The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

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THE BULLETIN

Editor : John Shepherd

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ADDITIONAL "BULLETINS" JUNE, 1999 - JUNE, 2000

The Editor has a large surplus of excellent "Bulletin" material, and it is proposed that "Bulletins" will be issued at two-monthly intervals during the next twelve months, i.e. June, 1999, August, 1999, October, 1999, December, 1999, February, 2000, April, 2000 and June, 2000.

Front Cover : The Carmania of 1905

THE "THETIS" DISASTER OF 1st JUNE, 1939

by John Shepherd

Tuesday, 1st June, 1999 marked the 60th anniversary of the loss of the **Thetis** in Liverpool Bay. This article has been compiled from contemporary newspaper cuttings, and extensive reference has been made to the book '*The Admiralty Regrets*' by C.E.T. Warren and James Benson, published in 1958.

Shortly before 10.00am on 1st June 1939, His Majesty's Submarine Thetis left Birkenhead under the command of Lt.Cdr. G.H. Bolus, R.N., for Liverpool Bay. The principal purpose of the day was to make a diving trial at sea. She had on board a complement of 103, fifty more than her normal crew. Five hours later she was lying, sunk, 160 feet down, with her bows in the mud. She was only 14 miles from the Great Orme's Head. Of the 103 men who sailed in her, a mere four survived.

Lt.Cdr. Bolus had joined the Thetis a few days before she was launched at Cammell Laird's yard on 29th June 1938. The Thetis was the third of the new 'T' class of submarine ordered under the Navy Estimates of 1936. She was the first of the class to be built at Birkenhead. The Thetis had been laid down in December 1936 and had been budgeted to cost £350,000. She was 270 feet long overall, displaced 1,575 tons submerged, had a maximum speed of 16 knots on the surface and 9 knots dived, and a range of 8,000 miles. The Thetis carried one 4-inch gun and six 21-inch torpedo tubes.

On 30th April, 1939, the Thetis sailed on her official sea trials for engines and steering. She was also to undertake her first dive underway in the open sea. However, it was immediately apparent that the steering gear had been connected up incorrectly - port for starboard, and vice versa. It seemed strange that acceptance machinery trials, supervised by Admiralty overseers, should have failed to detect so obvious a mistake. Leaving the Mersey, the Thetis headed north through the Irish Sea for the trials area in the Firth of Clyde. It had been intended to make the diving trial in the Gare Loch, but as the hydroplanes were being tested, they jammed at 'hard to dive' and despite all efforts could not be shifted. So the diving trial was postponed, and Admiralty approval was subsequently obtained for it to be carried out at a later date, in Liverpool Bay.

During May came the torpedo equipment trials which were supervised by Lt. Frederick Woods, the Thetis's torpedo officer. The 'bow-cap', at the for'ard or seaward end of the torpedo tube, was opened after a torpedo was in the tube prior to firing; the 'rear door', inboard, opened to allow a torpedo to



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enter the tube. Obviously, a bow-cap and a rear door should not be open simultaneously. Each rear door was fitted with a test-cock. This was so constructed that when a small lever was operated, two narrow holes moved adjacent to each other, making a continuous hole through the rear door. An open test cock thus served as a check on the presence of water in a tube. A few days after the torpedo equipment trials, a Cammell Laird sub-contractor commenced work on the insides of the tubes. Unfortunately, when applying bitumastic enamel to the insides of the rear doors, no action was taken to prevent the solution choking the test-cock holes.

There remained a last inspection of the Davis Submarine Escape Arrangements, and the installation of the D.S.E.A. sets themselves. Under Admiralty instructions any submarine proceeding to sea had to have one set of breathing apparatus for each person on board, plus a one-third excess. On the expectation of 98 persons being on board for the diving trial, the Thetis carried 131 sets.

A few minutes before the Thetis was scheduled to leave Cammell Laird's wet basin, the draft of the hull in the water was taken, fore and aft. The submarine was still four inches higher out of the water for'ard than she had been at the time of the basin dive in March, and she was three-and-a-half inches deeper in the water to port than to starboard. This could be rectified by filling one or more of the starboard torpedo tubes.

It was 9.40am on 1st June, 1939, when the Thetis slipped and proceeded out of the basin. She had, all told, 103 men on board. Besides her crew of 5 officers and 48 ratings, she had as passengers 9 other officers from submarine headquarters, 7 Admiralty civilian staff and 26 employees of Cammell Laird. Of the remaining eight, 5 came from other shipbuilding companies, there were 2 from a Liverpool firm of caterers, and the total was made up by the Mersey pilot, Norman Willcox.

For the 26 Cammell Laird employees there was no question of volunteering. A list was put up and everyone named on it was expected to go, but the extra pay could be as much as thirty shillings, no small sum in the late 1930s. Within 20 minutes of slipping, the **Thetis** was slowly edging out of Cammell Laird's basin and into the Mersey on the high tide.

The Liverpool Screw Towing and Lighterage Company's tug Grebecock had left Birkenhead before the Thetis, for whom she was to act as escort during the trials. The submarine had been lying in a position easily accessible for the Mersey, and the pilot had told the tug's master, Captain A.E. Godfrey, that he would not need any help getting out. Also on board the Grebecock, and acting as liaison officer, was Lt. R.E. Coltart. He had five years' experience in submarines and had been appointed First Lieutenant of the 'Taku, a sistership of the Thetis being built at Barrow.

The Thetis and the Grebecock cleared the Bar Light Vessel at about noon. The Thetis signalled to the tug: 'Follow me, speed 9 knots'. The weather

was fine and clear and, as she reached open water, the Thetis started her steering trials. Lunch was served as the submarine continued steaming slightly north of west - a course designed to take her to the deeper waters of Liverpool Bay. The Thetis reached her diving position just before 1.30pm when she was 38 miles out of Liverpool and 15 miles slightly west of north from the Great Orme's Head. Lt.Cdr. Bolus instructed any of the 'passengers' who might wish to leave the submarine before she dived to come up topside. Nobody appeared, but Coltart on the Grebecock had been expecting upwards of twenty men to transfer. Bolus signalled the Grebecock to close, and he hailed her through a megaphone: 'I shall not be transferring anybody. Take station half a mile on my port quarter. The diving course will be 310 degrees'.

At 1.40pm, Bolus despatched his formal diving signal to Admiralty C.-in-C., Plymouth: 'From H.M.S. Thetis. Important. Diving in position 53°35' North, 04°00' West, for three hours'. The acknowledgement from the Naval Wireless Station at Plymouth arrived at 1.56pm. Immediately Bolus took up position in the Thetis's control room and gave orders for flooding the main ballast tanks in pairs - in slow time. The diesels had already been stopped (with their huge consumption of air they could never be used other than on the surface), and the main electric motors had been ordered 'half ahead'.

It appeared to the observers on the Grebecock that the Thetis had too much buoyancy when she started to dive. She got her bows down at a slight angle, and remained in that position for about 20 minutes. Then she levelled off until the top of her guardrails for'ard and aft were just showing above the water. For about another 30 minutes she was in a position where half her conning tower remained above the surface.

At two minutes to three, the Thetis went down suddenly and completely disappeared within a minute. Lt. Coltart on the Grebecock decided that there was not sufficient reason for speculating that a serious accident might have taken place. If anything disastrous had by any mischance occurred, there would be some immediate sign on the surface - a smoke candle or an indicator-buoy.

The Grebecock stopped her engines, going ahead at intervals to stem the one to two knot tide, and trying to remain in the position in which the Thetis had dived. The water was too deep for her to anchor. Her whole complement of twelve was searching the surface, looking for the slightest sign. The day was fine and clear with a smooth sea, but no signal of any kind appeared from the Thetis. It soon became apparent that the Thetis was not adhering to the programme for the dive as she had been due to submerge to check her trim; surface and blow main tanks; dive again to periscope depth; lower periscope; dive to 60 feet and then fire smoke candles.

The Grebecock was equipped only with radio-telephony equipment which had an official range of 75 miles, although in Captain Godfrey's experience its performance varied tremendously in different atmospheric conditions. At 4.45pm Lt. Coltart sent a signal which was intended to convey his anxiety, without causing alarm: 'To Captain S.5, Fort Blockhouse, Gosport, Hampshire. From tug attending on Thetis. What was duration of Thetis dive? Coltart'. Although the Grebecock was only some 35 miles away from the aerials of Seaforth Radio, reception was very difficult and it was not until 4.56pm that Seaforth finally received and acknowledged the message. It was not until 6.15pm, some ninety minutes after its origination, that Coltart's message reached its destination. Coltart attempted to despatch a second, more urgent, message at about 5.15pm, but the Grebecock's radio-telephony set was quite unable to contact Seaforth Radio.

At about 5.00pm, the **Grebecock** anchored. The bottom was some 23 fathoms (138 feet) beneath the tug, and in order for the anchor to hold, cable of about three or more times the depth of water would be required. As each of the **Grebecock's** anchor cables was 40 fathoms long, this meant unshackling the second anchor and adding the free cable to the first, so that the tug was finally lying to one anchor on 80 fathoms of cable.

From 4.45pm onwards, Fort Blockhouse, the Submarine Headquarters at Gosport, had been attempting to contact the Thetis on wireless telegraphy every ten minutes. Culver Wireless Station and the Admiralty were contacted, but neither could report any communication with the submarine. When no surfacing signal had been received from the Thetis by 5.05pm, Captain Macintyre, the Chief of Staff to Flag Officer Submarines, had evidence that she had almost certainly been unable to surface. Yet the first order for search by ship was not despatched until 6.22pm, and the first request for search by aircraft was not sent until 6.50pm. This meant that before either a ship or an aircraft could arrive at the scene it would be sunset. At 5.50pm Captain Macintyre still thought it premature to set in motion the 'Subsmash' drill.

At 5.50pm on 1st June the known facts were as follows. The Thetis was undertaking her diving trial in Liverpool Bay, in open waters and out of sight of land, and in an area of strong tides. She had a number of men on board in excess of her normal complement, and was therefore short of air reserve when submerged for a long time. There was only the tug Grebecock standing by, a vessel not fitted with wireless telegraphy and without the means of underwater signalling to the Thetis.

At 6.15pm Admiralty Fleet Order 971/35 - the then 'Subsmash' - was radioed as top priority. Orders to report to the scene of the sinking 'with utmost despatch' were sent to a wide variety of units. Two submarines for underwater signalling; a mine-sweeping flotilla for sweeping the sea bottom; a destroyer flotilla from Portland; H.M.S. Tedworth, a deep-diving vessel from the Clyde, and aircraft from various bases were immediately on their way. Somewhat incredibly, Captain Macintyre himself travelled north to take charge of the Thetis operations in the destroyer H.M.S. Winchelsea, a veteran lacking high speed and requiring 19 hours for the passage to Liverpool Bay.



LIVERPOOL BAY: NINE CHARTED POSITIONS OF "THETIS," JUNE 1 AND 2, 1939

The destroyer H.M.S. Brazen, on passage through the Irish Sea to Plymouth from the Clyde, received orders at 6.22pm to divert to the scene, and at 9.03pm she sighted the Grebecock and made contact by Aldis lamp. From Brazen: 'Are you over the position where the Thetis was last seen?' Grebecock: 'No, position approximate'. The Grebecock was unfortunately only too right in stating that her position was an approximate one, and both ashore and afloat the confusion about the likely whereabouts of the Thetis was growing worse. The submarine's actual position was $53^{\circ}33'$ North $4^{\circ}04'$ West, which meant that she lay 14 miles from the Great Orme's Head on a bearing of 328 degrees. The position in which the Grebecock had anchored, and which was regarded for some time as the datum position for the search, was some four miles further west. But a signal from the Grebecock to Fort Blockhouse, after R/T contact with Seaforth Radio had been resumed, read: 'Am anchored in last position of Thetis. Position approximately 12 miles N.W. of North West Buoy'.

