which was chartered for five years by the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association. The **Dispenser** was built for the Admiralty in 1943 by Smith's Dock Co.Ltd., Middlesborough.

### **MORE ABOUT THE "CAMPANIA"**

In June and July 1914 the **Campania** made two voyages from Glasgow to New York and back for the Anchor Line. In the last days of July, 1914, she was moored at Stobcross Quay on the Clyde in Anchor Line colours and flying the Blue Ensign.

### **THE BELL OF THE "KING ORRY" (3)**

Dave Handscombe, of Castletown, Isle of Man, is researching the career of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **King Orry** of 1913. He has managed to obtain photocopies of all her Crew Agreements, the originals being kept in the archives of the University of Newfoundland. Apparently, all British Merchant Navy records were sent to Canada for safe keeping at the beginning of the war in 1939, and only the records of vessels which survived the war were returned to the U.K. in 1945. However, Dave has problems positively identifying a ship's bell engraved **King Orry**, and wonders if L.N.R.S. members could help. He writes :



"Another aspect that I am looking into is a ship's bell marked **King Orry**. It is owned by a gentleman from Birkdale who bought it from an antique dealer on the Isle of Man many years ago. He believes the bell is from the **King Orry** (3) of 1913. He bases this on the manufacturer of the bell being Henry Wilson & Company of Cornhill in Liverpool. Apparently their factory was bombed out of production during the 1939/45 war, so that rules out the possibility of the bell belonging to the **King Orry** (4) of 1946. He seems to think that the bell was removed when the **King Orry** (3) was taken over by the Royal Navy in 1939.

Unless the bell was stolen, I can't see it having been officially removed by either the Steam Packet or the Royal Navy. I have been given to understand that the bell hung in a church or chapel in the south of the Isle of Man for a few years, but I have not been able to confirm this.

Can anyone advise me of the dates between which Henry Wilson and Company's factory operated? If I could confirm the date that the factory opened, then it may be possible to work out which **King Orry** the bell belonged to. I should be most grateful for any information"

*Can any reader help Dave Handscombe with the dates of Henry Wilson & Company's Cornhill factory?*

### JUST FANCY THAT !!!

The Liverpool & Manchester S.S. Co. Ltd.

**092** **FIRST CLASS,**  
1937.

ISSUED TO  
*John Wallfries Esq*  
*H. Beechfield Road*  
*West Hill, Liverpool*

Available by express to passengers' sailings as advertised by the Company, excepting from Liverpool on Sun. Holidays.

PIER DUES. Before disembarking at any Pier (Liverpool excepted), this Ticket must be shown to the Porter, and Landing Ticket obtained on payment of 2d. to cover Pier Dues (excepting Douglas and Blackpool, 6d.).

**SEASON**  
(NOT AVAILABLE ON SUNDAYS.)  
**NOT TRANSFERABLE.**  
**1937.**

Signature of Holder *[Signature]*  
**£4 10s. 0d** PAID BY  
*[Signature]*

THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE ARE HEREIN

In 1937 a first class Season ticket for the St. Tudno or St. Seiriol was available for the sum of £4-10s-0d. (or £4-50p). Excluding Sundays, some 100 round trips to Menai Bridge could be made in the course of the season, at a cost of 4.5p, (or 9d) per round trip.

Sixty years later, a day-excursion ticket to the Isle of Man costs £34 for just one trip!

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Greasby, Wirral,  
November, 1997.

*Dear Friends,*

*Well, so far, so good; the Season has got away to a good start. And if you detect a hint of complacency in that opening phrase, then let me add somewhat hastily that it had very little to do with me! Many of you will be aware that a potential disaster at the September meeting was smoothly averted when the the advertised speaker, Mr Fred O'Brien, ("The Battle of the Atlantic"), who had been called away at a critical time to do jury duty, was replaced at short notice by our own John Shepherd, who launched into a fascinating and well illustrated talk about the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company! Thank you, John : we are all very grateful.*

*Then, in October, Harry Hignett addressed us on the subject of the American Bureau of Shipping, a Classification Society much akin to Lloyd's. It was rather an esoteric subject which Harry had researched well, and so shed a beam of enlightenment upon his appreciative audience, prompting a Vote of Thanks in stimulating style from Len Lloyd. All in all, a good start.*

*Of great concern at the moment is the fate of "The Monday Club", that nucleus of devoted researchers who make exclusive use of the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on twenty-two Mondays of the year, for which we pay the services of a curator/porter. A meeting of Council to be called later this month will assess the working of this unique arrangement over the past year, and decide whether we can afford a further series of Mondays next year. I certainly hope that we can.*

*As most of you know, my own field of research is largely connected to the history of Messrs Thos. & Jas. Harrison's ships, though diversions have been known to take place. Just recently , the discovery by a prominent art dealer of a hitherto little known painting (in which he thought Harrisons might be interested) led Sam Davidson and myself on a long and tortuous trail to identify the vessel in the picture. It was alleged to be an early Harrison steamer called the CHARENTE, but the ship displayed neither a red Maltese Cross, nor a "two-of-fat-and-one-of-lean" motif on the funnel. Now the name CHARENTE is hardly of common usage, yet, perversely, three steamers all named CHARENTE , were launched from North-East yards in the early 1860s; any one of which, at first glance, could have been the ship in the painting. To the best of our knowledge, no other pictures or even Builders' profiles existed with which comparisons could be made.*

*We knew from Harrisons' records that their CHARENTE had been sold to the Secretary of State for India in July 1863, about 15 months after her acceptance trials, but nothing was known of her subsequent career. Then Sam, sifting through old copies of "The Illustrated London News" in the Athenaeum Library, Liverpool, came across an article published in the issue of 19th September 1863 describing the laying of the Persian Gulf section of the telegraph cable to India. A large fleet of vessels was involved, including "... the CHARENTE, a screw steamer, which will be permanently stationed in the Persian Gulf as a repairing-vessel, and supplying the wants of the stations". Her name was changed to AMBERWITCH, and she was operated by the Royal Indian Marine. Ten years later, another article in the I.L.N. reproduced a sketch of the AMBERWITCH which compared closely, allowing for the intrusion of cable-lifting and stowing gear, to the CHARENTE of the painting.*

*Inspection of India Office records at the British Library in London with the professional assistance of Ms Nina Jenkins, a Researcher, whose article on sources of ship illustrations appears elsewhere in this issue, confirmed the purchase and renaming of the CHARENTE.*

*I mention this episode simply to illustrate the vagarious nature of maritime research, and how the unexpected so often erupts in a fascinating and intriguing manner.*

*As I write, I am thinking vaguely of Christmas shopping, and realise that none too soon the Festive Season of Goodwill and Good Cheer will be upon us! It is highly appropriate, therefore, to close this letter with Sincere Greetings and Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Prosperous New Year to all our Members and their families. God bless you, everyone!*



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#### DATA PROTECTION ACT

**All Membership details are maintained on a Liverpool Nautical Research Society Data Base, and under U.K. law we are required to bring this fact to the attention of all Members. In future the Society's Subscription Renewal Forms will include a clause bringing this fact to the attention of Members.**

j.s.

## SOURCES OF MARINE ILLUSTRATIONS

by Nina Jenkins

*Ms Jenkins, a Research Agent, has kindly granted permission to re-print this article for the benefit of readers of "The Bulletin". However, she would like to point out that it was written in August, 1993, and that many new sources have arisen in the interim. Nevertheless, we believe that it still provides a useful guide for those interested in the acquisition of ship pictures.*  
g.c.

There is no single source for prints, paintings or photographs. There is a large number of commercial companies and organisations who have a photo library and there are many, many museums and literally thousands of books which contain illustrations of ships.

The pre-eminent repository of maritime illustrations in the United Kingdom is the National Maritime Museum whose collection of oil paintings is said to number 3,500 works plus some 30,000 prints and drawings, as well as two substantial photographic collections. A *Concise Catalogue of Oil Paintings in the N.M.M.* includes an index of named ships portrayed. The Museum's catalogues of *Warship Photographs* and *Merchant Sailing Ships* contain references to available photographic prints going back to the 1860s. The catalogue of ship models may also help to fill a gap where no paintings or prints exist. Unfortunately, no comprehensive record of the prints and drawings is available outside the Museum. Over the years, extensive use has been made of the Macpherson Collection which forms the basis of the Museum's holding. Many of these may be seen in *Sailing Ships of War 1800-1860* by Alan Moore and *The Golden Age of Sail* by F.C.Bowen, each containing 90 named ships. There is the 4-volume *The Sea - its Romance and History*, also by F.C.Bowen, and *Mail and Passenger Ships of the Nineteenth Century* by H.Parker and F.C. Bowen. The Museum also has the Cust Collection of Naval Battles. Details of some 280 engagements and a total of some 1,000 prints illustrating them are listed in *Naval Prints* by H.Parker.

The Museum authorities have recently established a Maritime Information Centre which is intended to tap the resources of the entire collection. The address is Maritime Information Centre, National Maritime Museum, Park Row, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF.

The Public Record Office also has a photographic collection, although as yet its collection of ship photos is very limited. It has a photographic catalogue which lists both Naval and Merchant ships and Class ADM 176 consists entirely of British ships from 1854 - 1945 (both mounted and unmounted).

American researchers may be aware of the Beverley R. Robinson

Collection which consists of 6,000 prints and is housed at the U.S. Naval Academy Museum. *Naval Prints from the Beverley R. Robinson Collection, Volume 1, 1541 - 1791* has recently been published. This is an illustrated catalogue compiled and edited by Sigrid Trumphy, the curator of the collection. Further volumes are planned.

In Australasia, the Alexander Turnbull Library at PO Box 12-39, Wellington, New Zealand, has a notable collection of ships' photographs.

Lloyd's Register produces a leaflet of "*Concerns and Individuals Offering Photographs for Sale*" which can be obtained from them at : Shipping Information Section, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 71 Fenchurch Street, London EC3M 4BS.

There are also many Maritime Museums around the country whose collections include paintings and photographs of local ships and shipping companies. Apart from those at major ports, such as Liverpool and Southampton, there are those such as Kingston-upon-Hull, Whitby and Peterhead with their whaling connections.

The Royal Naval Museum at Portsmouth has the *Illustrated London News* for 1842 - 1900 and a photographic collection of some 42,000 items backed up by a fine collection of individual books covering all aspects of naval history. Some of the prints in the *Illustrated London News* have been indexed in *Maritime Illustrations Index*. This is a list of pictures of ships compiled by Vaughan Evans, which was published in 1990 in three volumes by the Australian Association of Maritime History, Sydney. It costs \$A28 for the three volumes and covers the *Illustrated Sydney News* 1853 - 1889, the *Illustrated London News* 1842 - 1891 and the *Australasian Sketcher* 1873 - 1889. The Guildhall Library in London has a card index to the ships in the *Illustrated London News*.

Before embarking on a search for pictures of Naval vessels, researchers are urged to check first with the two volumes of *Ships of the Royal Navy* by J.J.Collidge. Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and World War I the evolution from wooden sailing ships to capital ships resulted in a number of vessels being renamed and of the same name being applied to different classes of vessels in quick succession. It is essential, therefore, to establish at the outset whether one is looking for a wooden frigate, a paddle sloop or a dreadnought! Prior to 1860, the most likely source will be a print, but caution is necessary as, whilst a catalogue may indicate the presence of a vessel, care should be taken to ensure that it appears in a dominant position. All too often, in scenes of battles or fleet reviews, ships are said to be present when they are actually no more than in-fills in the background. Always try and view prints before purchase. If this is not possible, do stipulate that you are seeking a portrait of the vessel.

There are a number of good books on the subject of marine paintings, such as *A Dictionary of British Marine Painters* by A. Wilson, *Sea Painters of*

*Britain* by H.G.Roe, *Dictionary of Sea Painters* by E.H.H.Archibald, preferably the second edition, *British 19th Century Marine Painting* and *20th Century Marine Painting*, both by D. Brook-Hart. It is always worth trying your local library to obtain any of the above books, as they should be able to get them for you through the Inter Library Loan Scheme. Even very expensive and/or rare books can often be obtained in this way. Extended loan is often possible should you wish to study them for some time.

Those seeking 19th century vessels are well served by a series of books published in recent years which contain useful details and photographs of ships. Those looking for large vessels are better served than those looking for the less important. Fruitful places to look are *The Last Sailing Battlefleet* by A. Lambert, *Battleships in Transition* by the same author, *Before the Ironclad* by D.K. Brown and *The Black Battlefleet* by G.A.Ballard. If your efforts fail to find prints or photographs, alternatives are the scale line drawings used to illustrate such works as *The Fighting Ship in the Royal Navy 1897 - 1984* by E.H.H.Archibald, Conway's *All the World's Fighting Ships, Vol.1 1860-1905, Vol.2 1906-21, Vol.3 1922-46 and Vol.4 1947-1982*, and Jane's *All the World's Fighting Ships* which covers the same ground, but is issued annually.

A commercial photographic service has recently been established which will apparently search over twenty photographic collections. Each photograph is sent in a presentation folder, along with the ship's specification and history. Write to : Ship Search, 17 Kenmere Road, Welling, Kent DA16 1PD.

The merchant service has received extensive coverage. The glamour of the fast passage has led to specialised works. The three volumes of David MacGregor's *Merchant Sailing Ships* cover the years 1775 - 1875 and his *Fast Sailing Ships* and *The Tea Clippers* cover more of the age of sail. A further series relating to the age of sail is published by Brown, Son & Ferguson of Glasgow. In all there are eleven volumes compiled by Alfred Basil Lubbock and they contain histories of the square rigged vessels that caught the imagination of the public in the last century of sail, as well as numerous illustrations. *The Merchant Schooners* by Basil Greenhill portrays many of the ships trading from West Country ports. Similarly, *Porthmadog Ships* by Hughes and Eames, *Immortal Sails* by H. Hughes and *Brief Glory* by D.W.Morgan provide examples of vessels trading out of Welsh ports. *British Passenger Liners of the Five Oceans* by Vernon Gibbs is a useful work, as are the twenty or so volumes under the general heading *Merchant Fleets* by Duncan Haws. Each volume is devoted to a specific line or associated group and provides a black and white scale profile of each vessel and details of its service.

The World Ship Society has more elaborate fleet histories of such companies as P. & O. It is well worth joining particularly as it has a ship search service for members. The membership secretary is currently Andrew Tomlinson, "Riverlea", Fakenham Road, East Bilney, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4HS. Membership of the WSS entitles you to the monthly journal *Marine*

News which has many photographs of ships and also advertisements from people offering photographs for sale.

There are many specialist magazines which have been preserved in hardback bindings. Pre-war copies of *Blue Peter* are much sought after for their cover illustrations by Jack Spurling. The two volume *Shipping Wonders of the World* edited by Clarence Winchester contain many photographs of merchant and naval vessels. Published at more or less the same time, *Ships and Ship Models* records contemporary details often not recorded elsewhere.

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## STEAM PACKET MEMORIES

*by John Shepherd*

The first meeting of the new Season consisted of an illustrated talk by the Society's new Editor about The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in the 1960s and early 1970s. Ciné film taken during the period had been transferred to videotape and was shown to the meeting.

The Steam Packet's first purpose built car-ferry, the **Manx Maid**, was seen being launched by Cammell Laird in January 1962. Then came footage of the old steamers of the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company, laid up in the Morpeth Dock after the Company went into liquidation at the end of the 1962 summer season. The final passenger sailings of the 1927 **Ben-my-Chree** in September 1965 then featured, followed by the maiden voyage of the new **Ben-my-Chree(5)**, the second car-ferry, in May 1966. Rough weather sequences came next, including scenes of the **Manx Maid** being diverted to Peel during easterly gales which had made Douglas harbour unapproachable.