Once this position was charted, it could be seen to be some nine miles to the east of the **Thetis's** diving position and some twelve miles to the east of where the **Grebecock** was actually anchored. It was almost certainly not generally appreciated that, as the **Grebecock** did not have W/T, she had not known the original diving position as signalled by the **Thetis**. After dark, when the **Grebecock** could identify the Great Orme's Head and Point Lynas lights, her position was corrected back to her original estimate.

The Brazen commenced searching an area about three miles to the westward of the Grebecock. Had the tug been more or less over the submarine's diving position, this would have been a very good place to start, but the Grebecock was already four miles to the north and west of where the Thetis was lying, and so this course of action was taking the Brazen even further away from the Thetis.

An hour and a half earlier, at 7.40pm, a flight of four Ansons of 269 Squadron took off from Abbotsinch, Glasgow and arrived over the area about 9.00pm. The flight spread out but the light was already fading (sunset was at 9.04pm). Before darkness closed in a marker buoy with a flag sticking from it was sighted and at 9.25pm a signal was despatched: 'Important. Marker buoy observed in position 322 degrees Orme's Head 13 miles'. This position was only a mile south west of where the Thetis lay. At the same time as it sent this signal, the aircraft fired four green 'Very' lights which were seen by the Grebecock and reported to the Brazen. The destroyer steamed in their direction to investigate and remained in the vicinity. The navigator of the Anson was not satisfied with his original position, and the aircraft circled the marker buoy while it was carefully recalculated. Then, at 10.00pm, a second message was sent: 'Cancel my 2125 position of marker buoy. 303 degrees Orme's Head 10¹/₂ miles'. This revised position lay fully seven miles south-south-west of the Thetis. Throughout the night the Brazen swept this area, keeping a non-stop Asdic watch and burning her searchlight and two signal projectors.

The first public announcement was given on the BBC's 11.00pm news bulletin: 'The Admiralty regrets to announce that His Majesty's Submarine Thetis has failed to surface'. By midnight on 1st June, the Thetis had been shut down for ten hours. With her known complement of 103 it could be calculated that, even if all her compartments were full of breathable air, the carbon dioxide content would have risen to approximately 5% of the atmosphere. Experiment would suggest that this would cause panting, but no distress.

There were problems with despatching H.M.S. Tedworth to Liverpool Bay. She first had to replenish her empty coal bunkers at Greenock and arrived there during the early morning of 2nd June. It was four hours before any civilian staff could be made available to fuel her. This inability of the Tedworth to proceed immediately to the scene of the Thetis's disappearance meant that, during the whole of a vital period of 20 hours, the men in the submarine were deprived of the assistance of the ship and ship's company better qualified to help them than any other.

At 4.00am on 2nd June the Thetis had been submerged for 14 hours. Carbon dioxide content would by now have risen to approximately 5½%. Panting for breath could be expected to have become more marked. However, at this stage the greatest danger from carbon dioxide concentration was that a sudden change to pure oxygen, as supplied by the Davis Submarine Escape Apparatus, would in many cases bring on acute vomiting. And this, in the mouthpiece of a breathing apparatus, could be dangerous in the extreme. This reaction to oxygen was a known factor, being regularly experienced in a milder form whenever a submarine surfaced and flooded her living spaces with clean air after a long period dived.

Sunrise was at 4.48am on 2nd June. During the next hour and a half the steamers Meath and Delambre reported sighting patches of oil and miscellaneous wreckage in three different positions in Liverpool Bay but none of these could be reasonably connected with the Thetis. At 6.30am the Brazen returned to where the Grebecock lay at anchor. All the searches to the south and west of the tug had proved fruitless, and so the Brazen steamed to the eastward and northward.

At 7.50am the stern of the **Thetis** was sighted, some 18 feet of it clear of the surface at an angle of about 40 degrees from the horizontal. A signal was immediately sent to Rear Admiral Submarines; the Admiralty; C.-in-C. Plymouth: 'Have located submarine. Tail out of water. 328 degrees distance 14 miles Great Orme's Head. Time of despatch 0754'.

As the Thetis attempted to dive at 1.56pm on 1st June, the electric motors were running at 'half-ahead' (about 5 knots) and use of the

hydroplanes had been confined to a moderate angle of dive, certainly not more than 10 degrees. After all the main ballast tanks had been flooded, the Thetis should have been below the surface and losing depth steadily. As it was, she was still on the surface, and remained there for over thirty minutes in spite of increased use of speed and hydroplanes to drive her down. All the auxiliary tanks were flooded and with the hydroplanes set at 'hard to dive' she could only with difficulty be forced down to twenty feet. The whole of the top half of her conning tower would still be churning above the water. It was clear to all the experienced submariners on board that the excess buoyancy was for'ard.

The events of the next ten minutes would seal the fate of the Thetis. On the trim statement there was an entry for Nos. 5 and 6 torpedo tubes - they were noted as being 'full'. The inability of the Thetis to dive led Lt. Woods to suspect that these tubes might not, in fact, be full and he determined to satisfy himself as to what their real status was. He decided first of all to use the testcocks set into the rear doors of the tubes. Starting with No.6, he passed the test-cock lever slowly from the 'locked' to the 'unlocked' position and a small amount of water slopped out as he did so. Turning to No.5 tube, he worked the test-cock in exactly the same manner, but no water came out at all. Woods did not make use of the rimer, a pencil-like object provided for running through the holes of the test-cocks to remove dirt, grease or other obstructions. But, due to the bitumastic enamelling, No.5 test-cock was not clear, and whether the tube was full or empty, Woods's test had in fact given him no evidence at all. Puzzled as to the contradiction between his tests and the trim statement. Woods checked with the Cammell Laird foreman engineer, Mr Robinson, who denied that they had been filled. Back in the tube compartment, Woods carried out a repeat of the tests with the same results. He realised that it would probably be necessary to fill the tubes to enable the Thetis to dive, and accordingly requested that power be supplied to the bow-caps.

Woods then decided to inspect the insides of the torpedo tubes to see if they were dry or if there was any leakage around the seating of the bow-caps. Having decided to open the rear doors, Woods went for'ard to inspect the bow-cap mechanical indicators. These were six five-inches-in-diameter circular dials set one above the other, and with pointers operated by the rams which actually opened and shut the bow-caps. They were numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5. Not 1,2,3,4,5,6. Moreover the dial of No.5 indicator - the lowest one - was extremely difficult to see because of a horizontal bar immediately in front of it. Another complication about the bow-cap indicators was that the 'shut' and 'open' positions were in different places on different dials. On No.5, for instance, 'shut' was at five o'clock, while on No.6 it was at eleven o'clock - in other words, exactly opposite. In spite of all these complications, Woods was able to satisfy himself that all the pointers were at the 'shut' position.

Woods now worked the test-cock lever of No.1 tube to ascertain that it was empty, and as a prelude for opening the rear door. What he failed to do

was to follow the procedure laid down at Torpedo School which demanded that the state of a torpedo tube should be checked by the drain valve before the rear door was opened. The drain valve system was the normal method of emptying a tube, but a full tube would release over 100 gallons of water into the tube bilge spaces, which would have been far from popular with the First Lieutenant who would have needed to pump it out before he could adjust the trim.

The rear doors of Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 torpedo tubes were opened and the tubes found to be dry with no leakage from the bow-caps. Woods was now certain part of the failure of the **Thetis** to dive was due to a misunderstanding about the state of the tubes. Moving on to No.5 tube, Woods pushed up the test-cock lever as he had already done twice previously. Just as before, there was no sign of either air pressure or water. He then started to move the rear door operating lever. It was the first of the five to be in any way stiff. More weight was applied and the lever moved through the last part of its arc. Suddenly, as the lever completed its travel, water surged out of No.5 torpedo tube and quickly flooded the tube space. Despite all the checks, the bow-cap of No.5 torpedo tube had been open to the sea.

Woods shouted a reflex order to his Torpedo Gunner's Mate: 'Fore ends to control room: blow main ballast: we're flooding in fast through No.5 tube'. There was no possibility at all of a tube rear door being shut by hand against the full pressure of the sea.

In the control room, Bolus immediately gave the order: 'Blow main ballast. Full ahead. Hard to rise. Surface'. However, within the first few seconds, the Thetis had taken an angle down by the bows and had begun to career deeper and deeper. The high pressure air and the motors running at 'full ahead' were having no effect. The watertight door between the tube space and the torpedo stowage compartment pivoted from for'ard to aft, and was held in the open position by a latch. Before it could be moved it was necessary to get round behind it and let the latch go. Several pairs of hands then swung the door round, but a butterfly-nut, used for securing it, then jammed between the door and the coaming, and more time was lost clearing this. Every moment the Thetis's bows were angling more steeply and the water was gathering on the door coaming between the two compartments. The angle and the pressure of water together were making it impossible to pull the heavy door firmly enough 'uphill' into position before the first of eighteen turn-buckles could be secured to effect a watertight seal. The lights in the two for'ard compartments then went out and in the blackness the crew were fouling one another's efforts.

The seawater was now entering the torpedo stowage compartment. This meant that there was a new danger as the main batteries were in the compartment immediately aft of the stowage area. If the water reached the batteries there would immediately be vast clouds of poisonous chlorine gas throughout the whole boat. Unless the door at the after end of the torpedo stowage space could be securely shut, there would be no hope for a single man aboard. Accordingly, all attempts at closing the for'ard door to the tube space were abandoned, and all efforts were employed in closing the door in No.2 watertight bulkhead, aft of the stowage space. This door also opened for'ard and had to be pulled 'uphill' against the angle but fortunately, instead of having 18 turn-buckles, it was fitted with one circular, quick-acting lever. As this was being secured there was a jarring, reverberating impact as the Thetis's bows hit the bottom.

When the Thetis's nose smacked into the sea bed, the gauge on the control room bulkhead showed an angle of between 35 and 40 degrees from the horizontal. This meant that she was in about 160 feet of water. The Thetis gradually levelled off and degree by degree the slope was reduced until at 3.40pm she settled at the insignificant angle of some six degrees down. The for'ard indicator buoy was released and a smoke candle was fired from one of the underwater guns.

It was immediately decided to attempt to pump the water out of the two flooded for ard compartments. The two pumps were both in an unflooded compartment, but before the water could be expelled it was necessary to close the hole through which it had entered. It was proposed to pass a man through the for ard escape chamber using his Davis escape apparatus. He would then close the rear door of No.5 tube and open the two main line suction valves. After that it should have been possible to start the main ballast pumps and to pump the water out. Three attempts were made to follow this procedure but all had to be aborted due to the volunteers being totally unable to cope with the pressure of the water once the escape chamber was flooded.