The old **Lady of Mann** made her final passengers sailings in mid August 1971, and was given an emotional farewell as she left Douglas for Barrow to be laid up. The following year, the new diesel car-ferry **Mona's Queen** replaced the **Lady** and was seen arriving at Douglas on her maiden voyage. The final sequences consisted of footage taken on board the **King Orry** at the end of her Steam Packet career in August, 1975.

At a question and answer session at the end of the meeting, John Tebay reminded Members of the practice in the 1940s and 50s whereby Liverpool Pilots would often *hitch a ride* back to Liverpool from the Bar on board Steam Packet vessels. Providing the pilot cutter was conveniently located to the north-east of the Bar Light Vessel, the incoming Manx steamer would, on request, slow down and maybe half a dozen pilots would be transferred by punt and embarked via the main deck doors. This arrangement was forced to stop after an over-zealous Customs Officer pointed out that the Pilots would have had access to bonded stores on their outward bound deep-sea vessels, and it would therefore be necessary for all passengers on the Manx steamer to pass through Customs on arrival at Liverpool!

## READERS' LETTERS

*Letters are the lifeblood of any magazine. Readers have every right to chip in and lively feedback makes for good copy. So, if you've anything to add to the articles in the Bulletin, please write in. Any constructive criticism would also be welcome - is the balance of articles satisfactory? Please let me know!*

*js*

**Jim Cowden writes :**

I was really taken by the article "*In Command*" by Captain Marshall which appeared in the September *Bulletin*. When I got as far as the third paragraph on page 53 where he states '*Proceed to Cartaret*' ..... '*Where was Cartaret?*', I immediately said to myself "*I wonder if he is sailing for Cartaret in New Jersey?*" I was proved right a little later in his article.

I well recall, way back in 1950, being aboard one of Elders' ships which had been booked to Fall River (Mass.), Cartaret (New Jersey) and then Montreal. The cargo for Fall River was bulk latex, and there were about 250 tons of logs (on deck) for discharge at Cartaret. On arrival at Fall River we entered the ship with the U.S. Customs, declaring '*next port of call Cartaret*', and requested that the 'traveller manifest' be endorsed accordingly. The customs officer advised me that a 'traveller manifest' was not necessary because Cartaret was not in the United States! I produced the Bills of Lading which clearly stated the port as Cartaret, New Jersey. He eventually agreed to my request for a 'traveller manifest'.

I was talking this over with the captain a little later and he said that he had been told by our New York Agents (Booth American, Battery Place) that a small timber jetty was situated at Cartaret, which lay on the port side heading up the Hudson River. Even the local pilot had his doubts about a 7,000 tonner with a deck cargo of timber going to discharge at Cartaret. The ship dwarfed the jetty and had to be shifted up and down to land the timber on dry land. The authorities who boarded the ship said '*entry was not required through Customs, due to you coming from another U.S. port.*' This proved totally incorrect and after the Elder Dempster agent had boarded, he and I travelled across to Brooklyn where E.D. ships normally berthed, and thus entered the ship through the proper channels.

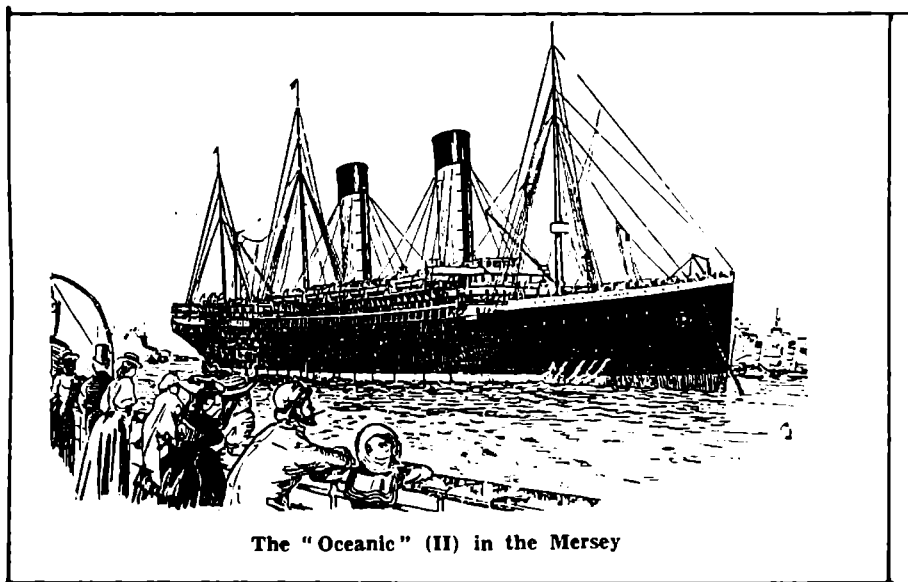
Cartaret is an interesting little port and clearly not many folk know that it exists.

**Mr J.A.Lee of Creetown, Newton Stewart, Dumfries & Galloway writes :**

As a postscript to the article about the *Campania* in the Autumn *Bulletin*, I can tell you that the Festival of Britain vessel *Campania* was commanded, for



Furness Withy, by Captain Frank S. Thornton. An ex-aircraft carrier was presumably a completely new experience for a merchant ship skipper, but he must have managed it well because he was awarded the O.B.E. for his services. Almost nine years later I served as second officer under him on his last deep sea command, the *Mystic*, which came new out of Burntisland Shipyard in March, 1959. I occasionally had to type letters for him and it was very important to put the magical three letters "O.B.E." after his name! Frank Thornton was a grand old fellow who gave me great freedom in the navigation of the ship on the Australia / New Zealand run (no 'Ocean Routing' in those days). He finished deep-sea command in February 1960, and following a short spell as relieving skipper, he retired. Sadly, he did not live long in retirement. I remember Frank Thornton with great affection.



The "Oceanic" (II) in the Mersey

#### ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES ON MONDAYS

The arrangement whereby Members have access to the Archives and Library on Mondays will continue in 1998 as follows :

FEBRUARY : 9th, 16th and 23rd. MARCH : 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th

APRIL : Nil                      MAY : 11th and 18th

## A DATABASE OF EARLY STEAM VESSELS REGISTERED IN LIVERPOOL

*compiled by Olive Williamson*

This database is compiled from the Customs Registers for the port of Liverpool. I started the search with the 1812 registers and found the first registration in 1822. I have recorded all the technical details of the steam driven vessels that I could find, and the list is complete to the end of 1855. I hope to extend the list to 1860, and so cover the time until the firm establishment of the *Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association*, but I felt that publishing an interim list might be helpful to enquirers.

The information is recorded in the **ACCESS** format and can be filtered by any standard method. The file is deposited in the archives of the Liverpool Maritime Museum and a printed list, in alphabetical order of ship's name, is available there.

The recorded details of the information held are :

- Name of vessel with her tonnage and rig, the tonnage being rounded to the nearest integer. The official number is included where the registers give it.
- Year of registration and port number for that year with notes on previous and subsequent registrations where these are known.
- Details of final fate where this is recorded.
- Year and place of build, type of construction and propulsion, with details of her builders and date of launch if known. The early vessels were wood framed and that should be taken as standard unless iron frames are noted. Paddle wheels should also be assumed unless screw propulsion is given.

There notes are given in an abbreviated form, to enable them to be printed on a pair of opposite pages. The abbreviations are given on the introductory page.

There is sometimes more than one vessel with the same name. Detailed checks on the builder and tonnage will usually clarify which is which, given that the early *Lloyd's Registers* are not always accurate and should not be relied on as the final arbiter.

Further details of a vessel, together with a list of owners, can always be checked in the Customs Registers for the year and found quickly from the port number for the certificate. I cannot guarantee the accuracy of this compilation but I have done my best to be careful!

## SHIPWRECKED ON VATERSAY

by Charles Dawson

The Quebec built ship **Annie Jane**, 179ft x 32ft and of 1,294 tons, was delivered to her owner Thomas Holderness of Holderness & Chilton, South Fenwick Street, Liverpool in late June 1853, and she was ready for her voyage back to Quebec in September. With the building up of the railway system in Canada, she had a profitable cargo of 800 tons of iron and lengths of railroad track, together with 300 tons of general goods. Besides this generous bulk cargo, she would be carrying hundreds of emigrants.

Her experienced captain, fifty year old William Mason, was looking forward to a prosperous voyage too, for passenger tickets had sold extremely well, with a heavy response from craftsmen of all types hoping for a better life in the New World. *The Times* newspaper published a graphic description of the berths that emigrants could expect : "*a shelf of coarse pinewood in a noisy dungeon, airless and without light, in which several hundred persons of both sexes ... are stowed away, on three feet wide shelves placed two feet above each other*". The legal maximum number of emigrants permitted on the **Annie Jane** was 385.

On Tuesday 23rd August, 1853, the *Liverpool Telegraph & Shipping Gazette* reported that the **Annie Jane** was outward bound in the River Mersey, but the reality was that she was still securely berthed in Sandon Dock. The Government Chief Emigration Officer at the Port of Liverpool, Captain Charles F. Schomberg, R.N., "*a functionary of great influence*", who was later to have the rare honour of having a ship named after him,\* had refused to clear the **Annie Jane** because of the poor condition of the water-closets, and so her sailing was delayed.

At noon on Wednesday 24th August, the **Annie Jane** was in the North Channel, heading north by north-west for Rathlin Island. At about noon on 26th August, with the wind from the north-east, a squall blew up and the **Annie Jane** pitched and rolled quite violently. First mate Bell on watch called for all hands on deck, and as the rolling increased in the late afternoon, he was joined by the captain.

Towards night, the wind freshened and suddenly, without any warning, her mizzen mast and her other two topmasts gave way, crashing down on deck

\* **SCHOMBERG** , wood ship, built on the patent diagonal system (three skins fastened with screwed tree nails) by Alexander Hall & Sons, Aberdeen, 247.7ft x 42.2ft x 28.9ft, 2,400 reg. tons. Launched on 5th April 1855 for James Baines & Company's Liverpool Black Ball Line. Cost £43,105-13s-8d. Lost on her maiden voyage under captain (so-called 'bully') James Nicol Forbes.

with a tremendous noise, but miraculously missing some of the crew and passengers who were there. The light covering of planks over the hatchway to the lower forehold gave way, leaving the Glasgow joiners who were berthed there exposed to the pieces of wreckage that came in with torrents of water. With an unsteady cross-sea and the ship still frantically rolling all the following night, it took the crew hours to clear up the mess.

The first light of dawn did nothing to dispel the mood of pessimism that had begun to run through the passengers. The **Annie Jane** was still labouring - and still heading for Canada - but there were many who began to air their doubts about her ever reaching her destination. Eventually agreement was reached that they should petition the captain to return to Liverpool.

Captain Mason had seen very little of his emigrant passengers, who were the responsibility of the boatswain and his team. Many complaints had already been aired about the poor distribution of rations, and now in addition there were rumblings that the reason for this was that the ship was overcrowded. A general meeting of the passengers was called, with Glasgow joiner William Hendrie beginning to make his appearance as a strong spokesman. As a result, a signed petition was drawn up, protesting against the poor conditions for the steerage passengers and the danger of proceeding further on the voyage. The captain agreed and ordered the mate to steer south down the west coast of Ireland, a route forced on him by the wind conditions at the time.

By Monday 29th August, the **Annie Jane** had passed Dingle Bay and Bantry Bay and was soon turning east by Cape Clear for a smooth run through the St. George's Channel and back to Liverpool. It was late afternoon on Wednesday 31st August when the **Annie Jane** reached the Mersey after her fruitless, disheartening eight day and nearly thousand mile voyage.

On Friday 2nd September, Captain Schomberg met a deputation of the **Annie Jane's** passengers, with the captain and owner in attendance. There was much argument about the conditions on board but the meeting ended inconclusively; most of the passengers were reluctant to make precise accusations for fear of being refused passage at a later date.

William Hendrie, who by this time had quite definitely decided that he would never again set sail with the **Annie Jane** tried alone to pursue the matter at Captain Schomberg's office, but to no avail. He collected money from other passengers in order to cover solicitor's costs for pursuing the matter in court. Unfortunately, the complaints that actually surfaced were so trivial that the owner quickly accepted responsibility, since he was able to reveal that some compensation money had already been paid out to a number of passengers. The only winners were William Hendrie and another like-minded passenger, both of whom received a refund of their passage money.

The repairs to the **Annie Jane** were carried out - to all appearances rather too quickly - and she sailed once again from Sandon Dock on the night

of Thursday 8th September, ostensibly with her legal maximum of 385 steerage emigrants, eight cabin passengers and a crew of forty-one, including nine officers and stewards. The owners found no difficulty in filling the places vacated by a number of passengers who had had second thoughts about sailing with her. Hendrie had continued to fight on and his appeal was eventually brought to court, but this did not happen until after the *Annie Jane* had sailed. The appeal was summarily dismissed, after which Hendrie appears to have given up his fight.

There were no hitches to the *Annie Jane*'s second sailing, and the first thirty-six hours passed without mishap. She had been towed out through the North Channel to give her a good start and to allow her new masts and rigging to settle in without undue strain. On Monday 12th September the wind changed, blowing and strengthening from the south-west, and when the *Annie Jane* had reached longitude 11° west, trouble arose once again with her masts and rigging. For two days it continued to blow so heavily that nothing could be done to repair the damage. By Thursday 15th September, enough steerage passengers had plucked up courage to present another petition to the captain. Incensed, the captain called for his pistol (which it was later disclosed was *not* loaded) and threatened to shoot anyone attempting to take charge.

On Sunday 18th September the *Annie Jane* was able to wear round and the captain steered a course for Londonderry. The wind then backed round from north-west to south-west and the ship was laid to under a close-reefed maintopsail. Captain Mason had no choice but to turn to windward to keep his ship off shore. On Monday morning 19th September the wind blew harder again and the maintopsail sheet parted. The captain tried to shame the raw French-Canadians in his crew into action by climbing up to furl the sail himself. When he came down, he thought that the mainmast step had given way, possibly due to the mainmast shrinking with consequent slackening of the rigging.

The seas continued to increase by the hour; one boat had already been washed overboard by a tremendous wave that took the davits with it as well. Driven constantly to the north-west, by Thursday 22nd September the *Annie Jane* was at latitude 60°N, longitude 12°W, some 220 miles north-north-west of the island group of St.Kilda. Another tremendous sea struck the *Annie Jane*, and more damage was caused aloft.

By Saturday 24th September the wind had moderated somewhat and veered northward. With makeshift sail and the pumps working continuously, and with the passengers helping the exhausted crew, the *Annie Jane* was able to make headway south towards the Irish coast. On the morning of Wednesday 28th September the cry '*Land Ahoy!*' was heard : St.Kilda had been sighted some fifteen miles to port. By two o'clock the misty blue islands of Harris and South Uist were sighted. At about 6.30 that evening, now in poor visibility, the Barra Head light on Berneray Island, the southernmost of the islands of the



the *Annie Jane* was opposite a sandy bay called in Gaelic *Bagh Siar* on the west side of the island of Vatersay, south of Barra. Captain Mason knew that without sail he could not steer his ship beyond the rocks that surrounded the bay and his only thought was to run her ashore and save as many lives as possible. The *Annie Jane* struck the beach at about a quarter to midnight. As she struck, the whole of her foremast toppled and went right through her side. With tremendous seas going clean over her stern she was slung round and ended up broadside to the force of the waves and began to break up. The remaining masts also toppled, crashing down on to the deck or over her side. On the poop there were about one hundred passengers huddled together petrified until another immense wave swept them away like dolls, and the poop like a doll's house.

All the officers and crew were up on deck with a large number of the male passengers. The majority of the emigrants, including all the women and children, never came up from below. If not crushed by the falling timbers, most of them were killed before they could move by the debris that crashed in as the sea rushed in. It was just impossible to escape once the ship began to break up and the carnage was appalling.

By two o'clock on the morning of Thursday 29th September 1853 the worst was over; the drama of the fearful last act had reached its climax. Every mast had gone and the *Annie Jane* had split into three separate pieces. Her bow was aground outside the bay with four crew members still on it; the massive middle section was lying on the beach on its starboard quarter, and the poop with many of the survivors clinging on was impaled on unseen rocks midway between the two.

The official list of survivors published on 30th December 1853, which appears on Vol. LX of Parliamentary Accounts and Papers, 1854, names exactly one hundred persons. Of the emigrants, only sixty survived.

The report of the official enquiry, which was held in Liverpool on 1st November 1854, and published on 30th December, concluded that the improper stowage of the cargo, too few crew - in view of the 'useless' French Canadians - were all factors contributing to the loss of the *Annie Jane*. There was no denying the intensity of the gales which had swept all parts of the coast of Britain in September 1853, as the *Illustrated London News* had reported on 1st October.

A granite memorial to the dead of the *Annie Jane* overlooks the white sand bay of Bagh Siar on Vatersay, a beautiful spot on a fine summer's day. The inscription reads :

*"On 28th September, 1853, the ship Annie Jane with emigrants from Liverpool to Quebec was totally wrecked in this bay, and three-fourths of the crew and passengers numbering about 350 men, women and children were drowned and their bodies interred here"*

A fuller account of this tragedy can be found in **SHIPWRECKED ON VATERSAY** by Bob Charnley, MacLean Press, Portree, Skye; price £2.65p.

The allotment of space to passengers on British vessels took some time to become firmly fixed. Masters had at first to compromise between somewhat vague British and American rules. Very early in the 19th century, one passenger or crewman could be carried per ton and a half of registry. Later, two tons were required. However, the rules were complicated by different allotments of space to cabin and steerage passengers, and adults and children. In 1855 an Act relating to the "*Carriage of Passengers by Sea*" stated that '*no ship propelled by sails only shall carry a greater number of passengers (including every individual on board) than in the proportion of one statute adult to every two tons of registered tonnage.*' Two persons between 1 and 12 years of age constituted one statute adult.

Since 1990, it has been possible to reach Vatersay from Barra by a 250 yard causeway which cost £4 million, including a new road over the hill from Castlebay. The present population of Vatersay of some 70 Gaelic speakers view this as a life-saver for their small community.

To the south of Vatersay are the Bishop's Isles and Mingulay to where boat trips can sometimes be arranged. There is a story about Mingulay reminiscent to that of the *Marie Celeste*, but the details are shrouded in just as complex a mystery.

## THE "*BUENAVENTURA*" INCIDENT

by *David Eccles*

L.N.R.S. Member David Eccles read his paper to a well attended meeting of the Society on Thursday 20th November. David's talk concerned the painting which portrays the capture of the Spanish steamer *Buenaventura* by the cruiser *New York* off Key West on 22nd April 1898. This painting is on permanent loan to the Merseyside Maritime Museum from the Larrinaga family.

As background to the incident, the talk commenced with an account of the *Virginus* affair of 1873. The *Virginus* was a New England built screw steamer under the command of ex-Confederate Navy Officer Captain Fry. She left Kingston, Jamaica on 23rd October 1873 bound for Port Lemon, Costa Rica. She had no port of registry but flew the American flag and had 155 people on board. The *Virginus* was sighted 20 miles off the Cuban coast by the Spanish gunboat *Tornado* and was captured after an eight hour chase and



towed into Santiago da Cuba. Fifty four of those on board, including an American General Ryan, were shot as pirates before H.M. Sloop Niobe arrived. America threatened war, but Spain replied with a Circular issued by the United States in April 1860 declaring that all persons captured on board Confederate Privateers would be treated as pirates and shot.

Relations between the United States and Spain remained tense for the next 25 years. In January 1898 the U.S. battleship **Maine** arrived at Havana on a 'goodwill' visit, and spent three weeks fostering good relations. At 9.40pm on 15th February a double explosion destroyed the **Maine** killing two officers and 264 of the crew. The **Maine's** commanding officer reported the probable cause of the explosions as decomposing propellant, but a Court of Enquiry concluded that the **Maine** had been destroyed by a mine placed below the hull. The slogan in the American press "*Remember the Maine - to hell with Spain*" led to a demand for government action, and a naval squadron was assembled at Key West. The squadron, led by the three-funnelled armoured cruiser **New York**, left Key West on 22nd April 1898 and soon the smoke of a merchant steamer was seen on the western horizon.

As the warships converged, the steamer raised her ensign to expose the red and gold colours of Spain. The gunboat **Nashville** chased towards the merchantman and two shots were fired towards her. The steamer concerned was the **Buenaventura** bound from Pascagoula, Mississippi to Rotterdam. Despite protest from her master an armed boarding party was placed on board and the **Buenaventura** was escorted to Key West by the **Nashville**. The American press reported the incident as a great victory, but many foreign newspapers reported it as an act of piracy. During the night of 22nd April the **Buenaventura** broke adrift and the following morning was found stranded on a reef, making water, and listing to starboard.

The **Buenaventura** was built at Sunderland in 1871 and was owned by Liverpool based Larrinaga and Company, but she was registered at Bilbao. She had sailed from Toxteth Dock on 29th January 1898.

On the day following '*The Buenaventura Incident*', Spain declared war with the United States during which the Spanish fleet was destroyed at Manila Bay and Santiago Bay. Hostilities ceased on 14th August 1898 when the U.S. blockade of Cuban ports was lifted. A peace treaty compelled Spain to give up all claim to Cuba and ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States. In return the United States paid Spain \$20million (US) for the Philippine Islands. Larrinaga and Company appealed to the United States Supreme Court and on 11th December 1899 the Court held that an innocent vessel like the **Buenaventura** which had loaded and sailed from a U.S. port before the commencement of war was entitled to continue her voyage.

A brisk question and answer session concluded the meeting. Alan McClelland proposed a *Vote of Thanks* to David Eccles, drawing attention to the meticulous research which had gone into the preparation of the paper. *j.s.*

## **P. & O.'s BRINDISI - PORT SAID SHUTTLE SERVICE**

P. & O. liners had been calling at Brindisi (on the Adriatic coast of the 'heel' of Italy) to pick up mails and passengers since about 1870, but towards the turn of the century the company was becoming seriously dissatisfied with that port, and the excellent facilities offered by Marseille as an alternative finally won it over. It was decided to eliminate the mail steamers' calls at Brindisi, but there was still, however, some advantage in time in running the mails from Brindisi; and consequently the P. & O. decided to operate a shuttle service between the Italian port and Port Said, carrying the mails and a number of first-class passengers who might require a speedy passage.

The idea was that mails and passengers left the U.K. about a week after the departure of the mail steamer from London; travelled by train across Europe; boarded the shuttle steamer at Brindisi and caught up with the mail boat at Port Said. Homewards, the process was reversed. Thus those on a few months' leave from the East were able to obtain an extra fortnight at home, and the mails were speeded up by almost a week.

To operate this service the P. & O. went to Caird's of Greenock, regular P. & O. builders, for two ships in 1898. The shipbuilders were confronted with a difficult problem. This was in the days before turbines, and to get a speed of 20 knots and over out of a hull only 300' long was no mean feat. Caird's did it, however, and produced two of the most remarkable little ships of their day, which proved able to do all that was expected of them, and more.

The Isis and Osiris were identical steamers, built in adjoining berths, and completed in the same year. On a gross tonnage of 1,728, their dimensions were 315' overall, 300.2' b.p., with a beam of 37.1'. With twin screws they had 4-cylinder triple expansion engines, giving them a speed of 22 knots in moderate weather.

Only 78 first-class passengers were carried, and the cargo amounted to 123 tons, consisting only of mail, baggage and sometimes specie. The officers were regular P. & O. men, but the crew, both deck and engine room, were Italians. Each ship cost £86,000. They looked like miniatures of the Egypt class of P. & O. steamers.

In late 1898 the Isis and the Osiris went out to their station and soon settled down into the new service. It was an exacting one, and the little ships frequently had to be driven hard. In the heavy seas that can be encountered in the Eastern Mediterranean they rolled and pitched, wallowed and skidded, the seas washing their decks; their saloon tables were empty, and only the most hardened of travellers were able to maintain any semblance of normal life. But in spite of all this, they always remained popular with many - presumably an extra fortnight's leave was worth a few days' discomfort. Their officers and crews took great pride in them, and as commands they were keenly sought

after by the younger P. & O. men. From the start there was tremendous rivalry between the two. Records came to be timed from the instant the first mail bag went aboard at one port to the moment the last bag was swung over the side at the other. All hands on board turned to on the mail at each terminal and not a minute was wasted. The Isis lost no time in breaking the record from Brindisi to Port Said by completing the passage in 46 hours, 14 minutes. For sixteen years the Isis and Osiris maintained their two-day passages, often carrying distinguished passengers in a hurry on some important mission. The Isis had just two masters - Captain C.H. Watkins until 1907, and Captain Armitage ( of Polar expedition fame) until the outbreak of the First World War.

Towards the end of 1906 the Isis had a serious accident which could easily have ended in complete disaster. Bound for Port Said, she lost her starboard propeller. The racing engine was severely damaged and the shaft lashing about in the tunnel damaged the hull and caused her to leak badly. Captain Watkins at first attempted to continue the voyage on one engine, but the steamer was making too much water, and he was compelled to take her into Zante. HMS Suffolk arrived from Malta with divers to assist her, but the leaks had already been located, and with the help of the Navy the Isis was temporarily patched up and sailed for Greenock for permanent repairs. On one screw she made the voyage home at 14 knots. Repaired and refitted, the Isis left again for the Mediterranean in 1907 and resumed the Brindisi - Port Said service, and both vessels continued for the next seven years without mishap.

When war broke out, the Isis was in Port Said. The Brindisi service was one of the first to be suspended, and the Isis was ordered to Malta to lay up. She reached the island without trouble, though she unwittingly ran through a minefield on the way, and she was laid up at Malta until June, 1915. The Navy then took her over, but as there was already an old cruiser named Isis, she was renamed HMS Isonzo. Under the white ensign she was used as a fast despatch ship and fleet messenger, and although her naval career does not seem to have been over-ex citing, she was run very hard until late in 1919, by which time her boilers had suffered and a major refit was necessary.

The Isis sailed to Falmouth and was laid up there whilst discussions took place between the P. & O. and the government on the new mail contract and, in particular, the future of the Brindisi service. The old arrangement was never revived after the war, and at the end of 1920 the Isis and Osiris were sold out of the P. & O. fleet.

The Osiris, which had also been on naval service as a despatch vessel, went to the scrapyard, but the Isis was bought by the Bland company of Gibraltar. She was refitted and renamed Gibel Sarsar, and sailed in Bland's services between the Rock and Moroccan ports. In 1923, when French shipping was temporarily paralysed by seamen's strikes, she was on charter for a time, running on the North African mail service from Marseille. The Gibel Sarsar (ex Isis) was broken up in Italy in 1926.

## **AND FINALLY ..... THE "COOGEE" INCIDENT**

**COOGEE : Official No: 93722 : Call Sign S L J F**

**Gross Tonnage 762 / Nett 286**

**Built by J.L.Thompson & Sons, Sunderland**

**Owners : Huddart, Parker & Co Proprietary Ltd**

**Length 225', Breadth 30'2', Registered at Melbourne**

The **Coogee** was built in 1887 as the **Lancashire Witch** for the New Isle of Man Steam Navigation Company, popularly known as the Lancashire Line. She operated for just one year on the Liverpool and Douglas service, before being sold by order of the mortgagees in May 1888. She could not attain her contract speed and was thrown back on the builders' hands.

The **Lancashire Witch** was laid up in Sunderland North Docks for some time, before being sold to Australia and renamed **Coogee**. Before leaving Sunderland she was drydocked and her propeller was unshipped, the aperture being filled with timber. She then *sailed* out to Australia. One of her sails was a staysail rigged from her funnel.

The **Coogee** took up service across the Bass Straits, and just before Christmas, 1902, her master, Captain Carrington was driving her hard in thick fog, as he was anxious to be home for Christmas. Without any warning whatsoever, the **Coogee** ran under the bowsprit of the Italian steel barque **Fortunato Figari**, which was loaded with steel rails and cement. It all happened before the look-out on either vessel could give the alarm.

The steel bowsprit of the barque swept the deck of the **Coogee**, killing the helmsman and the captain. Thinking the **Coogee** was sinking, and in the confusion after the accident, the **Coogee's** officers and some of her crew climbed on board the **Fortunato Figari**. A steward and a passenger restored some order on the **Coogee** and then the barque took her in tow.

Subsequently, however, it was found that the **Coogee** could steam, despite her shattered funnel, and she proceeded to Melbourne under her own power, and half-smothering her crew with smoke.

Giving judgement in the case, Sir John Madden, Chief Justice for Victoria, said that the master of the **Coogee** should have reversed the engines when he heard the foghorn of the **Fortunato Figari**. He was of the opinion that the **Coogee** was going at her top speed of 14 knots almost from the time she left Tamar Heads. Sir John Madden censured the **Coogee's** mate for jumping aboard the sailing vessel; the mate's excuse was that he did so in order to lend a hand to get the boats out. Generally the **Coogee** was held to blame for the incident, and the Italian barque was awarded £1,250 as salvage.

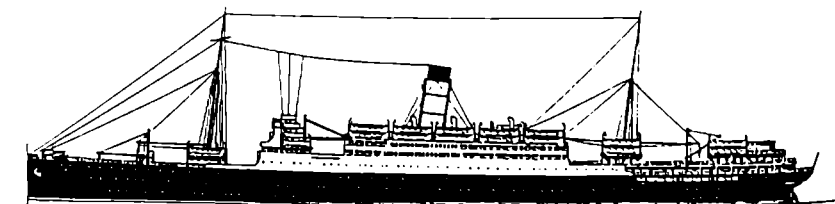
The **Coogee** sailed on across the Bass Strait until 1904 when she was replaced by the **Loongana**, and she is credited with completing 961 round voyages.

*The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*  
(Founded 1938)

THE BULLETIN

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 41, Number 4, Spring, 1998



Hound of the Sea ( <i>P.J.H.Tebay</i> )	page 87
The "Cú na Mara" and other Jetfoils ( <i>Malcolm McDonald</i> )	page 90
Third Class Fare - Once Upon a Time ( <i>T.A.Porter</i> )	page 93
Pioneering the Amazon	page 98
"Manxman" Update ( <i>John Shepherd</i> )	page 100
Forgotten Liners of Liverpool - the "Samaria" of 1921	page 104
The "Empress of Australia" and the Japanese Earthquake	page 110
Visit to Cammell Laird's Shipyard ( <i>Norman West</i> )	page 112
The "Columbus" Quicksilver Steamship ( <i>Terry Kavanagh</i> )	page 114

*plus Readers' Letters, 'Notes and Queries' and Book Reviews*

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## ***Forthcoming Meetings***

***Thursday, 19th March 1998***

**Safety at Sea, A Brief History of Government Involvement (D.J.Pickup)**

***Thursday 16th April 1998***

**Conditions of Seamen employed on Liverpool Shipping in the last quarter of  
the 18th Century (Dr.D.J.Pope)**

***Thursday, 21st May, 1998***

**Annual General Meeting**

**Front Cover: The "Samaria" of 1921 - article on page 104.**

## HOUND OF THE SEA

by L.N.R.S. Member P.J.H. Tebay

It was the short note in the Winter "*Bulletin*" referring to the proposed SuperSeaCat service between Liverpool and Dublin that reminded me of a much earlier jet-propelled craft on the same run.