The Submarine Service in the middle of 1939 had really very little experience in the art of escaping from a sunken submarine. The training in the use of the Davis Submarine Escape Apparatus was confined to a tank only fifteen feet deep - not much more than the deep end of an ordinary swimming pool. Not only was there the **Thetis's** crew to be saved, but also fifty civilians whose knowledge of submarines under such circumstances was nil. Admiralty instructions were that there should be no reliance on surface help, but that submariners should use their escape apparatus, waiting, if possible, until they heard a ship on the surface which would signal her readiness to pick up survivors by dropping a succession of small explosive charges.

It was decided to try to raise the stern of the Thetis during the night with the intention of getting the after escape chamber as near as possible to the surface, so as to reduce the water pressure and make easier the process of escape. First of all, ten tons of fresh water were pumped out which presented no difficulties. Problems arose when it came to moving on to the fuel tanks as the Thetis's pumping systems had to be adapted quickly to purposes for which they had not been designed. It took the Cammell Laird fitters several hours to rig a system of pipes from the fuel bunkers to the pumps. By 7.00am on 2nd June, the angle of the Thetis had reached 34 degrees from the horizontal and it was calculated that part of her stern must be out of the water. The condition of the air seemed suddenly to have got very much worse. It was necessary to take deep and distressing breaths. Many men were retching and yawning, and watering from the eyes was continuous. They felt a great lassitude and it required a distinct mental effort to co-ordinate mind and action.

Bolus estimated that under normal circumstances the crew of the Thetis could have lasted for 48 hours with the air available. But the Thetis had two compartments flooded and nearly a double crew on board. This brought the estimate for the limit of activity down to about 24 hours or to about 3.00pm on 2nd June. They all knew that they could not afford to wait any longer before attempting to escape. However quickly the escapes could be made from the after escape chamber - the only one at a reasonably shallow depth - the full complement would not have sufficient time to get out.

The First Lieutenant, Lt. Oram offered to go up to the surface with a plan of action strapped to one arm in a watertight cover, so that if he did not survive and his body was found, the message would still be intact. Bolus's view was that he would prefer Lt. Woods to accompany him as he had the greatest knowledge of the part of Thetis to which the disaster had occurred, and he would be of the maximum value in explaining the situation and helping the salvors. The plan to be carried by Oram, in its basic form, requested high pressure air to charge the Thetis through either the gun recuperator connection or the whistle connection on the bridge. A pre-requisite was for a diver to tighten down the forehatch so that the blow could be put on the for'ard flooded compartments without lifting the hatch.

Just as Oram and Woods were entering the escape chamber there came a series of dull, subdued explosions signifying that charges had been dropped from a vessel on the surface. Inside the chamber the escape had gone quite smoothly, although both men had found great difficulty in concentrating on the correct drill due to carbon dioxide poisoning. But as the chamber finished flooding they pushed up the top hatch and found that it was still about twenty feet under water. They both floated clear and rose to the surface.

Back in the Thetis the escape chamber was drained down. One of the crew swung open the door but in his impatience he had not waited long enough and a quantity of water slopped out. Normally this would not have mattered but the extreme angle of the Thetis meant that the coaming of the bulkhead door alongside the chamber was not high enough to contain all the water and within seconds a few gallons had swirled into the motor-room and on to the main motors and the switchboard. Immediately there was the crackle of the sharp, dry flashes of a short-circuit and a cloud of thick white suffocating smoke welled up. The group of men around the escape chamber seized gasmasks or D.S.E.A. sets and within moments were breathing more easily. After a few minutes the smoke subsided but the change in the condition of the

remaining air was remarkable. The brief period of combustion had consumed a large amount of the remaining oxygen.

Taking into account the D.S.E.A. sets used during the fire, plus the 29 sets in the flooded for'ard compartments, and the five used in the attempts to get for'ard and shut the rear door of No.5 torpedo tube, there were now not enough remaining to go round, despite the excess carried.

After the success of Oram's and Woods's escape, four men were now ordered to squeeze themselves into the escape chamber which was designed for just two. The safety clip was removed so as to leave the escape hatch free to open as soon as the water pressure inside had equalised with that of the water above. The flood valves were operated. After twenty long minutes there was no indication that the four had managed to open the hatch and float clear. The order was given to drain the chamber down. As the door was swung gently open it was seen that the four were still inside - drowned. For whatever reason, perhaps confusion caused by carbon dioxide poisoning, they had been unable to open the hatch.

Another attempt was immediately set up with Leading Stoker Walter Arnold from the Thetis's crew and Frank Shaw, an engine fitter from Cammell Laird. It was almost 10.00am. As the water in the chamber rose, Shaw put up one hand in an attempt to open the hatch. Arnold motioned to him that the water had to come up higher to equalise the pressure. A minute or two later Arnold indicated to Shaw to try again. For a fraction of a second there was no movement but then the hatch shifted and both men felt themselves shooting up towards the surface.

The first successful escape by Oram and Woods had taken place at 8.07am on 2nd June. They were quickly hauled into the Brazen's whaler and taken on board. Oram reported to Lt.Cdr Mills of the Brazen that: 'Everyone is alive on board. They will be escaping at regular intervals of about 20 minutes. Don't try to go alongside, it would only endanger the attempts to get out. I'm confident that the majority will be saved'. Mills sent the following message: 'To Rear-Admiral Submarines; Admiralty; C.-in-C. Plymouth. Lieutenant Oram and Lieutenant Woods are in Brazen. All the rest of the crew are alive in submarine and endeavouring to escape by D.S.E.A. Time of Despatch 0826'.

It was at 10.40am when the Sixth Destroyer Flotilla, commanded by Captain R.S.G. Nicholson in H.M.S. Somali, arrived from Portland. He could advance no reasons to fault the 'keep away from the escape area until you can connect an air-pipe' instructions which Oram had brought up with him. The lack of even one officer thoroughly experienced in submarines was being keenly felt. Captain Macintyre, Chief of Staff to Flag Officer Submarines, was still some five hours away on board H.M.S. Winchelsea.

With no further successful escapes taking place it was agreed to try and get the Thetis's stern high enough out of the water for a hole to be cut in it by which her whole complement could escape, or through which someone from outside could get in. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's salvage steamer Vigilant had arrived and orders were given for a 3¹/₂-inch wire hawser to be passed round the Thetis's stern and made fast to the Vigilant's bows.

Meanwhile the divers and crew of the deep-diving vessel Tedworth were still at the Greenock coaling base. No attempts were made to get them down to Liverpool Bay by road or air. It was noon on 2nd June before the Tedworth completed taking bunkers and sailed for the scene of the disaster, at least twelve hours steaming time away.

Back on the Vigilant, the two ends of the $3\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wire hawser had been made fast. The wire led from the salvage vessel's bows, round the Thetis's stern, and back again. The time was 1.10pm, and the Thetis had been submerged for fifty minutes short of twenty-four hours. Two tugs were secured and within minutes they were towing the Vigilant astern and the combined efforts of the three vessels were soon to be seen on the Thetis. By 1.30pm she was noticeably higher out of the water. Her propellers were well clear and a sizeable portion of her after hull had been exposed.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's Wreck Master Charles Brock, from the Vigilant, was rowed over to the Thetis's stern. He managed to find both handhold and foothold and started work on one of the manholes near the stern. On at least two occasions Brock noticed a large bubble of air break surface near him and he assumed that further escapes were being attempted. Brock removed the outer cover of the manhole without much difficulty. As he started work on the bolts of the inner cover, Brock thought he heard a hissing of air. As the lifting of a bolt allowed the two surfaces of metal to come clearly apart, the hissing became a distinct jet - of air under pressure. Brock was not prepared for this and wondered if he should let the pressure escape, or was he ruining some internal plan for building up buoyancy? In a matter of seconds, Brock tightened the inner cover and the escaping air stopped. His information was relayed back to the Vigilant.

At 2.40pm the Thetis suddenly pivoted round on her stern. Within a few moments her stern was pointing towards the west, with the result that the west-running ebb was pushing hard against her, acting to force her back beneath the surface. Brock was ordered off the Thetis. The Vigilant then steamed in close to the Thetis, taking in the slack on the 3¹/₂-inch hawser, and preparing to heave in once again at the submarine's stern. Minutes later the Somali berthed alongside the Vigilant in order to use her electric drill for cutting a hole in the submarine's stern. The tug Crosby then arrived from Liverpool, bringing with her the oxy-acetylene cutting gear that had been requested five-and-a-half hours earlier. Once more the Vigilant's winch began heaving in and the two tugs astern began towing the salvage vessel. Slowly the Thetis's stern increased its angle and came further out of the water.

Without any warning the Thetis's stern started to cant over. Almost

immediately the hawser parted and the stern sank beneath the water. Hope had required an absolute certainty that the **Thetis's** stern would be held out of the water at whatever cost. At just after 3.00pm on 2nd June, the stern had disappeared.

On board the Thetis a final escape attempt was under way. Two men were in the escape chamber. The door was closed and the flooding system was open to the sea. The water in the chamber rose. What happened next will never be known. Perhaps the two men trying to escape had got as far as trying the hatch, but certainly the flood valve had not been turned off and the chamber was still open to sea pressure. In the event, one of the men in the escape chamber opened the chamber's for'ard door, probably as a result of confusion and disorientation caused by severe carbon dioxide poisoning. This for'ard door led into the Thetis's engine room. Once again two adjacent apertures were open simultaneously to the sea, and the water flooded into the Thetis. First it had been the two doors of No.5 torpedo tube; now it was the flood valve and the engine room door of the aft escape chamber.

Within seconds - a minute or so at the most - all the occupants of His Majesty's Submarine Thetis succumbed to the abrupt rise in the concentration of carbon dioxide that the rapid increase in pressure instantaneously caused. It was just after 3.00pm on Friday afternoon, 2nd June 1939. The Thetis slid gradually through the waters until she came to rest in the mud of Liverpool Bay.

At 4.10pm on the following afternoon, some 25 hours after the last man alive in the Thetis had perished, and some 13 hours after a normal crew's air supply would have been exhausted, a statement was issued from Whitehall: 'The Admiralty regrets that hope of saving lives in the Thetis must be abandoned'.

At 11.15am on Sunday 4th June, the Admiralty issued the following statement: 'Salvage work on H.M.S. Thetis is proceeding, but it may be some time before the vessel can be brought to the surface. Messrs Cammell Laird & Company will be responsible for the work from now onwards, but H.M.S. Tedworth will remain on the spot to render any assistance or advice required by the firm. A full inquiry is being held as soon as possible'.

Wednesday 7th June was the occasion of the Memorial Service at Sea. The cortège was led from the Mersey, over the last 38 miles that the Thetis had covered on her last voyage, by the minesweeper H.M.S. Hebe. Most of the relatives and those intimately concerned with the lost submarine were standing on the open deck. Before she reached the spot where the Thetis lay, the Hebe had been joined by a congregation of salvage vessels, lifeboats and miscellaneous light craft. The service was conducted from the minesweeper's quarterdeck by the Rev'd. G.H. Crouch, R.N., the Submarine Service's Chaplain at Fort Blockhouse.

There was much speculation as to whether the **Thetis** should be raised at all. A paragraph in the Liverpool Echo ran: 'It is understood that most of the relatives who attended the memorial services regarded them as the funeral services of their loved ones. For the vessel to be raised and the bodies to be removed from the tomb in which they have now rested for a week would, it is thought, only serve to reopen the wounds already deep in the hearts of those left behind.'