On 13th February 1980 a Boeing Jetfoil, to be named **Cú na Mara** (*Hound of the Sea*), arrived in Gladstone Dock on the deck of the **Antonia Johnson**. Built in Seattle and intended for the B. & I. Line, she was to carry 250 passengers on a 3¼ hour passage between Liverpool and Dublin at approximately 45 knots.

Foreknowledge of the B. & I.'s plans had resulted by November 1979 in meetings between representatives of the Port and Pilotage Authorities and senior B. & I. staff, when safety and practical operational aspects were discussed. Prior to the **Cú na Mara** coming into service, there were to be at least six weeks of working-up trials and crew training. Initially, an American bridge team of captain and engineer would instruct a small number of selected B. & I. masters and mates until they were officially qualified to operate the craft. Amongst the port's requirements would be the employment of a Liverpool Pilot when navigating the River and Mersey channels. The pilots to be used would have to be current members of the Pilotage and Examination Committees and would report back on any potential problems whilst in the pilotage area.

B. & I. also suggested that, before the jetfoil arrived, a small team should travel to Brighton to have a look at a similar craft then running a service to Dieppe. This team consisted of Captain G. Barry (B. & I. Commodore), Captain J. Devaney (Superintendent, Dublin), Captain A. Jones, (B. & I., Liverpool), and Pilots Tebay and Webber. Arriving at the Brighton Marina, I think it is fair to say that, considering the craft was intended to carry 250 passengers across the Irish Sea, she looked a mite small - actually 99 feet long with the foils up, and 30 feet beam - and she was moving gently in the sheltered waters. Whilst manoeuvring when sailing or berthing, the jetfoil did so in displacement mode (i.e. floating on the hull), and with a vectored jet aft and a small bow thrust forward she could turn in her own length. Displacement speed was about 10 knots. In this trim, and once out into a slight swell, she tended to roll uncomfortably, probably due to her flattish hull and light draft. However, as she swiftly accelerated past 30 knots with the foils down, she rose up and became pleasantly steady, the twin 4,500 hp gas turbine engines drawing in water at the leading edge of the engine pod and ejecting it with great force through the rear jets. Despite the speed of 43 knots, and with her hull clear of the water, she did not appear to make a broad or high wash, and from a passenger seat on the upper of two decks it was like being in a low flying

aircraft as we skimmed the waves. This sensation was encouraged by the seating layout being similar to a wide-bodied jet, plus the use of aviation terminology such as 'take-off' or 'landing'. On the bridge ('cockpit'?) the instruments were grouped in a semi-circle around the two command seats.

Arriving at Dieppe, the captain kept the power on as we entered the harbour, and if it was intended to impress, it certainly induced some palpitation in this observer! However, once he '*lifted the handles*' the power fell off and, dropping back into displacement mode, she lost way immediately. Apart from this excitement, it was a pleasant and comfortable passage both ways. From a navigational point of view, we noted how quickly the crossing situations built up with the traffic in the Channel, and how it involved some re-interpretation as to the visual assessments on radar.

In the third week of February 1980 the Mersey trials and training began. If the **Cú na Mara** was in Liverpool, she would be berthed in the Waterloo system. Joining time for those required was around 07.30, and the craft would be in the river by 08.30. With Langton abeam she would be up on the foils and passing the Rock at 43 knots through the water. Initially at this speed it took some time in adjusting as to how quickly we closed with other vessels. The same applied for the other port users! The **Cú na Mara** seldom needed more than 5° of helm for course alterations, and on Crosby bend it could be made on a continuous gentle swing. When overtaking on Crosby bend one had to be careful not to swing wide as at 70 feet per second the jetfoil could readily be over towards the inward side of the channel. To give other port users some forewarning of the jetfoil's presence, she carried a flashing strobe light above the bridge, and Mersey Radio would report her passing way-points on open broadcasts. It has to be remembered that, apart from some naval vessels or specialised small craft, few if any port users had experience of a speed more than three times the average, especially in a winding channel. Whilst in an emergency the **Cú na Mara** could come off the foils and thereby bring up very quickly (actually five seconds from full speed), she would then need a clear, straight stretch to take off again. It was interesting to note that despite her manoeuvrability previously referred to, because of her transfer distance at full speed, she took as big a radius to turn 180° off Prince's Stage as one of the much larger conventional ferries. The **Cú na Mara's** Liverpool berth was to be Prince's Stage, and at Dublin a purpose-built berth and airport-type lounge had been built at the Custom House Quay. Thus the attraction to passengers would be city centre to city centre in 3¼ hours.

Apart from the River and Bar Light Vessel shake-down trips, the runs to Dublin also started in February 1980. As it was neither practical nor desirable to discharge (or pick up) the pilot at the Bar, he would carry on for the passage to Dublin, and then return with the jetfoil, provided that this return was on the same or the next day. In good weather it was quite a novelty to be passing the Lynas pilot station in a little over 1¼ hours after leaving the



stage! With reasonable weather the trip was a pleasure, but if the sea and swell started to increase beyond 4 - 5 feet, it became less comfortable. Whilst not rolling or pitching, there would be an element of slamming or jerkiness and as the tops of the seas hit the bottom of the exposed hull it made an unsettling noise. A limit of 10 feet (3 metres) wave height had been imposed. What did help towards 'level flight' was the Automatic Control System whereby two sensors forward assessed the oncoming waves and adjusted the water-flaps on the foils accordingly. A further factor was the facility for the captain to regulate the depths of the foils themselves, thereby regulating the height of the hull above sea level. On one trip from Dublin something went wrong and we started to '*porpoise*' - that was not at all pleasant and we had to 'land' whilst the fault was rectified. Fortunately the passenger seats had seatbelts! On the humorous side was the astonishment registered by seagulls as they made their customary 'laid-back' take off from near the bows, and then suddenly realised that they weren't going to make it!

Before the **Cú na Mara** entered passenger service, a river and channel trip was arranged for all available pilots to give them an idea of operational parameters and the high approach speeds.

Throughout the trial trips four Liverpool pilots were employed, individually, on the **Cú na Mara**, but such was the efficiency and experience of the B. & I. masters and mates that there was no problem in extending their pilotage exemption certificates to cover the jetfoil.

Full passenger services commenced on 25th April 1980, but inevitably the Irish Sea had plenty of weather tricks to play. As a result trips were cancelled to an unacceptable degree, and unreliability of service is a quick commercial killer. After the summer season of 1981 the jetfoil service was wound up. I understand that the **Cú na Mara** was sold to the Japanese and renamed **Ginga**, which sounds not an unreasonable name for a hound! ■



## THE "CÚ NA MARA" AND OTHER JETFOILS

*by Malcolm McDonald*

After completing her trials and crew training, the **Cú na Mara** entered service on 25th April 1980. She was based at Dublin, and made either one or two round sailings to Liverpool each day. Her scheduled passage time was 3½ hours, which allowed two round sailings to be carried out without resorting to night-time arrivals or departures. There were many opportunities for day trips from Dublin, with up to nine hours in Liverpool, but no realistic opportunities in the opposite direction as, on the days when there were two round trips, the vessel was in Dublin for only 50 minutes after completing her morning sailing from Liverpool.

The service continued until 3rd November 1980, when it was withdrawn for the winter, despite earlier hints that it might become a year-round service. There is little doubt that the weather played some part in this decision; on 22nd October the **Cú na Mara** was forced to abandon her crossing to Liverpool after making three attempts to leave Dublin. Overall she made 90% of her scheduled crossings, but a 10% failure rate must have caused problems for many passengers. The weather was not the only cause of the jetfoil's problems: she was off service for ten days from 3rd July after striking the **Manxman**, which was berthed at the landing stage, on the evening of 2nd July 1980. She suffered substantial damage and engineers from Boeing were flown over to assist with the repairs. In contrast, the **Manxman** was undamaged.

During the winter of 1980/81, Boeing carried out modifications to the **Cú na Mara** to improve her fuel economy and her bad weather performance. Following these modifications, she was chartered to the Belgian RTM organisation for two months to carry out crew training and familiarisation, before the introduction of a jetfoil service between Ostend and Dover. Before opening the 1981 service, the **Cú na Mara** called at Douglas, Isle of Man, on 4th May to assess its potential as a storm port.

The 1981 season started on 8th May, and followed a similar pattern to the previous year. The improvements made by Boeing allowed the scheduled crossing time to be reduced to 3¼ hours, and one of the eastbound crossings on the first day was completed in the record time of 2 hours 50 minutes. The service was scheduled to operate only until 5th October, which suggests that the numbers carried during the last month of service in 1980 had been poor. During the 1981 season, the **Cú na Mara** was twice withdrawn from service because of mechanical problems.

There were signs that increasing numbers of passengers were using the jetfoil service, with around 75,000 tickets sold in 1981. This was similar to the

number sold in 1980, when there had been a longer season. However, the B. & I. Line was suffering huge losses, and was required by its owner, the Irish Government, to take steps to improve its financial performance. After a full review, the company decided to withdraw the jetfoil service at the end of the 1981 season. The withdrawal did not succeed in stemming B. & I.'s losses, and it was not until some years later, following the closure of the Swansea - Cork car ferry service, and the full transfer of the Dublin car ferry service's British terminal from Liverpool to Holyhead, that B. & I. returned to profit.

After her withdrawal, the **Cú na Mara** went to the Irish port of Arklow to lay up. She was advertised for sale at a price around £6.6 million, similar to her original cost to B. & I. She remained at Arklow until January 1985, when she was sold to a Japanese company for around £5 million. The **Cú na Mara** was handed over in mid-January and was renamed **Ginga**.

The **Ginga's** owners were Sado Kishen Kaisha, a Japanese company which operates ferry services from the main Japanese island of Honshu to the small island of Sado-shima, off the west coast of Honshu. Sado is a little larger than the Isle of Man, and the company operates services on three routes from mainland ports to the island, using a fleet of four car ferries and four jetfoils. The principal route is from Niigata, on Honshu, to Ryōtsu, on Sado island. This is served by three jetfoils, which take one hour for the 36 mile crossing. During the peak summer season there are eleven jetfoil crossings per day in each direction; during January and February this falls to three crossings which can be maintained by two jetfoils. The **Ginga** (ex **Cú na Mara**) is still in service today.

B. & I. was one of a number of operators to introduce jetfoils in northern European waters. Most of these were no more successful than B. & I. Following a trial with a chartered craft between London and Zeebrugge, P. & O. introduced a service between London and Ostend in February 1980, using two jetfoils. This service lasted barely more than six months. Seajet Ferries' service between Brighton and Dieppe, which started in April 1979, suffered numerous weather cancellations during the winter of 1979/80, in addition to mechanical failures, but the final blow came in August 1980, when French fishermen blockaded every Northern French port. Seajet Ferries missed fifteen days of crossings and never resumed the service. Seajet International, which attempted a Newhaven - Dieppe service in 1982 by chartering one of the two jetfoils laid up since the closure of the P. & O. service, lasted barely one month. The Royal Navy carried out trials with a jetfoil, HMS **Speedy**, in a variety of coastal and offshore roles, including fishery protection, but she was not a success, so she was withdrawn in 1982 and placed on the disposal list.

The only long-lasting North European jetfoil service was the RTM route between Ostend and Dover. The British terminal was transferred to Ramsgate in February 1994, but otherwise the same two craft remained in service on the route until 1997. It is significant that RTM was a state-owned

organisation, which had been making heavy losses for some years. In view of the experience of other jetfoil operators, it is likely that RTM's two jetfoils contributed to these losses. RTM was shut down by the Belgian Government and the service by the two Belgian jetfoils was due to end on 28th February 1997, but their final week was disrupted by cancellations caused by bad weather.

Common themes of the jetfoil failures have been the lack of fuel economy, poor mechanical reliability, and an inability to operate in all winter conditions around the British Isles. The failure to develop a larger vessel, which could have carried cars, and so improved the financial performance of the craft, probably contributed to their early demise. It seems that B. & I.'s experiment, which could have transformed sea travel between Liverpool and Dublin, was doomed to failure from the start. It is good to see that the *Cú na Mara* has found a service on a shorter route, where her future is more certain.

It may be of interest to add that the *Cú na Mara* was one of two jetfoils in which the B. & I. Line was interested. An option was taken out on a second craft, which would have operated between Belfast and Glasgow, but this option was never taken up, probably because of experience with the first craft. ■

#### WORLD SHIP SOCIETY

##### ***CENTRAL RECORD AND RESEARCHERS' MEETING, 1998***

It is the turn of the north-west of England to host the Central Record and Researchers' Meeting, which has been held at intervals of a year to eighteen months since 1994. The date is Saturday 4th April 1998, and the venue is the Education Suite of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool. As in previous years, the meeting will begin by covering a certain amount of Central Record business and other matters of interest to researchers and the Central Record team. There will then be a number of short presentations from those attending, covering aspects of their own research with the emphasis on the methods they have used. The meeting will start at 10.00am, and continue until about 5.00pm, with a generous break at lunchtime, as one of the meeting's purposes is to allow those interested in research to get together and exchange ideas.

The meeting, which is relatively informal, is open to all WSS members, and we have also extended an invitation to our friends in the Liverpool Nautical Research Society. We will be asking for a small donation (£1) from those attending to go towards the cost of room hire. There is no need to reserve a place at the meeting, but anyone who has queries should get in touch with Roy Fenton direct. ■

## THIRD CLASS FARE - ONCE UPON A TIME

by T.A. Porter

In the first week of December 1909 I decided that I was fed up with the monotony of sailing out of Panama to Guayaquil, with no social life at either end, and decided to return to Liverpool and try another company. A shipmate of mine had the same idea and together we left Panama for Colon and obtained second-class berths in the Hapag-Lloyd liner *Prinz August Wilhelm* at \$45, plus \$4 head tax into the United States.

We arrived in New York on a Tuesday evening at about 6.30pm. The immigration officials were very exacting in their enquiries about our plans for the future, but we succeeded in convincing them that we were anxious to get home after three years' absence. We were then allowed to go ashore.

After a night in the new sailors' home in Jane Street we went down to the Cunard Pier at the foot of West 14th Street. Neither of us had booked a passage, but we had been assured that this was not necessary and soon we found out why. At the entrance to the pier we saw a long line of men stretching almost across the roadway who, we discovered, were all prospective third-class passengers. We joined the line and in due course arrived at a narrow kiosk, something like a sentry box with a covered front. There was an aperture just big enough to put your hand through. Mine went through with £5-10s in English money.

A voice said : "*Say, the fare is \$33.25 and I want another sovereign*". Not having any argument ready I put down the extra pound and was handed something like a railway ticket. With my companion I followed the men in front until we reached the gangway of the *Campania*, something like a crew's gangway, and just wide enough for one person. We boarded on the port side of the ship and heard a steward reciting : "*Third-class passengers the other side.*" To reach the starboard side we crossed the fiddley just at the time the fires were being cleaned. This was a surprise to both of us but we accepted it as part and parcel of third-class.

Outside the fiddley door was another steward who directed the stream of men to the third-class entrance and here we descended to the deck below and again to the next deck where we found ourselves in an alleyway formed on one side by the ship's side and on the other by the partitions of the sleeping accommodation which could be removed or built up according to the number of passengers carried.

A steward indicated a doorway which opened on to a short alleyway between four 'shelves'. Each 'shelf' had iron bars spaced about 24 inches apart and in each space along the shelf were a straw mattress, pillow and blanket. There were twenty men in this area with their heads about three feet away from their neighbours' and their feet against the partition. Another steward

kept up the monotonous chant : "*pick a berth, gentlemen*". We both deposited our bags into a space and struggled back against the stream of oncoming men to the upper deck. In 1909 if a man had no more than the third-class fare there was no chance of his living with his wife on the passage. The rule was men forward, women aft.

On the upper deck they were just casting off, and for some time we were occupied with the sights of New York. At noon a bell rang for lunch and we searched for the dining compartment. We were directed to the place where we had picked our berths and found that the eating place was in the alleyway. A table not much more than 18 inches wide was fastened to the ship's side by chains and supported by galvanised iron rods let into holes in the deck. Long forms were placed at the table. After we had secured places at this table the steward came along with a stack of plates and passed them down the table from one end. Another steward handed out knives, forks and spoons; there was no table cloth.

The bill of fare was similar to that given to the 'black gang' of the average tramp steamer of the period, and just about as appetising. Friday's breakfast was potatoes (boiled in their jackets), salt fish, bread, margarine and tea with brown sugar and weak condensed milk. For breakfast on Sunday and Thursday we each had a boiled egg, and this was followed by pork for dinner and beef and pickles for tea.

By that first tea-time on sailing day it was already dark and the **Campania** was well out into the Atlantic and beginning to take the seas over her. On the upper deck a long seat was fixed to the side of the accommodation parallel to the rail and there were several hardy souls sitting out. Just before 9.00pm however, seas were breaking over the deck and I have a recollection of passing the **Majestic** which was driving into the weather and shipping green water over the forecastle.

At exactly 9.00pm the master-at-arms came along and in a loud voice ordered all women off the deck. Husbands and wives bade each other '*good-night*'. It was freezing and very wet as we went below. Up to that time we had seen little of our fellow sleepers. But we found them all on their mattresses and smoking as if they had been paid to do so, despite "No Smoking" notices. The air was thick. At about 11.00pm everyone decided to call it a day and it was then that we found that a 'donkey's breakfast' left much to be desired. At 6.00am my companion and I arose and went to the wash-place which we had previously noted as being on the deck above that on which we slept. We were not the first but fortunately there were only a few ahead of us. There were three metal 'tip-up' basins, three roller towels and five toilets for 200 passengers. Shaving was an art, even to sea-going men.

We secured two seats on the form for breakfast. When the plates had been given out, a steward advanced along the form behind the passengers with a long-spouted enamel jug filled with oatmeal porridge which he served out

using each passenger's shoulder as a fulcrum. That which struck the plate you retained, and the remainder you wiped off your clothes. At 9.00am everyone was ordered on deck and the third-class steward saw to it that no one came below again until noon.

It was annoying to see the greasers pass you on their way to the fo'c'sle bearing plates of ham and eggs when you recalled that your breakfast had been kipper or herring. For three days the weather was vile which demonstrated perfectly what it was like to be aboard a ship making 20 knots without cabin, lounge, smokeroom or any other form of shelter. We stood packed like sardines on a wet deck watching 300ft of promenade deck looking like a half-tide rock.

Sunday was a brighter day however and 30 or so Welsh miners standing on top of the after hatch sang hymns for about an hour; this was the only diversion of the whole week's voyage. The **Campania** certainly had speed but she had been built in 1893 and the ideas of that year were still unchanged in her, sixteen years on.

We called at Queenstown and Fishguard and reached Liverpool Landing Stage at 5.30pm on Wednesday. There were no formalities as to who you were. A gangway was shipped and everyone trooped ashore to go whither they pleased.

About two years later I crossed the Atlantic as a second-class passenger in the **Campania**. What a difference! There were four men in one cabin, but the ship was packed in all three classes. The comfort of the lounge, smoke-room and dining saloon however prompted the notion that no such thing as 'third-class' existed.

I sometimes used to think that very few designers of ships really knew what the North Atlantic was like. Even during my second-class crossing in the June before the coronation of King George V, there were three days when no one in any class was permitted to go out on deck. Whenever the **Campania** shipped a sea it just rolled along her whole length and flopped over aft. I wonder how many of us remember the Allan liner **Pomeranian** whose bridge, with her master and another officer, was swept overboard? ■

#### Editor's Note :

*The **Pomeranian** was built in 1882 by Earle's Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Hull. She was built as the **Grecian Monarch** for the Monarch Line (The Royal Exchange Shipping Company). In 1887 she was acquired by the Allan Line and renamed **Pomeranian**. In 1889 she took up the Glasgow - Montreal route and in February 1893 she ran into a severe storm. A huge wave carried away the bridge, charthouse and fore-deck saloon, killing twelve people. The **Pomeranian** had to return to Glasgow for repairs.*

j.s.

## THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

*Greasby, Wirral,  
March, 1998*

Dear Friends,

As I write, there is a promising hint of Spring in the air; in fact it seems to have been there for several weeks already, and may even be said to have begun (far fetched though it may seem) on 15th January, a day of bright sunshine and gentle breezes, and the day on which a party of L.N.R.S. Members, some 30-strong, visited Cammell Laird's shipyard at the invitation of our good friend, Mr Linton Roberts.

On arrival at the yard gates in Campbeltown Road we were escorted to a well-appointed reception centre and served with coffee. Linton then gave us a brief talk on the progress made at the Yard since the parent-company took over two years ago. The catalogue of achievements was impressive. One recalls with awe the sense of gloom which descended on Merseyside when news of the closure of Cammell Laird became public knowledge. It was only partially lifted when, a couple of years later, word got around that a new group was about to take over and revive the Yard. The sceptical view prevailed that there was little chance of outsiders succeeding where Lairds had failed. Well, the evidence of success was all around us, as we saw during a conducted tour of the site, with its wet basin, dry docks, and workshops humming with every activity known to shipyard practice.

There was an air of dynamism about management and workforce which was almost palpable. Gone were the old demarcation disputes which so bedevilled the old working practices. In their place was a desire simply "*to get on with the job!*". The installation of new dock gates at Nos 6 and 7 Dry Docks had eliminated one obvious source of dereliction. But the prime exhibit was the sight of the drill-ship *Peregrine VII* sitting in two halves in No.5 Dry Dock, in the lee of the old Birkenhead Priory, undergoing conversion and lengthening by installing a new 100-foot section amidships!

The tour lasted about one hour, and, on our return to the reception centre, we found that a welcoming buffet had been prepared in our absence, to which we proceeded to do full justice! Altogether, a most memorable excursion.

A month earlier we had rounded off the old year in style, with a splendid Christmas Lunch at the Blundellsands Hotel, organised by that



indefatigable Member, Gordon Wright. Our "*Cakes and Wine*" meeting on the 18th December (for which, once again, we owe our thanks to Gordon and his wife), was marked by the traditional Christmas Quiz, compiled and conducted by Mike Stammers. I do not know what the prevailing opinion may be, but to me the questions seem to get more difficult every year! However, this debatable issue did not deter our current champion, Norman West, from amassing a highly respectable score, and carrying off the prize. And I think that we are all agreed that there must be no debasing of standards!

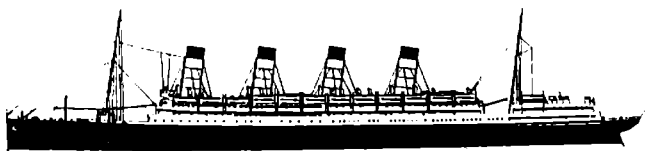
That, of course, was the month we raffled a voucher presented by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company for a round trip for two to the Island. The raffle raised £50 towards Society funds, and the lucky winner was our worthy Member, Peter Day of Anglesey.

I think I had better call a halt there. Our enterprising Editor jealously guards the space available in *The Bulletin*, and I would be loath to encroach too far on his generosity. However, he hopes to be more expansive in the next issue which he plans to enlarge by 50%! I understand that he is presently floating on quite a large pool of material, but I know that he would more than welcome suitable original articles from Members at any time.

The switch of our concessionary facility from Monday to Friday began earlier this month, and seems to be progressing smoothly. Most Members seem to have adapted favourably to the change, but we do commiserate with those who find the new regime inconvenient.

Yours sincerely

*Graeme Cubbin*



*The "Aquitania" will be the subject of the lead article in the next 'Bulletin' which will be sent out to Members in mid-June.*

## PIONEERING THE AMAZON

In a Booth Line management note of the early 1920s, it is observed that following the Great War, it was no longer viable to continue the short cruises to Spain and Portugal. Looking for a new area of business, Booth Line decided that the Amazon offered a little known but intensely interesting destination for the travelling public, and beginning in 1922 six-week cruises were operated with the **Hildebrand**. Among the many eminent people who enjoyed an Amazon cruise was Sir Edward Elgar, who kept a journal in late 1923. The **Hildebrand** was joined for a short period in 1931-32 by the **Hilary** on the cruise run. ■

### GENERAL INFORMATION.

WIRELESS MESSAGES sent between England and Steamers of the BOOTH LINE, via following Stations, are charged for as under :—

Seaforth, Fishguard, Land's End, Niton	-	-	-	-	11d. per word.
Rugby (world-wide range)	-	-	-	-	-1s. 6d. ..
Ushant Havre	-	-	-	-	10½d. ..
Finisterre, Vigo	-	-	-	-	11½d. ..
Lavadôres, Monsanto (Portugal)	-	-	-	-	11½d. ..
Madeira Marconi	-	-	-	-	-1s. 8d. ..
Between Ship and Ship	-	-	-	-	8d. ..

Telegrams to be addressed—Name of Passenger.  
Name of Ship.  
Name of W/T Station—radio.

Specimen :—" Williams, steamer Hildebrand, Landsendradio."

MEALS IN THE SALOON will be served at the following times :—

Between LIVERPOOL and LISBON.

BREAKFAST	-	-	from 8. 0 to 9.30 a.m.
LUNCHEON	-	-	at 1. 0 p.m.
AFTERNOON TEA	-	-	at 4.30 p.m.
DINNER	-	-	at 7. 0 p.m.

Between LISBON and BRAZIL.

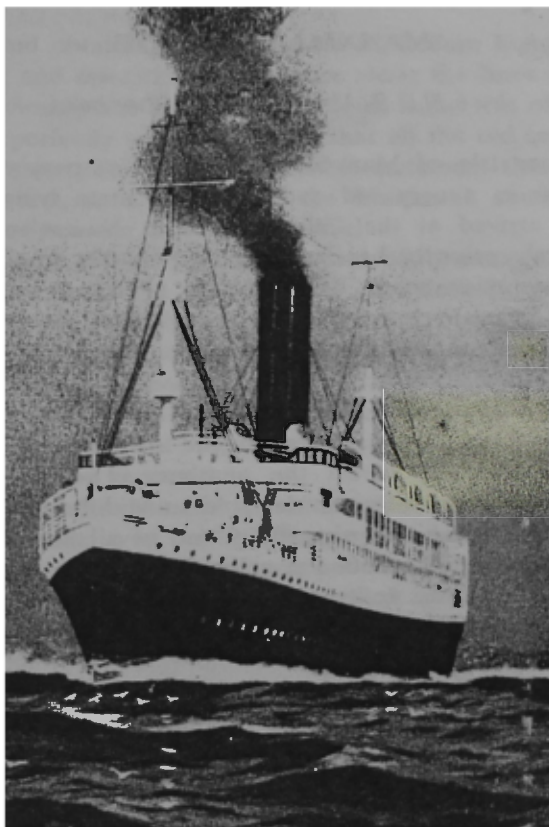
BREAKFAST	-	-	from 8. 0 to 9.30 a.m.
LUNCHEON	-	-	at 12.30 p.m.
AFTERNOON TEA	-	-	at 4. 0 p.m.
DINNER-	-	-	at 7. 0 p.m.

THE SMOKING ROOM BAR is closed at 11 p.m.

SEATS AT TABLE.—Application may be made at any of the Chief Offices, or to the Head Saloon Steward on board the Steamer on day of Sailing.

DECK CHAIRS for use on the voyage can be hired on board the Steamers.

THE SURGEON is authorised to make a charge for treating 1st Class Passengers at their request for any illness not originating on board the ship. In the case of sickness contracted on board no charge will be made and medicine will be provided free.



**R.M.S. HILDEBRAND,**

7,000 Tons.

From LIVERPOOL, 16th JULY, 1929,

FOR

Leixões (Oporto), Lisbon, Madeira,  
Pará and Manaos.

**The Booth Steamship Co. Ltd.**

London Office : 11, ADELPHI TERRACE, STRAND, W.C.2.

Head Office : CUNARD BUILDING, LIVERPOOL.

Telegraphic Addresses : " LUSIAD, WESTRAND, LONDON."

" BOOTH, LIVERPOOL "

## **"MANXMAN" UPDATE**

*by L.N.R.S. Member John Shepherd*

The former Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's turbine steamer **Manxman** is now in a very sad and neglected state lying in the port of Sunderland. She arrived at the Pallion Yard in November 1997 with two shortened masts, a section of her bow cut away and a smoke-blackened hull following an alleged arson attack. Still, it seems, there are backers prepared to put more money into her and Dundee and Great Yarmouth have been rumoured as possible future destinations.

The **Manxman** completed her last passenger sailing for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company on 4th September 1982 and one month later she steamed to Preston Dock, having been bought for static use there by Marda (Squash) Ltd. She did not attract the numbers of visitors that had been envisaged, and in the mid 1980s she was sold to Midnite Entertainments Ltd. At this time the **Manxman** was virtually gutted of all her original passenger accommodation and the old wooden panelling and fittings were burnt on the quayside at Preston. She was refitted as a floating nightclub with bars, discos and fast-food counters. Internally, very little remained of the old **Manxman**, apart from the engine room, which remained wonderfully intact and lovingly cared for by the ship's caretaker, Jim Long of Preston.

In 1990 the **Manxman** closed for business at Preston as her berth was required for the future development of the quays. She was refused a berth to operate as a nightclub at Lancaster and in November she was towed round to Liverpool, arriving in the Waterloo Dock on 6th November. In 1991 she opened for business as the **Manxman Princess** but was not a financial success and closed after a couple of years. Midnite Entertainments seemed determined to pour more money into her, and on 16th April 1994 the old steamer left the Mersey under tow for Hull where it was planned to berth her in the disused Ruscador Dry Dock. On arrival it was found that the **Manxman** was too large to fit in the dock and a notch had to be cut out of her bows to accommodate her.

With amazing lack of foresight, Midnite Entertainments had not secured an entertainments licence for her, and this was subsequently refused by magistrates in November 1994. Without the late night drinks licence, the **Manxman** was once again unprofitable and she was left to deteriorate further. Huge debts accumulated and a High Court Warrant was served on her. In July 1996 the London based Pacific Maritime Group (of which Midnite Entertainments was a subsidiary) announced a £1.5 million plan to take the **Manxman** to Granton at Edinburgh. This subsequently came to nothing and in September 1996 it was reported that a Dr Edmund Carus was interested in "*preserving the unique high pressure turbine vessel for the nation*". Dr Carus's

scheme involved obtaining cash from the Millenium Fund or in the form of a Lottery Grant and operating the steamer along the lines of the **Waverley**. Dr. Carus had obviously not done his homework as he was of the opinion that the engines were perfectly serviceable, and that all the old internal woodwork was in store at Preston. The only half-sensible statement that Dr Carus made was to the effect that, as a last resort, the **Manxman** could be scuttled off the Manx coast and become a divers' paradise!

In August 1997 the **Manxman** was badly damaged in an alleged arson attack. The fire broke out in the after shelter deck bar, which was the old 3rd class ladies' room until the introduction of the single class system in 1967. Ironically this was the one room in the ship which had retained some of its identity - much of the old woodwork was still in place. The room was gutted by the fire and elsewhere much vandalism has taken place - all the Steam Packet frosted glass windows have been smashed and all her fittings such as the bridge telegraphs have been removed.

A month after the fire the **Manxman** was towed to Sunderland by the tug **T.H.Dev** and arrived on 12th September. As she was proceeding up river on 17th September, her foremast clipped the Wearmouth Bridge and the top fifteen feet or so of the mast were bent back at an angle of about 45 degrees. This necessitated a return to the Corporation Quay below the bridge. Both masts were then shortened and in November 1997 the **Manxman** was berthed up the River Wear at Pallion Engineering Limited.