On 9th June it was decided that the sole responsibility for, and control of, salvage operations on the Thetis should be entrusted to the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association. The Thetis had sunk in a depth of 150 feet at low water springs. The tidal range at the spot was 22 feet, so that diving would often be taking place in up to 172 feet of water. At times there was no slack water period at all, and, at best, absolute slack water did not exceed 30 minutes. The tidal stream at the surface reached a speed of 4 knots.

The Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association had decided that the only lifting medium likely to succeed would be a merchant ship of approximately the same length as the Thetis. She would need to be moored directly above, and eight nine-inch wire slings would have to be used to connect the two craft together. It was not long before a suitable candidate was found - she was the Zelo, and was lying at Cardiff under Admiralty charter. The Zelo was immediately despatched to Birkenhead where giant lifting beams were rigged athwartships across her deck at the points where it was planned the eight wires would be slung. She was ready to leave Cammell Laird's basin on 28th June but bad weather set in and she was detained for two days by a southerly gale.

On the night of 5th July the **Tedworth's** divers started going down to reeve medium-weight wires under the **Thetis's** bows and immediately for'ard of her kccl. These were the wires that would ultimately pull the huge nine-inch hawsers into position.

In the early hours of Friday 7th July a full gale from the south-west struck the Zelo and her starboard moorings dragged. She had to return to Birkenhead for repairs. Severe weather set in and it was not until 16th July that she was back in position above the Thetis. Eventually all was set for the lift to commence, and it started according to plan. However, the wires and the beams lifting the Thetis's bows came under greater pressure than the others and the wooden beams on the Zelo began to twist. The lift had to be abandoned and the Zelo returned, once again, to Birkenhead.

It was agreed to replace the timber beams with steel girders. It was the Cammell Laird view that the salvage should be abandoned. The chairman, Mr R.S. Johnson, held that: 'the Thetis should lie where she is and the bodies be left in peace'. But, once the decision was taken to go ahead again, continuous day-and-night work had the Zelo ready for 24th August. On 26th August, the Zelo was once again in position over the Thetis, and the Tedworth's divers

had all the lifting wires in position by the early morning of 28th August. Low water was at 6.30am and aboard the Zelo the nine-inch slings were hauled into position using the ship's derricks. The noon high tide raised the Thetis gently off the bottom, and the Zelo moved off on the first leg of the journey inshore towards the east coast of Anglesey. Every time that the Thetis grounded the lifting slings had to be hove taut at the next low water and re-pinned around the steel girders.

Nine lifts were made in seven days. By the afternoon of the sixth day, Saturday 2nd September, the operation had reached a depth of only six fathoms (36 feet) at low water. The final stage of the salvage was approaching. On the afternoon of 3rd September 1939 the Thetis grounded gently on the edge of a sandbank near Moelfre Bay. She had reached the farthest point inshore to which the Zelo could transport her. The eight nine-inch slings were cast off and at the next low water the Thetis's conning tower could be seen a few feet below the surface.

On 7th September the divers were working on unscrewing the bolts which were holding down the engine room hatch so that access could be gained to the hull. In order to open some of the bulkhead doors in the Thetis, to permit the free flow of compressed air and the free drainage of water throughout the boat once the 'blowing' stage of the proceedings was reached, the divers had to get forward to the control room. This meant negotiating the engine room and it necessitated all the bodies which were congregated there being removed. On the afternoon of Monday 23rd October, the Thetis was given the full supply of compressed air. At 2.00pm her stern broke surface, followed by her bows half an hour later. She was afloat again and was beached at Moelfre Bay. It was not until 12th November that the last of the bodies was finally recovered from the after machinery compartment.

The Thetis was next drydocked at Holyhead where the physical soundness of her hull structure was confirmed. She was then towed, still under the care of the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association, back to Birkenhead where she arrived on 18th November, 1939.

The Tribunal appointed to inquire into the loss of His Majesty's Submarine Thetis had commenced its proceedings on 3rd July 1939. The dramatic moments came almost entirely from the four men who had escaped: Lieutenant Oram, Lieutenant Woods, Leading Stoker Walter Arnold and Frank Shaw from the Cammell Laird staff. The Tribunal reported that at least six factors acting in sequence produced the full extent of the disaster. First and second came the complete blocking of the vital test-cock with bitumastic enamel, and the opening of the rear door of No.5 torpedo tube while the bow-cap was open to the sea. Third and fourth came the failure aboard the Thetis to shut the first water-tight door, and the subsequent failure to expel the water from the two flooded compartments. Fifth came the failure of those outside the Thetis to render effective assistance. And finally came the failure of those aboard the Thetis, other than the four survivors, to escape by D.S.E.A.

Key questions centred around the bow-cap. Why was it opened? When was it opened? By whom was it opened? The Tribunal found on the evidence that was presented to it that the bow-cap had not been opened until 'not many minutes before the accident, but there is no reliable evidence establishing the time more precisely than that'. The relevant section of the Report reads: 'There was evidence that if the bow-cap had been open for a considerable time while Lt. Woods and those under him were in charge of the tube compartment, they would probably have noticed it for certain technical reasons'. Just what these reasons were did not appear in the Report. Presumably if a flooded tube was going to be apparent it could be expected that its effect would be felt on the handling of the boat - perhaps the Thetis would yaw a little or carry a degree or two of port helm? Furthermore, when the Thetis was salved, the mechanical indicator of No.5 tube bow-cap was at 'open', and may well have been at 'open' for the whole of the passage out from Birkenhead. Taking into account the Thetis's drafts which were read in Cammell Laird's basin, it would seem that No.5 tube was flooded before she sailed from Birkenhead.

The Thetis was stripped immediately her salvors returned her to Cammell Laird's yard at Birkenhead. For a few weeks an Admiralty decision was awaited. By late 1939 submarines were needed as fast as the Royal Navy could get them, and so the Thetis's hull was refitted and the boat was renamed Thunderbolt. No attempt was made to enforce her new identity by means of a formal relaunching or renaming ceremony. One modification in the Thunderbolt's torpedo equipment regularly called to mind her previous identity. On the rear door of each of the torpedo tubes was fitted a 'Thetis-clip', as it was already universally known in the Submarine Service. This was a single dog-clip which initially prevented the door from opening more than a fractional amount, and which would reduce the inflow of water in any subsequent mishap to manageable proportions.

At 2.00pm on 3rd December 1940 His Majesty's Submarine Thunderbolt slipped from alongside H.M.S. Forth on the Clyde and went to war. She served the Royal Navy well until 14th March 1943 when she was depth-charged off Cape San Vito, at the north-western tip of Sicily, and sank in 3,000 feet of water.

On 2nd June 1943, four years and a day since she had first dived in Liverpool Bay, the London Gazette carried an Admiralty communiqué: 'The Admiralty regrets to announce that His Majesty's Submarine Thunderbolt must now be considered lost'.

RACING BETWEEN SHIPS

by LNRS Member Charles Dawson

The competitive spirit seems to be deeply ingrained in the human psyche, but it can be egged on by market forces. Throughout the history of the mercantile marine we can find many examples of the aim "to be there first": the Tea Races from the Far East and the Blue Riband of the Atlantic are good examples. Sometimes the race can be taken to extremes, ending in disaster. Perhaps even the **Titanic** and **Estonia** tragedies come into this category, since schedules were being adhered to, despite extremely adverse conditions.

During the era of the steamship, the racing mania appeared right from the start. Coupled with the primitive state of the technology of the time, it spelled not just 'shaken nerves', as was so often reported, especially in respect of lady passengers, but also, at times, danger. Only a year after the ps Comet made her début, the Glasgow Herald of 12th July 1813 was making this comment in the florid language of the period: "We are sorry to learn that the competition among the steam-boats plying twixt Glasgow and Greenock is carried on to a height which is extremely dangerous to passengers If there be any sense among the proprietors of these vessels, they must see the immediate necessity of satisfying the public that no danger is to be incurred by those who favour them with their custom"

This provoked an immediate assurance from the owners of ps Elizabeth, the Comet's follower, in the Glasgow Courier of the following day: "the proprietors beg leave to assure the Public that there has nothing happened to the Elizabeth since she began to ply regularly on the river that was in the smallest degree dangerous; and they are determined for the future to use their utmost endeavours to prevent anything unpleasant to those who may favour them with their company."

Despite such assurances, the racing mania continued and only four years afterwards the first really serious disaster happened, but it took place in a secluded part of Britain where steamboats had quietly started to run a year after ps Comet. This was East Anglia where the history of steamboats seems still to be relatively little researched. The disaster happened to 'the Norwich steamboat' called **Telegraph** and was fully recorded in the 58-page long Parliamentary Report on Steam Boats etc. dated 28th June 1817, from the meetings of the first Committee expressly convened to investigate such a case. The **Telegraph** was referred to on no less than eight pages of the report.

The ps Telegraph and the ps [Lord] Nelson had assembled on Good Friday morning 4th April 1817 at the moorings near Foundry Bridge, Norwich, anxious to be off. The Telegraph got away first and had given three snorts of her high-pressure machinery when, with a tremendous roar, the cast-iron end of her boiler shattered, and the boiler tore itself loose from its bed and hurled itself out through the stern like an enormous rocket. Of the 22 people on board, nine were killed and six seriously injured.

The Telegraph belonged to the East Anglian Quaker brothers John and Richard Wright and it is said that they paid out some £10,000 to the families of the victims. This was despite the fact that the immediate causes of the explosion were, to quote the Report: "not only the improper construction and materials of the boiler (the offending end had previously been replaced by an outside contractor), but the safety valve connected with it having been overloaded." The Committee recommended that boilers in future be made of wrought iron; that they should be provided with two safety valves and that they should be subject to the inspection of a qualified engineer. In the Report somewhat scathing references were made to "the inattention or temerity of the engineer."

Despite the tragic warning that this explosion presented, we can read further repeated warnings in the ensuing years. The *Glasgow Herald* of 10th February 1826 reported that the captain of ps **Benlomond** was fined £5 for not slowing his engine when ps **Helensburgh** attempted to pass. In fact he had speeded up to prevent her passing. The *Glasgow Courier* of 3rd August 1830 reported that ps **Kilmun** was overtaken by ps **Inverary Castle** some distance upstream from Port Glasgow. The two steamers continued to race abreast and at Port Glasgow the **Kilmun** was forced against the quay, fortunately without casualties.

In May 1836, two East Scottish steamers were reported to be racing off the English coast on voyages between Dundee and Hull. One of these was ps Forfarshire, which on 6th September 1838 stranded on the north side of Big Harker Rock in the Farne Islands with the loss of 54 lives despite the heroic rescue by Grace Darling of the nine remaining passengers. The reason given for the disaster was that the Forfarshire was 'unseaworthy' - her boilers were in very bad condition and therefore highly dangerous if speeding was being resorted to. Had the fierce competition which led to the racing also led to the owners skimping on maintenance?

Yet another Parliamentary Report on Steam-Vessel Accidents was published on 31st May 1839. Racing was also dealt with in the report's 200 pages, although the investigation had been instigated mainly because of the continuing high number of steamboat explosions which were dramatically reported at the time. One such example was: "The Dreadful Explosion of the Union Steam Packet in the Humber Dock Basin, Hull on the Morning of The 7th June, 1837", written by the Rev'd Thomas Jackson.

Captain Edward Chapell, RN, of H.M. Dublin Mail Steam Packet Office, was one of the many dozens of experts consulted. On page 70 of the report he has his say: "Racing cannot be too severely prohibited, particularly if there be only one safety valve, and that accessible." He describes one case, where he was a passenger, when "one vessel in trying to cross upon the other kept her helm hard a-starboard - the other hard a-port; the engines of both going full power, but the vessels remaining almost stationary, heeling over on either side to the great terror of the female passengers; and in this state they continued for above an hour owing to the obstinacy of the commanders. I have also been a daily witness to similar scenes occurring in the Mersey where much damage has been done to the vessels; all of which, I believe, might be prevented, if a regulation was made under penalty, that the steamer on the larboard side should be compelled, when requested, to stop her engines and let the other go past." Here, incidentally, we see that racing was even more dangerous at this early stage, while a Rule of the Road at sea was still being formulated.

The mania was still raging on the Clyde in 1849 and 1850. The magazine of the Clyde River Steamer Club, *Bulletin* No 21, Summer 1985, reported that in those years the steamships Merlin and Eclipse were racing on the Rothesay run and even later, in the 1850s, the Eclipse was still at it, racing with the Victoria on the Helensburgh route. The 'great races' between the Ruby, the Rothesay Castle and the Neptune were the culmination of what had beceome an established feature of the competitive trade among Clyde river steamers. Some passengers may have had their nerves badly shaken by racing, but many seem to have approved of the practice as pure sport.

A short report appeared on page 23 of the Summer 1997 LNRS 'Bulletin' entitled Racing on the Clyde; this particular example taking us almost into the 20th century, occurring in September 1893, when 'many steamboat passengers had their nerves so badly shaken that they left the boat'.

It takes a long time for regulations to take effect; in fact they seem to be continually thwarted by the same economic pressures that lead to racing in all its different forms.

Editor's Note:

Many Members will fondly recall the friendly racing that used to take place on a summer evening between the incoming Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company vessel and the IOMSPCo vessel. The North Wales steamer - the St. Tudno or St. Seiriol - was due to arrive at the south end of Prince's Stage at 7.40pm, whilst the Manx steamer was due to berth at the north stage at 7.45pm.

The St. Tudno (19 knots) or the St. Seiriol (18¹/₂ knots) would have left Llandudno Pier at 5.15pm, whilst the Manx steamer (21 knots) would have left Douglas at 4.00pm. On many an evening they were neck and neck at Crosby bend, and there would be a grand race down the Crosby Channel to the Rock Light, with the Manx steamer slowly overhauling the slower North Wales steamer. This racing ceased in September 1962 when the North Wales company went into liquidation. *j.s.*

THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

It is with mixed feelings - of regret (at having to relinquish the trappings of high office), or relief (at having completed the course), and of sober reflection (on the pros and cons of my incumbency) - that I present to you my third and final report as Chairman.

<u>1. The Monday Facility</u>. Although I myself have not always been able to be present at the Monday sessions, they nevertheless have been well attended by groups of dedicated researchers, and we continue to appreciate the worth of this concession. Good value for money, too, at the rate of approximately £1.50 per user per session!

2. The Lecture Programme. Throughout the period of my Chairmanship, Ron Dennis has continued to produce a superlative series of lecturers for each of our monthly meetings. This, I know from experience, is no easy task, involving a good deal of work and persuasive talent! Occasionally, things do go wrong, as when, last April, Dr Power was unable to deliver her talk on '*Tropical Doctor at Sea*' due to illness, and at such times it is always good to know that members of the calibre of Alan McClelland are willing to step in at short notice, ably to plug the gap. Once again at our Christmas meeting, Mike Stammers, the Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, presented his customary and well assorted Maritime Quiz with Inquisitorial relish!

3. "A Nautical Miscellany", the book we produced on the occasion of our sixtieth anniversary in place of the more traditional 'Transactions', is an attractive publication, replete with a collection of articles and pictures describing aspects of Liverpool shipping over the past sixty years. However, sales have been, shall I say, leisurely, reflecting perhaps a discernible decline in interest in shipping and the sea among the general public. No more topical illustration of the malign effects of this trend exists than in the recent refurbishment of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich (of which you may have read in the press) due to reopen this month. Here, a misguided attempt by the governing body to attract patrons and perhaps lottery funds has led to a reversal of all that is heroic and traditional to produce a mess of all that is politically correct. The slave trade, for instance, which certainly none would defend today, is given undue prominence, as if it had been practised by none but the British since Roman times, while the Royal Navy's stalwart efforts to suppress the trade are, according to reports, not even mentioned. It should be one of this Society's aims to oppose this travesty of history - our history and do all we can to help paint a true picture.

4. Merchant Navy Gallery. We do, of course, take a great interest in the affairs and activities of the Merseyside Maritime Museum. The current scheme to create a gallery dedicated to the history of the British Merchant Service is one that must interest us all, and the organisers should be aware that if our members can assist in any way with matters of research, we are ready and willing to do so. You may remember the Harrison Line Exhibition which was mounted by the Museum last summer. Apparently it was a success and attracted a great deal of public interest; a foretaste, perhaps, of what is to come. It was a privilege for me to participate - in a rather minor advisory capacity - in the research for that Exhibition.

5. <u>Harrison Line Museum</u>. Talking about museums, a small party of our members visited Harrisons' own little private museum on the top floor of Mersey Chambers last month. It was the second of such visits, and I believe that those who attended were suitably impressed.

6. The Internet. The subject of the Internet has come up in Council several times, principally to discuss whether it would be viable, economically and in practice, for the Society to set up its own web site. Which is why the matter is being put to the A.G.M. in the hope that some well-informed members may state their views! At present we have a sort of rent-free accommodation in a maritime history site known as <u>www.cronab.demon.co.uk</u>, which is run by one Michael Phillips. Harry Hignett has had some queries through this address, but some have been quite outlandish and beyond our remit.

My term in the Chair of this worthy Society is now reaching its close. It has, I think, been a rather low key chairmanship, but it has had its dramatic moments, most of which were amicably resolved. I can say, without equivocation, however, that I shall be delighted to hand over the watch to Captain Mike Jones, whose positive attributes, known to you all, will surely enhance the Society's reputation. But before I do so, I wish to thank all of you who have supported and encouraged me during my term. It is, I know, invidious to name names - there is always the danger that someone may be inadvertantly omitted! But I cannot restrain my desire to thank John Tebay, our Secretary, for his valuable support and guidance over the past three years; or Alan McClelland, my immediate past Chairman, always ready with sound advice and encouragement; or Sandy Williamson, our Treasurer, whose impeccable book-keeping ensures financial stability; or John Shepherd, our Editor, whose dedication and skills have ensured that our publications have invariably maintained a high standard; or Ron Dennis, whose tireless quest for interesting speakers to address our meetings is habitually successful; or Harry Hignett, Vice-President, whose breadth of experience has proved invaluable on many occasions; or Sam Davidson, our distinguished President, who has been of great assistance to me, personally, in my research work; or finally Gordon Wright, to whom I could justifiably assign the title of Social and Catering Secretary, for his work and undoubted talents in those fields. And to you, the Membership, I also thank for your loyal support and spirit of comradeship, which has sustained me over the years. I am sure Mike Jones will enjoy similar support. and it will be with feelings of profound equanimity that I shall pass the torch to him.

Graeme Cubbin, Chairman, Liverpool Nautical Research Society, May, 1999.

FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

No: 6 THE "CARMANIA" OF 1905

from Lloyd's Register, 1906

CARMANIA Official Number: 120901 Signal Letters: H F B J Steel Screw Steamer - 3 shafts Tonnage: 19,524 gross, 9,982 nett

built 1905 by J. Brown & Co. Ltd of Glasgow for the Cunard S.S. Co. Ltd. Dimensions: Length: 650.4' Breadth: 72.2' Depth: 40.0' Engines: 3 steam turbines built by J. Brown & Co. Ltd.



At the time of the building of the Carmania, the fortunes of the Cunard company were at a remarkably low ebb. Its two express ships, the Campania and the Lucania, had lost all their records to the four-funnelled Norddeutscher Lloyd liners. Amongst the remaining Cunarders, the Umbria and Etruria were over twenty years old. The later intermediates, Saxonia, Ivernia and Carpathia had nothing like the appeal of White Star's Celtic and Cedric.

Cunard was faced with intense competition from the International Mercantile Marine Company. Only through the intervention of the Admiralty and the promise of Government help was the Cunard company able to remain outside this amalgamation of almost all the North Atlantic passenger lines. The I.M.M. now had an immense fleet and the ability to switch large units to and fro between services as required.

The Cunard Line therefore planned two new intermediate ships. The principal problem to be solved was that of their propulsion. The company set up a committee of experts to go into the question of how the turbine machinery in the Clyde steamers and cross-Channel packets could be adapted for use in ocean-going liners. At the same time John Brown & Company, who already had the contract for the Caronia as a twin-screw quadruple-expansion ship, suggested that her sister, the Carmania, might be turbine-driven in order to give some practical experience with large turbines, and direct comparison with the vessel propelled by conventional machinery. In 1903 they supplied rough designs, and the findings of the Cunard committee and the shipbuilder's suggestions resulted in the experiment. Thus the **Carmania** was from the start 'a special job' with much depending on her and, as an auxiliary cruiser and one of the pioneers of really large turbines, the Admiralty was almost as interested in her as Cunard.

The Carmania was launched on 21st February 1905 and in November was ready for her trials. These lasted a week and the Admiralty was represented throughout. The new ship averaged 20.19 knots over the measured mile runs, and 19.56 knots on the best of her 6-hour sea trials. On 3rd December 1905 the Carmania left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to New York, encountering very bad weather the whole way across, but she arrived on schedule, having behaved excellently and proved herself to be a thoroughly good seaboat. She was soon a favourite with the travelling public and made her passages usually at between 18 and 19 knots. In only one respect did she fall behind her sister, the Caronia, and that was in manoeuvrability. She had no astern power on the centre screw, and astern power on the wing propellers was both less, and more slowly obtained, than in the Caronia. She was therefore by no means as easy to handle as the quadruple expansion ship.

The Carmania's turbine machinery weighed about 5% less than the Caronia's engines. All told there were nearly 1¼ million blades in the turbine installation. The Carmania cannot claim the honour of being the first turbinedriven Atlantic liner, as the Virginian and Victorian beat her by a small margin.

The original passenger accommodation was for 300 first, 326 second, and 2,000 third-class, of which 1,000 were in cabins and 1,000 in dormitories. The first-class accommodation, probably the best on the Atlantic at the time, occupied the central part of the ship, second-class were aft and third-class spread over the main deck. The crew numbered 700. The Carmania's deadweight was 12,318 tons

From 1905 until the outbreak of war in 1914 the Carmania and the Caronia were on the regular Liverpool-New York service in direct competition with the White Star. In the winter months, both ships made the occasional cruise to the Mediterranean. During these years the Cunard Line made a tremendous recovery, first with the Mauretania and Lusitania, then with new ships for the Boston and Canadian services, and finally with the Aquitania. In June 1912 the Carmania had a serious fire in her accommodation when in Liverpool and was taken off service for a time, and on 9th October 1913 she was one of the rescue ships at the burning of the Volturno which had 600 emigrants on board. But for the intervention of Anglo-American's tanker Narragansett, which poured oil on to the wild seas, it seems probable that more than 133 out of the 654 on board the Volturno would have lost their lives.