On the Isle of Man itself there is still interest in the **Manxman**, and tourism minister David Cretney was criticised for '*dragging his feet*' over the possible purchase of the old Steam Packet vessel for £30,000 for use as a proposed T.T. museum. How much more dignified it would have been if the **Manxman** had gone to the breakers' yard in 1982. ■



The **Manxman** arrives at Peel in the early 1960s after having been diverted from Douglas due to an easterly gale.

## NOTE AND QUERIES

### ***SEQUEL TO THE "PRINCESS VICTORIA" DISASTER - ALMOST ...***

The loss of the **Princess Victoria** on 31st January 1953 was dealt with in the Winter "*Bulletin*". Thirty years later there was almost another disaster on the same route. The Stranraer-Larne ferry **Antrim Princess** hit the national headlines when an engine room fire disabled her in gale force conditions off Island Magee, Co. Antrim. The ship had left Larne at 10.30am on 9th December 1983 on her regular sailing to Stranraer. With 60 knot gusts blowing, the North Channel was at its nastiest, and 25 minutes out from Larne an engine room fire caused the vessel to lose all power and she began to drift towards rocks, then some four miles distant.

Five R.A.F. helicopters from Leuchars and Lossiemouth and three RN Sea Kings from HMS **Gannet** at Prestwick were immediately scrambled, and the first were on the scene within 15 minutes. The 108 passengers were told to assemble in the first-class lounge where lifejackets were issued. They were then airlifted to safety from the open area at the after end of the boat deck. In quite appalling conditions, in which it was impossible to launch any lifeboats, all passengers and 31 crew were airlifted ashore to Larne.

The **Antrim Princess** later regained power on one engine, but the Naval tug **Rollicker** stood by in an attempt to tow her into Belfast Lough - a feat which was accomplished on the following day. The **Antrim Princess** had drifted to within half-a-mile of the coast, but fortunately her anchors held.

In 1985 the **Antrim Princess** joined the fleet of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company as the **Tynwald**, and maintained the Heysham - Douglas route until 1990.

### ***THE "ROYAL IRIS"***

Many Members will recall that the **Royal Iris** left the Mersey on 11th August 1993 under tow of the tug **Vanguard**, and bound for Cardiff. She had been sold to Hertfordshire-based Parkways Leisure who planned to spend £300,000 on refurbishing the former Wallasey ferry, and give her a new lease of life as a floating nightclub and restaurant.

As so often happens in these cases, the ambitious plans came to nothing and for four years the **Royal Iris** lay neglected and deteriorating at Cardiff.

In late August 1997 the **Royal Iris** was towed round to the Thames and is now berthed a few yards downstream of the Barrier Gardens Pier. It is understood that the old ferry is to be converted for use as a pub/restaurant, possibly to be berthed in central London. At present the *Iris* is in very poor external condition.

The truth of the matter is that the **Royal Iris** is just another name in a long list of failures. This list includes such well known vessels as the **Manxman** (now at Sunderland) and the **Duke of Lancaster**, still in the Dee estuary.

## **DOUBLE HIGH WATER AT LIVERPOOL ?**

Liverpool now, apparently, has a 'double high water', not quite in the same league as Southampton, though! Mersey Radio is now using the Admiralty Tide Tables when it broadcasts 'situation reports', at two hours before high water. The Admiralty Tide Tables vary by some eight to fourteen minutes from the predictions made by the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory at Bidston and used in Laver's Tables. Can any Member explain this anomaly?

## **CUNARD'S LAST SCHEDULED SAILING FROM LIVERPOOL**

It is now just over 30 years since the last scheduled sailing of a Cunarder from Liverpool. On Saturday 31st January 1968 the **Franconia** left Prince's Stage at 2.45pm on a direct sailing to Bermuda and then on to New York. The *Liverpool Daily Post* reported the departure :

*"The sunshine liner **Franconia** is the last Cunard passenger ship to sail from Liverpool. She left the landing stage in grand style on Saturday to lively music playing from a band on deck. Passengers threw colourful streamers and balloons, and a large crowd cheered as the cruise liner - gleaming after a refit - moved away.*

*The **Franconia** is to carry out an eleven-month tour as a dollar earner. She begins a series of cruises from New York in early February, and on 11th April opens a regular service between New York and Bermuda. She is expected to earn around \$6million for Britain.*

*A spokesman for Cunard said that it looked as if the **Franconia** was their last passenger ship to leave Liverpool.*

*The 180 passengers would be fully entertained during the voyage to the United States. On board were seven professional cabaret entertainers, nine musicians and a cruise staff of seven who would be responsible for entertainment. Last word was from Captain Phillip Read, the **Franconia's** master, who said "We are all looking forward to being in the sun after this cold winter!"*

## **THE LIGHTSHIP "PLANET"**

The Bar Lightship **Planet** was withdrawn from station in September 1971 and replaced with a 'LANBY' buoy. Berthed alongside the historic warships in Birkenhead's East Float is a lightship named the **Planet**, and with 'BAR' painted on her hull in large white letters. This vessel also carries a conspicuous board below the light tower marked 'CHANNEL'.

Is this the old Liverpool Bar Lightship **Planet**, and can any Member explain what happened to her between 1971 and her arrival back in Birkenhead a few years ago?

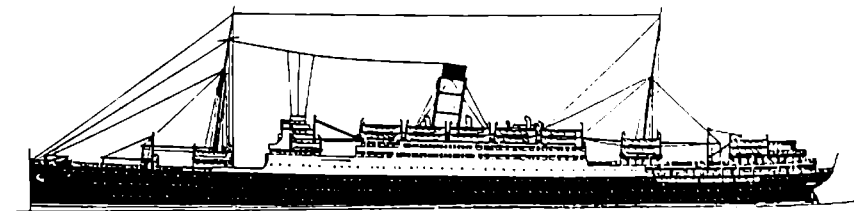
## **AND FINALLY ..... ON THE LIVERPOOL BUSES !**

How many Members remember the single-deck Seaforth to Dingle No. 1 route buses in the early '60s which had two large doors, one by the driver and the other towards the rear, and carried the unforgettable instruction (or was it an observation?) which read "*Passengers alight both ends*"! ■

## THE FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

### No: 1 : The "SAMARIA" OF 1921

*This is the first of what is intended as a regular feature in 'The Bulletin' - a short and accurate account of the careers of some of "The Forgotten Liners of Liverpool".*



The **Samaria** was built and engined by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead and was launched on 27th November, 1920. She was the second vessel to be so named in the Cunard fleet. At 19,597grt, 11,834nett, the **Samaria** was at the time the largest liner ever built on Merseyside, and the launch naturally attracted much attention. The launching ceremony was performed by Mrs J.H.Beazley, the wife of one of the Cunard Line Directors, at a time when labour conditions were interfering considerably with shipbuilding output, and the **Samaria** was delayed for six months on the slipway and cost an additional quarter of a million pounds.

The **Samaria** was 623'9" in overall length, the moulded breadth being 73'6". Propelling machinery was Brown-Curtis turbines of the latest type, driving twin screws through double reduction gearing for a speed of 16 knots. She could carry 9,200 tons deadweight. The **Samaria** ran her trials in Liverpool Bay on 8th April 1922 and began her maiden voyage to Boston on 19th April. The final cost of the **Samaria** was reputed to be just about as much as for the first **Mauretania** - a ship of nearly twice her gross tonnage!

According to the original schedule, the **Samaria** should have left Liverpool on 26th April for New York, but owing to the delayed completion of the **Laconia** by a shipyard strike at Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson, Wallsend, the Birkenhead-built vessel had her destination changed to Boston, and her sailing date advanced by a few days. In June 1922 the new **Samaria** was forced to return to Liverpool with engine trouble.

In July 1922 it was announced that the **Samaria** would make a round-the-world cruise, eastabout, organised by Thos. Cook & Son, starting on 20th January 1923. However, the **Samaria** was detained at Liverpool with gearing trouble and it was not until 24th January that she left for New York where she embarked 400 passengers for the world cruise. One attraction for



the American tourist was the prospect of a week being available to 'do' India. The **Samaria** eventually ended her cruise on arrival back in New York in June 1923, and a further luxury cruise, under the auspices of Cooks, was arranged leaving New York on 26th January 1924. The **Samaria** had the distinction of being the first Cunarder to transit the Panama Canal.

The next time the **Samaria** came into the news was in August 1926, when on a Saturday evening outside New York she narrowly missed being in collision with the Anchor Line vessel **Cameronia**. In dense fog the two ships came to within six feet of each other, and the **Cameronia's** log line was carried away by the **Samaria**.

In January 1928 the **Samaria** left Liverpool for Boston and New York, and her sailing marked the departure for the third successive week of a Cunarder bound for pleasure cruises from New York. She left New York on 28th January for a 30-day cruise to the Caribbean, the first of three such cruises. On 14th July 1928 the **Samaria** left New York for Galway carrying the "Mayo Men's Association of New York" on their annual pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick - Ireland's holy mountain. It was noted at the time that she was the first 20,000 ton liner to call at Galway, and while she was there she embarked pilgrims on their way to Lourdes.

During the years prior to the Second World War the **Samaria** became a popular ship on the trans-Atlantic run from Liverpool, and after the outbreak of war she was taken over for service as a troopship and made voyages to many parts of the world. On 16th December 1939 the **Samaria** left Liverpool for New York but had to put back after striking her escorting warship. After the end of hostilities she carried many thousands of returning troops to Canada, plus wives and children. Her passengers during the immediate post-war years included many displaced persons. These voyages were mainly made from Cuxhaven to Quebec or Halifax, often via Le Havre. In 1950 the **Samaria** made a series of voyages from London to Quebec, carrying one class of passengers at fares slightly higher than tourist. It was an innovation, though only temporary, for passengers to board the ship at London.

In the Autumn of 1950 the **Samaria** was taken in hand for a long overdue refit, and re-entered service when she sailed from Liverpool to Quebec on 14th June 1951 with accommodation for 250 first-class and 650 tourist-class passengers. In 1952 the **Samaria** grounded near Quebec. Her draft was almost that of the depth of the St. Lawrence, and it should be remembered that she was designed for New York or Boston, not the Canadian service. The following year, in 1953, the **Samaria** represented Cunard among the 260 vessels at the Coronation Naval Review at Spithead.

The **Samaria** completed her last trans-Atlantic voyage at Southampton on 3rd December 1955. The British Iron & Steel Corporation bought her and she left Southampton on 26th January 1956, and arrived at Inverkeithing for breaking up the following day.

## MERSEY FERRY USED TO CARRY RAILWAY CARRIAGES TO DUBLIN

*by Malcolm McDonald*

A photograph in the '*Railway Gazette*', dated 25th June 1926, showed two Pullman railway cars for Ireland being loaded at Birkenhead on to a vessel which appeared to be a luggage boat from the Birkenhead ferry service. The photograph showed one car already on the vessel, and another being lifted on board by a crane. The bogies had been removed from the cars, and one set was on the quay. The text accompanying the photograph referred to four cars. It was not clear whether the luggage boat had been used to trans-ship the Pullman cars to a seagoing vessel, or had herself crossed to Dublin. An investigation of the minutes of the Birkenhead Ferries Committee around that period did not mention any reference to a charter associated with the event.

The Liverpool Dock Registers held by the Merseyside Maritime Museum confirm that railway carriages were carried to Ireland in 1926 by a luggage boat, and show that she made two such sailings. The vessel in question was the **Old Oxtan**, which had been built as the **Oxtan** in 1879. She was the first luggage boat ever to be built for service on the Mersey. She took her second name in 1925, to free the name **Oxtan** for a new luggage boat being built by Cammell Laird, and was sold for breaking up after the new vessel had entered service.

It appears that the **Old Oxtan** had been delivered to the breakers before the charter was arranged. She returned from New Ferry to Princes Dock, Liverpool, on 16th June 1926, and then crossed over to Birkenhead docks. She loaded her cargo at Cavendish Quay, in the West Float. The Dock Register describes her cargo as 'railway carriages', but the photograph shows that they were two Pullman cars. The **Old Oxtan** departed for Dublin on 19th June 1926, and was back at Cavendish Quay on 23rd June to load more 'railway carriages', which must have been the remaining two Pullman cars. She left on the following day for her second crossing to Dublin, and was back at Cavendish Quay on 29th June. Her agents for the two crossings were E.J. Hughes & Co., but on her departure on 30th June, her agents had been changed to Robert Smith & Sons, who were local shipbreakers. The **Old Oxtan's** destination was Tranmere Beach, which implies that she was to be broken up there.

The reason for the lack of any reference to the voyages in the minutes of the Ferries Committee appears to be that the ship had already been sold by the Corporation, which was therefore not involved in the arrangement.

It appears from the dates that the photograph in question was taken with the first two Pullman cars to be delivered. As the **Old Oxtan** did not arrive back at Birkenhead for her second load until 23rd June, it would hardly

have been possible for any photograph taken then, or more likely on 24th June, to appear in a magazine dated 25th June.

The Mersey ferry **Mountwood** crossed to Dublin in June 1996 to act as a tender to the visiting U.S. aircraft carrier, **John F. Kennedy**. It was reported that she was the first Mersey ferry ever to sail over to Dublin from Liverpool. In fact her sailing happened just after the 70th anniversary of the first crossings between the two ports by a Mersey ferry.

I am grateful to the Board of the Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside for making the Dock Registers in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Archives available to me, and to David Le Mare for his help in finding the relevant Registers. ■

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### THE CAPTAIN LORD PAPERS

In December 1997, the Merseyside Maritime Museum received the final instalment of the papers of Leslie Harrison, who was General Secretary of the Mercantile Marine Service Association from 1956 until 1985. Leslie Harrison's papers related to the case of the **Californian**.

Mr Harrison died in April 1997. From 1958 to 1997 he waged a single-minded campaign to vindicate the name of the master of that vessel, Captain Lord, who was charged, by implication, with having failed to go to the rescue of the **Titanic**.

Leslie Harrison was thoroughly convinced of the justice of the cause he espoused, particularly since the well-known film, *A Night to Remember*, portrayed Captain Lord as a less than caring commander. Leslie Harrison wrote indefatigably to politicians and other authorities, to survivors and writers; in fact to anybody who wrote about the subject or could possibly add to the evidence. He produced at least three full-length books based on his findings. Finally, in 1992, the case was re-examined by the Ministry of Transport, but the results were not as clearly in Captain Lord's favour as he had hoped, and right up to his death, he was finalising his latest publication on the subject.

The recently received material includes letters from confidence tricksters claiming to be **Titanic** or **Californian** crew! It includes correspondence with well-known **Titanic** authors, such as Walter Lord and also with J.B.Priestley, and the text of a poem '*The Titanic*' by Dr E.J. Pratt, probably Newfoundland's most distinguished poet. ■

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *THE HISTORY OF THE SHIP*

by Richard Woodman, 1997

Published by Conway Maritime Press, 352 pages, illustrated

ISBN 0 85177 721 X

There have been many 'Histories of the Ship', some good and some downright '*scissors and paste jobs*'. Richard Woodman's new book must be among the most wide-ranging and comprehensive. In twenty chapters he covers the very earliest - a dugout canoe dating back to 6300BC - to the latest specialist ships of the hi-tech offshore industries. Even in 352 pages (many of them carrying full page pictures) this is a formidable act of compression. In the wrong hands, this could have become a turgid recital of facts; but Richard Woodman is a writer of distinction. His Nathaniel Drinkwater historical novels about naval adventures in the Napoleonic wars and his other works based on his own experience have been acclaimed, and he brings his novelist's skills to a narrative that is readable and at the same time authoritative. He exploits his wide experience as a professional seafarer (first as an officer with Blue Funnel and latterly as Commander with Trinity House). As a result he offers all kinds of insights on the ancient craft of the practical mariner and is admirably clear about complex modern developments, for example, in electronic navigation. This clarity is only obscured in one place where the explanation of the fundamental navigational concept of the PZX triangle would have been helped by a diagram. He has no illusions about ships and does not come out all romantic about tall ships : "*Seamen were not bedazzled by their ships, though they may have acknowledged a loyalty to them which was more to do with shared experience and mutual reliance than any false amatory emotion*".

The book deals not only with the technology of ships but also with their social history. For example, the development of the three-masted carrack and caravel enabled the Europeans to explore, colonise and trade to other parts of the globe, while they enriched Europe at the same time as they carried diseases to native populations, causing wholesale epidemics. Richard Woodman also emphasises the ordinary seaman's low social position and the quest for profit that sought and continues to seek through the employment of third world crews to keep their wages to a minimum. He also includes such startling anecdotes as Lady Astor's proposal as first woman M.P. that all merchant seamen should wear yellow armbands as potential carriers of venereal disease!

Much of the focus of the book is inevitably on European and especially British initiatives in naval and mercantile affairs in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the author does cover developments in other civilisations and, for example, affirms that the junks of the Chinese Empire were far in advance, in terms of structure and windward performance, of their 15th and 16th century

European counterparts.

The work is well illustrated throughout with a high proportion in colour. They match and amplify the text and it is good to have plenty of full page pictures. The paintings particularly benefit from this lay-out. There are a few typographical errors, for example, on page 139 *Britannia* is spelt correctly and incorrectly in the same paragraph. All told, this is a handsome, readable volume, often thought-provoking and an excellent introduction to one of '*the human race's greatest ventures*'. ■

M.K.S

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## MERSEY MARINERS

*by the Rev'd. Canon Bob Evans*

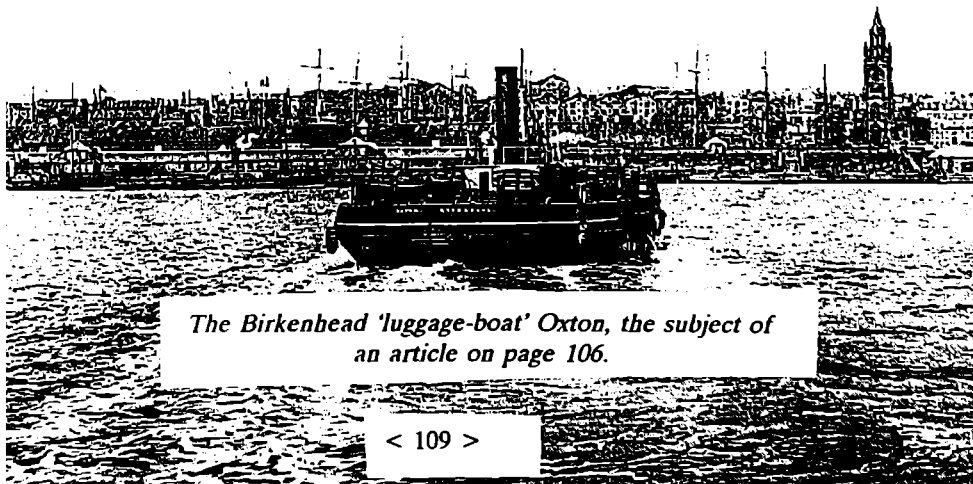
This is the story of seafarers during the past two centuries. From sail to steam, the notorious boarding houses and the crimps, the extortion, the poverty, the unforgiving sea: all these are vividly described. The courage of men, the complex mix of nationalities and the cheapness of life add colour to the scene. Against all this is the remarkable saga of the welfare organisations and societies which evolved to combat and overcome the problems. That story continues today.

Readers of Bob's first book '*A Dog Collar on the Docks*' will quickly recognise that the author is closely involved in this story and is well placed to bring it alive for us.

The Mersey Mission to Seamen has sponsored this book and it can be purchased by visitors to the Mersey Mission to Seamen at Colonsay House, 20 Crosby Road South, Seaforth, Liverpool L22 1RQ, or from :

Len and Ann Holder, "Hatherwood", 41 Grange Road, Heswall, Wirral L60 7RY  
The price of the book is £7.00 plus £1.50 post and packing. ■

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*The Birkenhead 'luggage-boat' Oxtan, the subject of  
an article on page 106.*

## THE "EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA" AND THE JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE OF 1st SEPTEMBER, 1923

*by John P. Light*

The **Empress of Australia** was a steamer of 21,883 gross tons, with a length of 589.9ft and a beam of 72.5ft. She was launched on 20th December 1913 for the Hamburg-Amerika Line by the Vulcan-Werke shipyard at Stettin and named **Admiral von Tirpitz**, but this was shortened to **Tirpitz** in February 1914. She was ceded to Britain after the First World War and was purchased by the Canadian Pacific Company early in 1921, to be taken over at Immingham on 25th July of that year. On 20th August she returned to Vulcan-Werke for a refit of the engines, having been renamed **Empress of China**, and in early 1922 she went to John Brown & Co., Clydebank, for her passenger accommodation to be renovated. On 2nd June 1922 the vessel was renamed **Empress of Australia** and she left the Clyde on 16th June to take up her Pacific service, sailing out via the Panama Canal. At 17 knots her speed was far inferior to that of her consorts, and in consequence she had a somewhat unbalancing effect on this service.

The **Empress of Australia** '*bit the headlines*' for the magnificent work she executed when the great earthquake hit Japan in 1923, causing the loss of more than 100,000 lives and the destruction of half a million homes. It was nearly noon on Saturday 1st September when the first great shock was experienced, and at the time the **Empress of Australia**, moored to the mole at Yokohama, was preparing to cast off and continue her voyage to Vancouver with some 2,000 passengers on board. Assembled on the mole were many members of the British community, waving and shouting '*goodbye*' to their friends on the liner. Suddenly the mole reared its back in the air '*like a giant caterpillar*' as one survivor described it. Just as suddenly it subsided, then reared again and disintegrated. In thirty seconds, Yokohama was destroyed. When the mole broke into pieces, a number of the people on it were flung in wild heaps into the water. Almost at the same time the warehouses on the dockside toppled over; the concrete sea wall surged backwards and forwards and then collapsed; and '*tsunami*' tidal waves swept the harbour picking up the living and the dead and piling them high on the promenade. The **Empress of Australia** was very violently shaken and virtually lifted away from the mole.

When the worst of the earthquake seemed to be over, Captain S. Robinson, Master of the **Empress**, took her back to what remained of the mole and attempted to embark a considerable number of the terrified people. Other vessels in the harbour, among them the P. & O. liner **Dongola**, the Messageries Maritimes liner **André Lebon**, and the United States Shipping Board's **President Jefferson**, also set about the perilous work of rescue. A violent gale, almost approaching the force of a typhoon in its intensity

succeeded the earthquake, pinning the **Empress of Australia** against the remains of the mole, where she was in imminent danger from the many fires which had broken out amongst the debris that had been the sheds and their contents.

Lifeboats were lowered, manned by all hands available, and sent to pick up survivors. Search and stretcher parties for the injured were also organised from among those of the ship's company who could be spared, and passengers who had volunteered for the work. Later, to add to the horror of the situation, cascades of oil from the burst tanks behind the naval dockyard began to flow into the harbour and ignited. This new peril to the **Empress** made it essential to get away from the vicinity at once. To do this the **Empress of Australia** had to go astern, and while carrying out this manoeuvre her port propeller was put out of action by picking up the anchor and chain of the United States Steel Products Company's cargo ship **Steel Navigator**, which was lying astern. Suddenly, out of the smoke from the many fires loomed the **Lyons Maru**, dragging her anchor and out of control. She struck the **Empress** aft and then swung away. Following her came a lighter piled high with timber, and as soon as it was alongside the **Empress of Australia**, the **Lyons Maru** again swung in towards her, but the lighter, acting as a fender, prevented any serious damage being done. With his starboard engine, and the assistance of the **Steel Navigator**, Captain Robinson was able to get away from the mole and proceeded, stern first, to what appeared to be a place of comparative safety, where he anchored.

Soon afterwards the burning oil again approached the ship and a further move had to be made. Captain Robinson therefore weighed anchor, and with the starboard engine drove his ship at full speed across the path of the flames and up to windward of them, but the burning oil continued to drift in the direction of the **Empress of Australia**. The situation was indeed grave, and the non-maneuvrability of the liner, with over 2,000 people on board, was causing the gravest concern to her master. In desperation, Captain Robinson sent out an S.O.S., and it was answered by the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company's tanker **Iris**, which lay in safety outside the harbour, with the reply : *"I'll come in and try and help you, but remember I'm full of oil"*. The **Iris** managed to pull the **Empress's** bows round sufficiently to enable Captain Robinson to draw clear of the danger zone and literally wriggle out of the harbour. Once outside, the anchor was again let go and the work of rescue continued, and then the **Empress of Australia** proceeded to Kobe where her hull was examined by a diver who found a length of 2¼" chain cable round the port propeller shaft.

Later, in the course of an interview relating to the catastrophe, Major Brackley, then Air Advisor to the Japanese Imperial Navy, said : *"It would be impossible adequately to praise the services of Captain Robinson and the officers and crew of the **Empress of Australia** in that terrible situation"*. ■

## VISIT TO CAMMELL LAIRD'S SHIPYARD

*by L.N.R.S. Member Norman West*

On Thursday, 15th January 1998, some thirty Members of the Society were privileged to be invited to visit Cammell Laird's shipyard.

On arrival at 12 noon at the main gate in Campbeltown Road, Members were greeted by the Project Manager, Linton Roberts, and taken to the Boardroom where they heard a short talk about the Company whilst refreshments were served.

Members were then fitted with protective headgear before starting the yard tour. We were joined by another guide - John Taylor - who is an estimator with Cammell Laird, but who is probably better known for his work as Company historian.

The first area to be visited was the fitting-out basin where there were three vessels. The first to be seen was the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **King Orry**, a passenger/ro-ro ferry, which was in for annual overhaul and general repairs. This is probably her last visit to the yard as a new purpose-built vessel, the **Ben-my-Chree** (6) will make the **Orry** surplus to requirements in August, 1998. A noticeable change to the **King Orry** was the change from a white to a blue hull, to fall into line with the parent company's corporate colours (Sea Containers).

A second vessel seen was the Norse **Lagan** which was laid up after drydocking in Canada Graving Dock. Her former Liverpool to Belfast route is now being operated by the new vessels **Mersey Viking** and **Lagan Viking**.

The third vessel in the fitting-out basin was a new tanker for J. Fisher Tankships. She was over on the south-west side and her name was not visible, but I feel sure that she was the **Galway Fisher**. She is one of a group of four clean products tankers ordered from the Qiuxin Shipyard in China, with tonnages of 3,368 gross, 3,627 deadweight. The first two are the **Forth Fisher** and the **Galway Fisher**, and they will be followed by the **Solent Fisher** and the **Milford Fisher**. Although the **Galway Fisher** is a new vessel, Cammell Laird are bringing her up to the standard required by her owners, which a U.K. yard would have done as basic! Our guide informed us that her owners were able to complete her at a lower price this way, even though additional work was being carried out on her.

From the fitting out basin we next visited No.7 Dry Dock which had two vessels in. The first vessel, the **Blue Sky**, had been a fish factory ship which had subsequently been converted to a container vessel. This current refit was to convert her to a seismic vessel and she was to be renamed **Austral Horizon**.

The second vessel seen in No.7 Dry Dock was the **Simon Labrador**, which was formerly the **Seaway Labrador**, a research seismographic survey



vessel, which was receiving a seismic upgrade and overhaul. She is to be renamed **Labrador Horizon**. No.7 Dry Dock was recommissioned in December 1997 after having been out of use for many years.

From here we moved to No.6 Dry Dock, which had been recommissioned in November 1997. In dock here was the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's freight ro-ro vessel **Belard**, receiving an overhaul before being sold to Scandinavian interests.

The final area visited was No.5 Dry Dock in which the **Peregrine VII** was having a major rebuild. She was previously the **Deepsea Worker**. Built in 1971 as a drilling ship, she was converted in 1994 to a salvage vessel. Her method of salvage was to drop a 200-ton grab on to a vessel on the seabed and rip up parts of the vessel and her cargo. The **Peregrine VII** is presently being converted into a Dynamically Positioned Drill Ship for Falcon Drilling Company, Inc., of Houston. The rebuild involves lengthening the vessel by 32 metres, widening by 5 metres and fitting blister tanks (sponsons on the sides). It is interesting to note that after the original hull was split, it was separated by sliding the two halves on sliding ways. This eliminated the need to flood the dock in order to part the vessel. Some 4,000 tons of new steel are being used in the rebuild, and new propulsion and steering units are being fitted.

After the tour we returned to the Boardroom where Members enjoyed a fine buffet lunch. We took the opportunity to ask our very knowledgeable guides more about Cammell Laird. We were all very impressed by what we had seen. There is an able, dedicated and flexible workforce. Cammell Laird has invested heavily in the site with upgrades to cranes, dredging of the wet basin and river entrance and recommissioning of disused dry docks with new dockgates being installed.

We all wish Cammell Laird every success for the future and hope that we may see them launching new ships down the slipways again very soon.

#### *Editor's Note:*

*Mention is made of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's freight vessel **Belard**. Members will be aware that **Belard** is not a traditional IOMSPCo name, and may be interested as to how it came about.*

*The **Belard** was taken on charter from Pandoro for the North Sea operations of the Steam Packet's subsidiary, Mannin Line, in November 1993. Pandoro had previously been operating the vessel across the North Channel between Belfast and Ardrossan and with startling originality had named the vessel by taking the first three letters of each terminal port, and combining them, hence **BEL**fast and **ARD**rossan giving the unusual name **Belard**.*

*The possibilities of such a system of naming ships are endless. Do Members have any suggestions ?*

j.s.

## THE "COLUMBUS" QUICKSILVER STEAMSHIP

by L.N.R.S. Member Terry Kavanagh

Most books on the history of steam navigation give a dramatic account of the 'race' across the Atlantic between the diminutive wooden paddler *Sirius* of the St. George Steam Packet Company and Brunel's *Great Western* in 1838. But another steamship that was intended to cross the Western Ocean, from Liverpool to New York, earlier that year - the experimental "quicksilver" engined *Columbus* - seldom gets a mention.

This is a pity because her "quicksilver" or "vapour-engine", which was the invention of Thomas Howard of London, who obtained a patent (no. 6339) for it in 1832, showed the greatest novelty and ingenuity.<sup>1</sup> Instead of generating steam in an ordinary boiler, it was produced instantly by injecting small quantities of water on a heated iron 'pan' containing 3½ inches of mercury. Mercury's boiling point being so high meant that it could be kept at a temperature of from 300 to 400 degrees celsius by using a mixture of coke and anthracite (which emitted no smoke). After the high pressure steam had worked the piston it was condensed by a jet of fresh water and then led through cooling pipes and the process repeated. In this way a considerable amount of fuel, space and weight could be saved.