On 6th August 1914 the **Carmania** arrived at Fishguard with $\pounds 2\frac{1}{2}$ million of gold from the U.S.A. Having discharged this, she sailed on to Liverpool, and on 7th August disembarked her passengers at the landing stage. She docked that evening and in the space of a week was converted into a full Armed Merchant Cruiser. She had discharged her cargo, landed most of her passenger fittings, shipped her guns, ammunition and stores and changed crews, as well as being painted grey overall, in just seven days. The Carmania was only given eight old 4.7 inch guns out of the old Naval Defence Act cruisers. Under a naval captain, the officers and crew consisted mainly of reservists - many of them in fact Cunard men.

H.M.S. Carmania was first put on patrol along the Halifax route, but was then ordered to Bermuda where she arrived on 22nd August 1915. She left again on 25th August, coaled at Port of Spain, Trinidad, and then joined Admiral Craddock's squadron. The Carmania was despatched to Ilha da Trindade, some 1,750 miles to the north-east of Montevideo (20°30'S, 29°50'W) It was thought that this was being used as a rendezvous for German raiders and colliers. On 2nd September she sighted the island and observed a large two-funnelled ship lying offshore. Since the Carmania had not been advised of any large British ships in the area, it was assumed that this was an enemy vessel; an additional anxiety was the possibility of other enemy vessels out of sight behind the island.

When within range, the Carmania fired a shot across the stranger's bow. Fire was returned immediately and the enemy ship moved out for action. She was the German Hamburg-South America liner Cap Trafalgar which had been disguised by removing her third funnel (a dummy). By an amazing coincidence, the disguise was intended to represent the Carmania herself. The Cap Trafalgar possessed two modern 4.1" guns (range 7,000 yards), which compared with the 9,300 yard range of the Carmania's guns.

Hits were soon being registered by both sides, with the vessels closing rapidly. The Germans appeared to be concentrating on the Carmania's bridge and soon her superstructure was a shambles. The Carmania's master (Captain Noel Grant, RN) shifted to the after steering position. Her guns had been scoring heavily on the Cap Trafalgar's hull and the vessel was assuming a heavy list and soon sank, bows first. The German collier Eleonore Woermann picked up survivors.

The following morning the Carmania anchored off the Arquipélago dos Abrolhos (17°50'S, 38°55'W) and contacted H.M. ships Bristol and Cornwall. Her crew repaired the worst of the damage from the 29 direct hits she had received. The rather extraordinary fact was that there were only nine killed and 26 wounded. From Abrolhos the Carmania set off on 17th September for Gibraltar, escorted by the A.M.C. Macedonia. Calling at Pernambuco, she reached Gibraltar nine days later and had to spend several months there being put back into shape. In May 1916, the Carmania was handed back to the Cunard Line and was equipped with more modern 6-inch guns. Back under Cunard management and also under the liner requisition scheme of 1917 she was used for trooping duties on the North Atlantic, but without any further events of special note.

When the War ended there was only time and opportunity to give the Carmania a meagre refit before she was urgently required to re-open a skeleton service between Liverpool and New York; her first sailing was on 21st December 1918. She was joined by the Caronia and Saxonia, the Royal George and the chartered Orduña, whilst various other chartered vessels helped out from time to time, including the V-class passenger ships of Lamport & Holt. In April 1922 the Caronia and Saxonia began a new service from Hamburg via Southampton to New York, and it was not until the end of 1923 that the Carmania was able to go back to her builders for a thorough refit. John Brown's yard reconstructed her into a cabin-class ship, with accommodation for 709 cabin passengers and 1,300 third-class. She was converted to burn oil fuel, and at the time of this refit her lifeboats were double-banked (as shown in the drawing), and extra pairs were installed abreast the mainmast. Following this refit, the Carmania was placed on the Canadian service from Liverpool. The Carmania and Caronia became the largest ships on the St. Lawrence run, but were too big to proceed above Quebec to Montreal. At that time, the route included a call at Belfast. In 1925 the pair were put back on the New York service, but with Boston as an additional port of call.

The following year saw the pair switched yet again to a new service from London to New York via Le Havre and Southampton, running with the Lancastria and the Cunard-Anchor Tuscania. This service continued to 1931. In 1927 the Carmania was off duty for several months whilst Cammell Laird gave her a thorough refit at Birkenhead during which her port turbine was renewed.

During the winter months the **Carmania** operated a cruise service between New York and Havana. This proved popular but caused much disquiet amongst U.S. companies who felt that she was poaching on their territory.

By 1931 the Cunard fleet was completely built up again. The slump was hitting all shipping hard, employment was difficult to find for the most modern and economic ships, and the Carmania's machinery was by then far from economical, although she still retained her original speed. In August 1931 she was laid up at Sheerness and in March of the following year she was sold for £20,000 as scrap to Hughes Bolckow and Company. In April she steamed round to Blyth to be broken up. The Carmania was only 27, not a great age, but her large direct-drive turbines and low-pressure cylindrical boilers were by that time quite outmoded - similar power could have been obtained from machinery installed in half the space.

THE CITY OF LIVERPOOL'S FIREFIGHTING AND PORT SANITARY TENDER "WILLIAM GREGSON" OF 1949

by L.N.R.S. Member Geoffrey Holmes of Wallasey

This short article has been written in response to a request for information about the William Gregson which appeared in the Spring 'Bulletin'.

from Lloyd's Register, 1949:

WILLIAM GREGSON Official Number: 165156 Signal Letters: M A I K Built in 1937 by Harland & Wolff, Belfast Gross Tonnage: 309 Nett: 62 Length: 119.7ft Breadth: 27.1ft 2 oil engines connected to electric motors and screw shafts Owned by The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Liverpool

The William Gregson (not, as popularly supposed, named after the bandleader at the New Brighton Tower Ballroom) was built in 1937 as the Duchess of Abercorn, a tender for the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. In 1948 she was sold to W.E. McCaig of Glasgow (Clyde Shipping Co. Ltd., Managers) and renamed Wimaisia.

In the following year (1949) the Wimaisia was acquired by the City of Liverpool as a combined Firefighting and Port Sanitary tender. She was renamed William Gregson after an Alderman on the City Council and for many years graced the south end of George's Landing Stage. Criticised as a *white elephant*, it was said that one could predict a fire in the Port of Liverpool by knowing when the William Gregson was going to be in drydock! As far as I am aware, she took no part in fighting any of the major fires which occurred in the port during her years of service.

In 1963 the William Gregson was sold to the Marine Diamond Corporation of Cape Town and renamed Collinstar. The company had been set up by an American - Sammy Collins - who had previously owned a fleet of small vessels operating in the Mississippi Delta and along the Gulf coast of Texas. These vessels were amongst the first to service the off-shore oil industry.

In the early 1960s, Mr Collins transferred his operations to South Africa and obtained a licence to dredge for diamonds off the coast of South West Africa (Namibia). His theory was that, as there were diamonds on the beach at Oranjemund and other points further north, it was reasonable to assume that there were diamonds offshore.

Several of Collins' Mississippi fleet went out to South West Africa and two large barges were acquired to dredge for diamonds. The larger - the Colpontoon - was built in the Duncan Drydock at Cape Town about 1964. A number of other craft including whale catchers and tugs were also bought. In February 1965 the Collinstar (ex William Gregson) was working with the Colpontoon in Chamais Bay which is south of Luderitz Bay. Whilst attempting to prevent the dredging barge from being swept ashore by the South Atlantic rollers, the towline parted and this fouled the Collinstar's propellers. She was lifted on board the barge by the seas and almost immediately thrown off and rolled on to the beach by the swells with the loss of her entire crew.

In 1966 the Marine Diamond Corporation was bought by Consolidated Diamond Mines - a subsidiary of De Beers. Mr Collins, after setting up an unsuccessful pipeline construction company - Collins Undersea Pipelines - subsequently moved his operation to Doha in Qatar taking a number of the craft with him. The Colpontoon was salvaged from the beach at Chamais Bay and was working in the Gulf as late as the mid-1980s.

THE TOTAL ECLIPSE OF WEDNESDAY 11TH AUGUST 1999

Next August brings the first total solar eclipse to be visible from the mainland of Britain since 29th June 1927 when the path of totality cut across North Wales and Northern England from Southport to Hartlepool. Unfortunately cloud hid the spectacle and weather statistics suggest that this may be the case again this year.

On 11th August totality will occur at locations to the south of a line from Port Isaac to Teignmouth, but the longest period of darkness (2 minutes, 2 seconds) will be enjoyed near the central line of the eclipse through Penzance and Falmouth. Here mid-eclipse will occur at 11.12 BST as the sun stands 46 degrees high in the south-east.

The track of totality will move east-south-eastwards across Europe and to places more likely to be clear. Places near the central line include Dieppe, Reims and Metz in France, and Stuttgart and Munich in Germany. Totality will be longest (2 minutes 23 seconds) at Bucharest. The eclipse will end at nightfall in the Bay of Bengal.



REPORT ON MEETING

'TRAINS TO BOATS AND FROM PLANES'

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

Norman West presented his illustrated talk to a well attended meeting on 21st January. It took the form of a journey on the Liverpool Overhead Railway, stopping at every station from Seaforth LMS to Dingle, Park Road. The 'planes' in the title refer to aerial photography of the docks.

Norman reminded his audience that it tends to be forgotten that Liverpool Overhead Railway (L.O.R.) trains travelled to Aintree station on Grand National Day, and he dealt with the section of the line from Aintree to Seaforth Sands first. From 1914 to 1924 the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and the L.M.S. ran an electric train passenger service to Seaforth Sands, and had their own station, named Gladstone Dock, on the goods line.

Slides of the interiors of traditional and modernised L.O.R. trains were seen; also route maps showing the distances between the stations. A variety of L.O.R. tickets were examined, giving an idea of the flexibility available using L.O.R. routes and competing railway and bus services.

The Gladstone Graving Dock was seen with the Aquitania undergoing overhaul in 1913. Norman discussed the plans for the Gladstone system and pointed out the folly of enclosing a 1,050ft drydock in an area which only permitted a 850ft vessel to turn and gain access. The Empress of Australia and the capsized Empress of Canada were shown, and then the Empresses of Britain and England, with the oiler Hemsley I alongside. The floating crane Mammoth was seen leaving on the barge Fairal P2 on 23rd August 1986, towed by the tug Fairplay IX.

Norman's slides next toured the L.O.R. sheds at Dingle, and various examples of the demolition in progress in 1957 were seen. There were nostalgic views of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's railway in action, both on its tracks under the Overhead Railway, and around the dock system.

The switchback at Bramley Moore Dock was viewed, where the L.O.R. went to ground level to go under the the L.& Y./L.M.S. line taking coal to the docks. An aerial view showed the coal flats and the floating coal hoist Sandon in the dock. Rising above street level again, the L.O.R. next crossed Stanley Dock and shots of Clarence Dock power station taken at various times were seen, with four, two and three chimneys. On to Prince's Dock station and the Pier Head, and mainline boat trains were seen crossing the dock road to gain access to Riverside Station. Norman's nostalgic tour concluded with James Street, Canning, Wapping, Brunswick and Toxteth stations, before the line passed Herculaneum Dock and entered the tunnel leading to Dingle, Park Road, station.

READERS' LETTERS

Graeme Cubbin writes:

Referring to the short article 'Biscuits: Ship and Dog' in the Spring 'Bulletin', I would point out the firm T. & J. Harrison was founded in 1853, whereas Richard Harrison and Co. had been in existence since 1840. The biscuits were known as 'hard tack' or 'Liverpool pantiles'.