At the time, Howard's "quicksilver-engine" attracted a great deal of attention in naval as well as mercantile circles. It was given a series of trials in the Royal Navy's 232 ton Rotherhithe-built steamship *Comet* of 1834, driving two 40hp engines and "*its (early) performances are very favourably spoken of*".<sup>2</sup> Then, in March 1835 the *Comet* steamed from London to Ramsgate, and afterwards from Woolwich to Falmouth, and returned again, and then went to Lisbon. Here disaster struck :

*"The Comet, which had left Lisbon, was obliged to put back with her machinery out of order. The plates immediately in contact with the heated quicksilver had burst, and rendered her unmanageable."*<sup>3</sup>

Owing in part to this failure, and partly to other unfavourable accidents - the most serious defect of this invention was that the mercury tended to leak out of its container and then adversely affected the health of the engineers<sup>4</sup> - the Admiralty decided to abandon further trials and to leave the project in Howard's hands.<sup>5</sup>

What happened next? Howard ordered new ¾ inch-thick iron plates from the Coalbrookdale Company in Shropshire and then fitted them in his own 102 ton paddle steamer *Vesta*, which was launched at All Saints, Poplar, Middlesex in 1835. The following year his steam packet was running daily to or from London and Southend and Sheerness.<sup>6</sup> By the summer of 1837, however, she had been placed on a shorter route, as evidenced by the report that "*the half-hour steamer plying between London and Westminster Bridges emits no*

*smoke, being worked by quicksilver*".<sup>7</sup> In all, the **Vesta** had sailed about 8,000 accident-free miles on the Thames - or so Howard claimed - when her quicksilver apparatus was removed and put in the **Columbus**.<sup>8</sup>

The 325 ton **Columbus** measured 145ft keel, 21½ft beam, with 13½ft depth of hold, and was purpose built for the Atlantic crossing by Fletcher and Fearnell at Poplar in 1837. She was equipped with two 55hp engines, having cylinders 40in diameter by 42in stroke, and carried two low funnels, three masts and a schooner rig. The vessel was also fitted with Morgan's patent feathering paddle wheels of 17½ feet diameter, which had variable angle paddle blades moved by eccentrics so as to emerge from the water at a fine angle and thus not retard the forward motion of the vessel. She maintained an average speed of 10 knots on her voyage round to Liverpool in March 1838, and her fuel consumption - three tons of mixed coke and anthracite per day - was only a quarter of that of other steamers of equal power and tonnage.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, the **Columbus**, with Captain Daniel Green in command, had further (smoke-free) trials at Liverpool, which "*excited much curiosity*" among observers. On one trial trip, in late April 1838, the **Columbus** steamed down the Mersey from the Trafalgar Dock and round the Bar Lightship "*with a highly respectable party of gentlemen on board*".<sup>10</sup> And, three days later,

*"the vessel made an experimental trip to Dublin, and was seventeen hours on her passage, having a strong head wind part of the way. She arrived back at Liverpool in 15½ hours. At Holyhead, she fell in with the Mermaid steamer, from Waterford, and slightly gained upon her"*.<sup>11</sup>

However, the **Columbus** was never put to the test in the North Atlantic as a serious explosion caused the abandonment of the enterprise.<sup>12</sup>

The **Columbus** was subsequently converted into a sailing vessel, being rigged as a three-masted barque initially, and then became a full-rigged ship. This London registered vessel, which stood A1 at Lloyds, belonged to W. Newall & Co., merchants, and traded between Liverpool and Pernambuco. In 1853 the **Columbus** was sold to Thomas Harrison, a merchant in Liverpool (her new port of registry, item 437/1853). Less than three years afterwards she was 'condemned as unseaworthy' at Tenerife - an undignified end to what had been a very bold and novel experiment.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> The earliest known reference to this engine is in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 96, part 1 (1826), page 549, which states (amongst other things) that "*the saving of stowage will be very considerable, and a ton of quicksilver will be sufficient for propelling a vessel to India and back again with 140 horse power*".

<sup>2</sup> *Mechanics Magazine*, vol. 21, 1834, pp 410-11, and vol. 22, 1835, p. 432. The Admiralty meant to try a paddle wheel invented by William Symington at the same time. But on Howard's pointing out "*the inconvenience and uncertainty of trial likely to result to both parties by this arrangement*", the Navy abandoned the idea, and the wheel was subsequently tested on another steamer (*Ibid.* vol 25, pp 362-63). Symington was not best pleased by the decision, inasmuch as he had been "*put to so much expense and inconvenience before I could even get the wheel tried with the vessel, the Alban, for which it had not been constructed*" (*Ibid.* p.393).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol 23, 1835, p.143.

<sup>4</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 16th March, 1838.

<sup>5</sup> *Mechanics Magazine*, vol. 28, 1838, p.363. It appears the Admiralty sold the **Comet**, as a steamer of that name built at Rotherhithe in 1834, and belonging to the Star Steam Boat Co., was later used for passenger service on the Thames between London and Gravesend. See H. Parker and Frank. C. Bowen, *Mail and Passenger Steamships of the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1928, p.79.

<sup>6</sup> *Mechanics Magazine*, vol.26, 1836, p.60.

<sup>7</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 2nd June 1837.

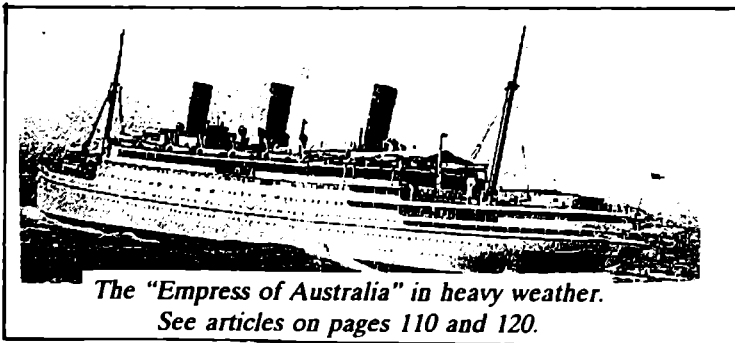
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th May 1838. The **Vesta** was converted into a conventional paddle steamer, and apparently remained on the River Thames for another nine years or so. Then she was sold to Edward Lloyd Mostyn, of Mostyn in the Dee estuary, and employed on the Liverpool run for the next twelve months (Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden. S/1. Item 8/1847). The **Vesta** was re-registered at Liverpool in 1848 (Item 199/1848), having been purchased by one Robert Collett Dalgleish, Esq. Two years later the **Vesta** returned to the London River.

<sup>9</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2nd May 1838, quoting *Liverpool Standard*. A print of the **Columbus** appears as Plate XXXVIII, in Parker & Bowen, *op. cit.*MMM Library, Ref: 311 PAR/R.

<sup>10</sup> *Chester Chronicle*, 4th May 1838.

<sup>11</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2nd May 1838.

<sup>12</sup> D.Tyler, *Steam Conquers the Atlantic*, New York, 1939, p.62.



The "Empress of Australia" in heavy weather.  
See articles on pages 110 and 120.

## READERS' LETTERS

*From L.N.R.S. Member Dan C. McCormick of Massena, N.Y., USA :*

A new ferry service from the mainland to Prince Edward Island began operating in July 1997 using the m.v. **Madeleine**, and is part of the tourism development strategy for the many small islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, following the opening of a bridge linking Prince Edward Island to the mainland. Some minor modifications were required to meet safety regulations and a new ferry terminal costing \$C 30 million was constructed. The name **Madeleine** is taken from the small coaster used on the same run prior to 1986.

The **Madeleine** is no stranger to the Mersey, having been built as the **Leinster**, the second of two sister ships for the B. & I. Line. She was built for the Liverpool to Dublin service to Waterloo Lock dimensions with a beam of 18.6 metres. The **Leinster** was the last seagoing car-ferry built by the Verolme Shipyard at Cork and entered service in 1981.

The **Leinster** was given a major rebuild in 1986 with some 286 passenger berths being removed to be replaced with open lounges, and in 1988 the B. & I. left Liverpool in favour of Holyhead. Five years later the vessel was renamed **Isle of Inishmore** and placed on the Rosslare to Pembroke run, and in 1996 there was a further change of name to **Isle of Inishturk**.

The **Madeleine** is now a mixture between a cruise liner and a ferry accommodating up to 1,200 passengers, 225 cars and 20 tractor trailers. Maxium speed is 20½ knots, and the hull is certified to Ice Class 3. Manoeuvring is by two controllable-pitch propellers and bow thruster. Reservations by passengers are no longer required, and there are no more long waiting periods on the dockside.

*From L.N.R.S. Member Charles Dawson of Sundbyberg, Sweden:*

Having noted that Olive Williamson has been compiling a database of early Liverpool steamers from the Customs Registers, I thought it might be of interest to comment on some of those I have called "*the steamers that never were*". In other words, those that were not registered for one or other reason. The most interesting perhaps are those built at Liverpool shipyards for overseas owners.

Under a second category come those that were originally Liverpool built or owned, but were later 'sold foreign'. Very few of these have more than the cursory note on the Register : "*Register closed - vessel sold to foreign owners*" or suchlike. I have found that it is a challenging quest to attempt to winkle out the history of some of these vessels. There are some interesting stories behind them such as that of PS **Telica**. This Liverpool built ship was the second steamship to arrive on the west coast of South America after

Thomas Cochrane's PS **Rising Star** in 1822. The **Telica** was a wooden paddle steamer, built by Hunter (*sic*\*) & Hurry, <sup>1</sup> Liverpool in 1824, of oak with fir deck planking, at a cost of £6,500. Recorded dimensions <sup>2</sup>: 92'10" bp x 17'6", 134 tons OM, 81 tons as a steamer; two 25 HP engines with iron boiler by Fawcett & Co. Optimum speed 8½ knots. The following sailing notice appeared in Liverpool newspapers on 19th November 1824:

#### SOUTH AMERICA

For passengers only, for VALPARAISO and LIMA

The Steam-Boat **TELICA**

She is a remarkably strong, well-built vessel, has excellent accommodation for passengers, and is intended to sail on the 10th of December, - apply  
J. BROTHERSTON & CO.

Such high-flown advertising seems to have been the norm of the day, irrespective of the actual standard of the vessel.

The **Telica** was built of wood and rigged as a galliot. Under the command of a Captain McClune, she finally cleared from the Mersey on 27th January 1825 bound under canvas for the coast of Chile, where her paddle wheels were mounted. There she plied as a passenger steamer on the Callao - Valparaiso service.

There is little detailed evidence of her further voyaging along the west coast of South America, but Liverpool newspapers of the time recorded the sad story of the disaster that befell her at Guayaquil. She had sailed under the command of a Captain Gibbs for Lima, some 600 miles to the south, but after having been at sea for some time, he was obliged to return for more fuel on more than one occasion. The story after that varied a little, depending on who had reported the event.

A passenger report<sup>3</sup> said that on 10th October 1825, he and four others who had gone ashore heard a tremendous explosion from the **Telica** and immediately returned to hear that Mr Metrovitch, the owner of the steamboat, (an Italian according to another source<sup>4</sup>), had set fire to the powder magazine, having only a few minutes previously departed from the passengers at the dinner table. It was said that he had invested his whole fortune in the boat - \$50,000 was quoted - and had gone crazy because he could not make ends meet with her. He himself, together with the captain and five passengers were killed, three other persons were injured and one was missing. One survivor of the crew was a Thomas Jump, believed to have been a Liverpool man.

Part of the after section of the deck was blown away, but the engines and a greater part of the hull were not affected and she was patched up. There still being no profitable employment for her on the South American coast, she was despatched to Bengal under sail, arriving at Calcutta in April 1827. She

was offered unsuccessfully to the government for a price of 130,000 rupees.

Failing to sell her to the government or to find any other purchaser, the agents used her for a time as a tug on the Hooghly where she acquitted herself quite well. In March 1829, the *Telica* was at last sold to the Bombay Government for 61,000 rupees. She therefore appears early on the list of steamers in India<sup>5</sup>, even though she did not remain one for long. She had a bad trip round to Bombay and arrived in need of considerable repairs, so much so that the government expressed displeasure at her condition. Her engines were removed and she was fitted out as a sailing yacht for the use of the governor. Perhaps the governor played a part in expressing the government's displeasure? After a few years she was sold out of the service and disappeared from the register.

Steamships appeared for a third time in South America in 1840. A forty year old American, William Wheelwright, the son of a master mariner hailing from Lincolnshire, had at last seen his dream come true: the paddle steamers *Chile* and *Peru*, the first steamers of the embryonic Pacific Steam Navigation Company, which he had helped to found, arrived together at Valparaiso on 16th October 1840, ready to start their west coast service. If it had not been for unforeseen delays in obtaining the Royal Charter, even these two ships would have been Liverpool built.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C.A.Gibson-Hill, "Steamers employed in Eastern Waters, 1819 - 1839" (*Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol XXVII Pt.1, 1954)

\* 'Hunter' should apparently read 'Humble': there was a shipbuilder Humble & Hurry at Liverpool. They built, for example, the *Etna* in 1826 which became the little HMS *Kite* at Bermuda.

\* Arthur C. Wardle reported that the *Telica* was built by Mottershead & Hayes of Liverpool.

<sup>2</sup> G.A. Prinsep, *An Account of Steam Vessels and of Proceedings Connected with Steam Navigation in British India*, (Government Gazette Press, Calcutta, 1830), 23 and App. A.

<sup>3</sup> *Liverpool Times*, 14th February 1826

<sup>4</sup> *Liverpool Commercial Chronicle*, 8th April 1826

<sup>5</sup> See L.N.R.S. *Bulletin*, Winter, 1990 for others

<sup>6</sup> Duncan Haws, P.S.N.C., (Burwash, 1986), 14, Orders had been placed with Thomas Wilson & Co., but the delay led to their cancellation and the ships being built in London.

*Letters for inclusion in "The Bulletin" are always welcome. It may be that you have something to add to a published article; or perhaps you have come across something which you feel is of interest to readers. Please write to The Editor at the address on the inside front cover.*

## MORE ABOUT THE "EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA"

The **Empress of Australia** was involved in an unusual incident in the Mersey on 7th May 1946 when, laden with troops, she was inward bound from Bombay. With the objective of coming to anchor, the *Empress* was proceeding up river with the intention of passing between the buoy marking the wreck of the **Tacoma City** (which had been sunk off Cammell Laird's on 13th March 1941, after striking a mine dropped from an enemy aircraft) and the Donaldson liner **Letitia**, anchored to the southward, and then rounding up to the flood tide. However, as Lamport & Holt's **Debrett** was also anchored to the southward of the **Letitia**, the *Empress* proceeded further up river before swinging round.

When passing to the westward of the **Debrett**, the **Empress of Australia**, with her decreasing way, sheered to port, due to a large number of troops moving over to one side of the vessel and causing a heel of about seven degrees. The starboard anchor was then let go, in order to check the sheer, but the port bow of the *Empress* came into contact with the port quarter of the **Debrett**, and the two vessels fell alongside each other. The **Empress of Australia** backed clear and began to heave in her anchor.

It was then found that the anchors of the two ships had fouled which caused the **Debrett** to be dragged up river. Five of the Alexandra Towing Company's tugs, and two belonging to the Liverpool Screw Towing and Lighterage Company were quickly on the scene, and their joint operations enabled the **Debrett** to slip her cable and proceed northwards. Four tugs were engaged for about an hour before they succeeded in rounding up the **Empress of Australia** on the flood tide.

In the subsequent claims for salvage services, it was contended on behalf of the tugs' owners that the **Empress of Australia** had grounded aft, and but for the assistance of the tugs, the liner would have got into a very serious situation, and in addition to sustaining damage to herself, would have caused damage to other property. Counsel for the Canadian Pacific admitted that the services of the tugs were promptly and efficiently rendered, but denied that the ship was ever aground or in a position of serious danger, because the use of the engines was available, and the other anchor could have been let go if required.

In the course of his judgement, the president, Mr Justice Pilcher, said that it was undoubtedly a difficult operation for the tugs, and was accompanied by some risk. He found, however, that the **Empress of Australia** was never aground, a fact that was established by the soundings of the 1946 Mersey chart, and the fact that the anchor of the **Debrett** was later picked up from a position 900 feet out from the river wall. For their services, the tugs were awarded the following amounts : **Trafalgar** £500, **Morpeth** £500, **Crosby** £800, **Egerton** £500, **Nelson** £700, **Holm Cock** £600 and **Storm Cock** £600. ■