Richard Harrison died in 1862 at the early age of 49. His partner, Henry Wright, had taken control of the business in 1855.

Alan McClelland writes:

John Shepherd's careful analysis of the performance of the SuperSeaCat Two, taken together with widely expressed dissatisfaction about accommodation on board the new Ben-my-Chree, demonstrates the need for a radical appraisal of some Irish Sea ferry services. Given misgivings about the abandonment of the Newhaven - Dieppe cross-Channel link, there may be a case for a yet more extensive investigation.

A number of questions present themselves at once. Other members / readers may have others:

i) Except on short distance routes with high passenger densities, are H.S.S., SeaCats or fast monohull vessels ever likely to demonstrate consistent reliability in service, given the disruptions caused by heavy weather?

ii) May there be an as yet not fully exploited market for services provided by ferries in the Lady of Mann tonnage range, with service speeds of 20 knots? Such ships would have ample passenger accommodation and some provision for vehicles, all carefully planned; not the uncomfortable compromises of the **Ben-my-Chree**. Given careful design to cater for differences in the terminals on various routes, could not the cost disadvantages of building vessels of moderate size be offset by building in standard series?

iii) When 'Duty-Free' trading is eventually abolished completely, will very large ferries on short and middle-distance routes retain passenger loyalty?

iv) It is increasingly obvious that all is not well with some ferry services based on ports in the United Kingdom. Passenger complaints continue to increase, as do impressions that some operators seem only concerned to deflect criticisms rather than addressing the realities of their causes. Is there therefore not a case for setting up a regulatory authority akin to those which monitor the performances of the privatised industries?

Editor's Note : The Newhaven - Dieppe cross-Channel link was re-opened on 23rd April by Sea Containers with the fast monohull SuperSeaCat Two. *i.s.*

NORTH WALES STEAMER MEMORIES



Above: The St.Tudno leaves Llandudno Pier for Liverpool at 5.15pm on a summer's evening in the early 1950s.



INTRODUCING THE

COASTAL CRUISING ASSOCIATION

Do you enjoy travelling by coastal or cross-channel passenger ships, large or small ? Do you enjoy travelling on rivers and canals? Do you want to receive monthly news about these topics?

Then the Coastal Cruising Association is for you.

Back in the sixties, a group of active coastal cruising enthusiasts had the idea of forming a nationwide association for people with similar interests. Out of this grew the Coastal Cruising Association, now one of the foremost maritime societies in the British Isles.

Our monthly publication, *Cruising Monthly*, keeps you up-to-date with all that is happening on the excursion ship, ferry and inland waterway scene. We arrange interesting charters and sailings on vessels large and small. As an example, last year, on the day of the Conwy Regatta, we chartered the vessel Queen Victoria for a sailing from Conwy into the Menai Straits, and then up the River Conwy to Tal-y-Cafn.

We also distribute time-tables and other literature for operators, including the annual programmes of the Waverley and the Balmoral.

You are invited to apply for Ordinary Membership, which costs £13 for a year, commencing 1st April. Your relatives may apply to become Associate Members at an annual cost of £1. This entitles them to join all CCA activities, but they do not receive a separate copy of *Cruising Monthly*.

You may join the Association by writing to:

Richard Winfield, Publicity Officer, CCA, 18 Newton Park Court, LEEDS, LS7 4RD

He can also supply further details of the Association, including a specimen copy of *Cruising Monthly*.

Please join us - you will be most welcome.

AND FINALLY

THE LAMENT OF THE 'BEN'

The present unsatisfactory state of passenger shipping services to the Isle of Man has resulted in the following satirical lines circulating on the Island, and being a much requested item on Manx Radio!

The 'Ben' is the new ro-pax vessel built by Sea Containers for Isle of Man service. Her cramped passenger accommodation has been much criticised, and her towering superstructure makes her almost impossible to manoeuvre in harbour except in light airs. The 'Supercat' is SuperSeaCat Two which attempted to operate on Manx routes during the recent winter, but which suffered up to a 46% cancellation rate due to being unable to sail in seas in excess of 3 metres (most of the time last winter!). The 'Lady' is the Lady of Mann, a purpose-built side-loading car-ferry built for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in 1976. She is a fast ship, a superb sea boat, totally dependable, and operates as 'back-up' for the Ben and the SuperCat.

I'm lying here in Douglas, once again I did not sail, The island has no papers and " Marksie's" bread's gone stale, I'm a brand new ship from Holland and Ben-my-Chree's my name. I'm the slowest ship they ever built and I've other claims to fame. I watch my little sister, the Lady, pass me by; She's on her way to Liverpool, so why the hell can't !? She's twenty-five years my senior and only half my size, But I mustn't put to sea today, for fear I might capsize. I see the yachts out in the bay, with their sails unfurled, My chairman's told my passengers I can sail throughout the world, To Tokyo or to Sydney or even Santa Fe. But Liverpool and Heysham are just too far away! I lie here in the harbour, feeling so uneasy, My sailings have been cancelled because it is too breezy. I'm stormbound here in Douglas and on my berth I lie, It really is embarrassing as canoes go paddling by. I've got another sister, she's called a Supercat, She takes day-trippers to Liverpool, but doesn't bring them back. The Lady comes to the rescue, she always is on call, I avoid these situations by not leaving port at all! Now we've got a little system, it really is unique, It protects us from the elements when the weather is too bleak. My captain lights a candle and hangs it from my railings, And if the wind doth blow it out he cancels all my sailings!
(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Editor : John Shepherd

Volume 43, Number 2, August, 1999



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For details of forthcoming meetings and the resumption of the 'Monday Facility', please refer to the 'Notice Board' on the outside back cover.

Front Cover : The Gallia of 1879

THE STORY OF THE CLIPPER SHIP

"LIGHT OF THE AGE"

(ex "BEACON LIGHT") : 1855 - 1868

'One of those far-famed Black Ball Liners'

Compiled by L.N.R.S. Member Cam Ford of Sydney, NSW

By way of introduction, the following letter was recently received from Cam Ford:

"Thank you for your flattering comments about my history of the Light of the Age. I am delighted that you think it worthy of inclusion in your journal! You asked for a few biographical details, so here goes:

I'm 62 years old, was born in Sydney, and earn my living as a cartoon animator. During the 1960s I spent five years working in England and Europe, including a year on the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine", followed by several months on an archaeological dig in Somerset, looking for King Arthur's Camelot.

In 1988, during Australia's Bicentennial celebrations, my family was on one of the headlands of Sydney Harbour - along with about two million other Sydneysiders - watching the parade of tall ships from all over the world enter Sydney Harbour as a re-enactment of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. It was then that I realised how little I knew about my family history and I resolved to do something about it. Over the next few years I discovered many things, including the convict great-grandfather that no-one had ever mentioned, and the fact that my wife and I are actually third cousins (once removed)! That's one of the dangers of too much research!

I also discovered another distant cousin in Melbourne who had all the family heirlooms, including a family photo album going back to 1858, with every picture named, and the diary that great-grandmother Ford kept on board the Light of the Age during the family's voyage out to Australia in 1859. Having transcribed that, I tried to trace a picture of the ship as well as any more details about her that I could find. This wasn't easy, since there were two ships of the same name, both operating from Liverpool for part of their careers. Gradually all the pieces came together, and I finished up with the history that you now have. But, sadly, no picture!

If, by some chance, anyone might have more information about the Light of the Age (Beacon Light) or, better still a picture, I should be absolutely delighted to hear from them!"

Cam Ford's story of the Light of the Age will appear in the next five L.N.R.S. 'Bulletins'. *j.s.*

The mid-19th century was the era of the clipper ship; the sleek, swift and elegant craft which, for twenty years, reigned supreme as the undisputed 'Queen of the Seas'. American built clippers were especially sought after as being the finest examples of the shipbuilding technology of the day and were built in vast numbers for the merchant fleets of the world. As one English shipping magnate wrote upon the arrival of the **James Baines** in Liverpool, after her record-breaking maiden voyage from America in 1854, the Black Ball Line's magnificent new 2,515 ton clipper was: "the most perfect ship ever to enter the Mersey. Even envy cannot prompt a fault in her."

During the boom decade of the 1850s, no fewer than 353 of these supremely graceful vessels were built in North America, many of which came from the busy shipyards at Medford and Chelsea on the Mystic River near Boston, Massachusetts. In 1855, a contemporary author wrote:

"Where can a little river be found that will afford convenient sites for ten large shipyards within one mile's distance? When, in one of these yards, we have seen from one to three vessels on the stocks at the same time, and have listened to that wellknown, busy hum that comes from the boring augers, the cutting of saws and the driving of bolts, we have felt that a more glorious exhibition of human industry could nowhere be witnessed.

To the gentlemen who have been at the head of this great enterprise, Medford is deeply indebted. The names of Magoun, Turner, Lapham, Sprague, James Fuller, Rogers, Stetson, Waterman, Ewell, Curtis, Foster and Taylor will be held in grateful remembrance for many generations."

Jotham Stetson was a member of the large Stetson shipbuilding family and had his yard at Chelsea where, during the 1850s, he built some eight first class clippers. Early in 1855 (the same year in which the above lines were written), he launched the **Beacon Light**; a brand new 1,379 ton clipper, which would subsequently be named **Light of the Age**. Unusually, when Stetson registered the vessel on 14th February, it was in his own name rather than that of an owner, which suggests that he had built the **Beacon Light** 'on spec', with the object of consigning her to a London shipping broker for subsequent sale. Whatever the reason, Stetson would have had no difficulty in finding a prospective purchaser since English shipowners were enthusiastically buying American-built clippers in great numbers at that time, due both to their acknowledged superiority over the English product and to the ongoing world wide shortage of speedy merchant vessels.

At the same time as the Beacon Light was fitting out for her maiden voyage to England, three other brand new clippers, the Alert, the King Lear (1,936 tons) and the giant Black Ball clipper Donald McKay (2,598 tons) were also being readied in Boston Harbour for despatch to the same destination. It was thus inevitable that the rival captains would seize upon this opportunity to pit their untried vessels against each other in a trans-Atlantic trial of speed. On 4th April 1855, the Boston Atlas reported on the outcome of this contest as:

"A RACE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC"

The new ships Alert (Captain Smith) and King Lear (Captain Eldridge), both sailed from this port on 17th February, and both arrived in London on 15th March, (27 days). The Beacon Light (Captain Simonson), also sailed hence 23rd February and arrived at London on 16th March (22 days) The Donald McKay (Captain Warner) sailed from this port on 21st February, anchored below Liverpool on 11th March and arrived in port on 12th March (20 days). First part [of the passage] - strong gale from N.W.; middle - blowing a hurricane from W.N.W., ship scudding under topsails and foresail at the rate of 18 knots; latter part - still blowing from W.N.W. with heavy hail squalls and a very high sea running.

At the same time as this race was being run, the colossal four-masted Great Republic (3,357 tons; the largest wooden clipper ever built), was also making her maiden crossing of the Atlantic from New York to London, a voyage which took her 21 days. Due largely to the heavy weather, none of these crossings came anywhere near matching the phenomenal record of 12 days and 8 hours set the previous year by the James Baines on her aforementioned maiden voyage. Nevertheless, the Beacon Light's feat of besting her peers by a margin of 5 days and of almost matching the performance of the larger, more powerful clippers with their greater spread of canvas was no mean one, and earned her the renown of being "one of the fastest ships on the berth". In an age when a speedy vessel was almost always the first choice of both prospective passengers and shippers of cargo, such a reputation was a valuable asset which her owners would naturally be eager to exploit.

Once in London, the **Beacon Light's** new owners, the shipping firm of Marshall and Eldridge, immediately set about remodelling her stern cabins and saloons to provide accommodation of a more luxurious standard for her cabin-class passengers, and adding lavish amenities such as an ornately decorated day-cabin for the ladies and a dining table, some thirty feet in length, in the main saloon. Now renamed the **Light of the Age**, the new clipper was first advertised in *The Times'* shipping notices of 31st May 1855 as:

"For Sydney direct - the splendid first class clipper Light of the Age, 2,100 tons burden; John Williams (late of the Marchioness of Londonderry), Commander, lying in the East India Import Dock. This magnificent ship was built at Boston, United States, by that celebrated builder, Mr Jotham Stetson, and launched in the present year, designed to compete with the fastest ships of the day, the expectation of which her voyage to England fully justifies. Her accommodations for passengers are spacious, and combine every comfort. The cabins and saloons are light and well ventilated, the provisions will be in character with the usage of her owners, and stewards attend on the passengers. Shippers of goods desirous of despatch will find this vessel a first-rate opportunity. Carries an experienced surgeon. The Light of the Age is intended to be a regular trader between London and Sydney."

On 10th September 1855 the Light of the Age sailed on her inaugural voyage to Australia, bearing the latest news of the Crimean War - in particular that of the fall of Sebastopol - and arrived at Circular Quay, Sydney, on 13th December. The Sydney

Morning Herald, which customarily published brief outlines of the voyages of incoming vessels in its 'Shipping Intelligence' columns, devoted a large article to the new arrival:

December 13th:- LIGHT OF THE AGE, ship, 1,287 tons, Captain John Williams, from London September 12th. Passengers: Rev'd W.A. Quick, Mrs Quick, 5 children and servant; Mr & Mrs J.C. Taylor, child and servant; Mr & Mrs Cowlishaw and 4 children; Mrs Iredale and child; Mr & Mrs J. Haydon, Mrs Haydon sen.; Mr & Mrs J. Vise and 2 children; Miss Allen, Miss Cowlishaw; Miss Adcock; Mrs Shaddick; Mr R. Williams; Master R. Butler and 199 in the steerage (total 232). Gilchrist, Watts & Co., Agents.

The LIGHT OF THE AGE - This splendid clipper ship arrived yesterday from London, under the command of Captain John Williams, late of the MARCHIONESS OF LONDONDERRY. She is a new clipper of 1,287 tons register, and a very beautiful model, built by her owners to run as a regular trader between London and this port. Her saloon is large, and elegantly fitted up; the table is about 30 feet in length, and the cabins spacious and well ventilated. There is a separate cabin for ladies fitted up in the most gorgeous style. The passage which has been accomplished in 91 days from London, a good one for an ordinary ship, is nevertheless long for a vessel of her class. Captain Williams states that with ordinary weather the passage could have been made in 60 days; he fully expected to reach Sydney before the RED JACKET arrived at Melbourne. Captain Williams has favoured us with the following abstract of the voyage:

The ship LIGHT OF THE AGE left London Docks on the afternoon of 10th September, and anchored at Gravesend the same evening. She left Gravesend on September 11th at 2.30pm; passed through the Downs on the 12th, and was detained in the Channel by calms and contrary winds to the 21st September, being then 31 miles south of Scilly. The equator was crossed on the 20th October at 1.00pm in longitude 28°45' west, having lost the north-east trade in 15° north latitude; was becalmed thirteen days, and had a succession of very light and contrary winds. The meridian of the Cape of Good Hope was reached on the 13th November, say latitude 46°16' south and longitude 17°34' east. The ship passed the east meridian of Van Diemen's Land on the 5th instant, being latitude 150° east, longitude 44°11' south.

The following is taken from her log:- 11 days to Scilly Islands from the Docks; 29 days from Scilly to the Line; 24 thence to the Cape of Good Hope, and 22 from the Cape to the eastward of Van Diemen's Land. She sailed from longitude 20°6' west, latitude 39°43' south, to longitude 150° east, latitude 44°11' south - equal to 170°6' (nearly half the circumference of the globe) in 30 days. Her average run for 13 consecutive days was 256 miles per diem; and for 63 days, 200 miles per diem. Her greatest day's sailing was 318 miles. On the 12th instant, at 10.00am, when off Bateman's Bay, the LIGHT OF THE AGE sighted the steamer TAMAR coming from Broulee; she immediately made signals and hove to. The steamer then stood out to her, and at 10.30am, in the expectation that he had brought us late and important

news (no less than the fall of Sebastopol), Captain Williams went on board the TAMAR and requested Captain Chatfield to bring on his mail, to which the latter assented. Thus, through the consideration of Captain Williams, the letters, &c. were delivered from the Post Office at 9.00am yesterday, instead of this morning. A file of English papers, together with the report and manifest of the vessel were also kindly forwarded to us, for which Captain Williams receives our thanks. The LIGHT OF THE AGE passed Montague Island, a distance of 150 miles from this port last Saturday morning, but has been detained by contrary winds since. Had it not been for that cause, Captain Williams would have brought the pleasing intelligence of the fall of Sebastopol, and thus have anticipated the City of Sydney's news ex the RED JACKET.¹ A testimonial has been presented to Captain Williams, signed by the whole of the passengers, expressing their appreciation of his kindness as a friend, and abilities as a commander. It is the intention of the owners to lay the LIGHT OF THE AGE on for London direct. No vessels connected with the colonies have been spoken with during the passage.

During her first five years of service, the Light of the Age made five essentially similar return voyage to Sydney - passages which were notable mainly for their regularity, as summarised below:

VOYAGE	DEPARTED	ROUTE	ARRIVED	DAYS (port to port)	CAPTAIN
	1855 (Feb 23rd.)	Boston to London	1855 (Mar 16th.)	22	Robt. Simonsor
1	1855 (Sep 10th.)	London to Sydney	1855 (Dec 13th.)	95	John Williams
	1856 (Mar 1st.)	Sydney to London	1856 (Jun_5lh.)	86	• • •
2	1856 (Aug 18th.)	London to Sydney	1856 (Nov 22nd.)	97	• • •
	1857 (Jan 24th.)	Sydney to London	1857 (Apr 14th.)	81	• • •
3	1857 (Jun 29th.)	London to Sydney	1857 (Oct 4th.)	98	S. McBeath
_	1858 (Jan 2nd.)	Sydney to London	1858 (Apr 13th.)	104	
4	1858 (Jul 161h.)	London to Sydney	1858 (Nov 8th.)	116	S. Baines
	1859 (Mar 25th.)	Sydney to London	1859 (Jul 5th.)	103	• • •
5	1859 (Sep 30th.)	London to Sydney	1859 (Dec 30th.)	92	John C. Gilson
	1860 (Mar 17lh)	Sydney to London	1860 (Jun 27th.)	103	• • •
	1860 (Jun - Jul)	(London)dry-da	ocked to be remetalled a	nd surveyed.	

¹ The **Red Jacket** arrived in Melbourne on 3rd December after a passage of 75 days from Liverpool, bringing English newspapers confirming the fall of Sebastopol. Rumours of the victory had already arrived by the **Gertrude** from Calcutta (India was in telegraphic communication with England) the previous day. The full account was published in the *Melbourne Age* on 4th December 1855, and in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 12th December. The Light of the Age brought out passengers and general cargo; everything from Woolwich Arsenal workers made redundant by the end of the Crimean War to a flock of llamas, and took back returning passengers and gold.

A typical return voyage from England to Australia at the time might take about a year - 90 days out, 90 days in port unloading and taking on cargo, 90 days back, and 90 days more in dock before setting out again. These times could naturally vary - storms and adverse winds might add many days to a voyage; whilst under favourable conditions a crack clipper and a daring captain could carve weeks off a normal passage. On the London-Sydney-London run, for example, the Cutty Sark's fastest voyage out was 75 days from The Lizard, and her fastest passage home was 77 days. The fastest overall passage under sail from England to Australia was made by the **Thermopylae**, which sailed from London to Melbourne in the record time of 61 days in 1868-69, whilst the Lightning held the record of 65 days for the fastest voyage from Melbourne to Liverpool in 1854-55.

It should be noted that the *port-to-port* duration of a passage might often be several days longer than that claimed by the owners, since many captains maintained that the real voyage out actually began a day or two after leaving London Docks, when a ship had left the Downs and entered the English Channel; whilst others did not consider a voyage really begun until the ship had passed The Lizard at the western end of the Channel and had left English waters altogether. Conversely, the return voyage was usually deemed to have ended when the vessel reached Dungeness or Gravesend, where she would be taken in tow by steam tugs for the one or two day passage to her berth in London Docks. Depending on the weather in the Channel, these factors could add anything up to ten days to the *claimed* duration of a voyage, and explain many of the slight discrepancies in times and dates given in this account.

Once having set sail on her 14,000 mile outward journey, the Light of the Age would not enter port again until she arrived at her destination. After leaving the English Channel she would follow the traditional clipper route which took her across the Bay of Biscay, then to the west of Madeira and into the north-east trade winds, before which she would have an easy run south-west down the mid-Atlantic, with the captain using the small groups of islands as navigation points along the way. After losing the trade winds, the Light of the Age would creep slowly south through the Doldrums to the Equator, which the captain would normally expect to cross some 21 days out. Once over the 'line', the ship would veer south-east out of the Doldrums and tack through the south-east trades until she reached the latitude of 40° south, where, several hundred miles to the south of the Cape of Good Hope, her captain would turn directly east past the islands of Tristan da Cunha, and let the mighty winds of the 'Roaring Forties' carry her across 3,000 miles of open sea towards Australia. Many captains, anxious for a faster passage, would venture even further south towards 50° south where the winds were even stronger, but where the risk of meeting dangerous icebergs was much higher. Nearing Tasmania, the captain would have two choices: to veer gradually north and head for the dangerously narrow opening of the Bass Strait for a shorter passage, or to continue on the long easterly route, passing south of Tasmania until he reached longitude 150° east, where he would turn north and sail up the eastern coast of Australia.

For her 15,000 mile return voyage to England, the Light of the Age would head south-east from Sydney across the Tasman Sea, before turning east below New Zealand to pick up the 'Roaring Forties' once more, which would take her 6,000 miles across the South Pacific to Cape Horn, with the crew again keeping watch for icebergs. An average time for this run was around 30 days, although the Lightning, on her previously mentioned record voyage to Liverpool in 1854-55, made the fastest passage of all - only 19 days from Melbourne to the tip of South America! After rounding the Horn, the Light of the Age would then have 8,000 miles of the Atlantic Ocean lying between her and London; the first 2,000 miles of which, depending on the season, might still be iceberg infested. She would head north-east up the mid-Atlantic, passing to the east of the Falkland Islands, before picking up the south-east trade winds to carry her through the Doldrums and across the Equator some 40 days after leaving Cape Horn. She would then tack into the north-east trades until she was able to round the Azores and be carried home by the prevailing westerly winds.

By September 1859, on the eve of the Light of the Age's fifth voyage to Australia, her owners could boast that:

"This vessel is well known as one of the finest ships employed in the trade between Sydney and London, and is noted not only for her remarkably fast sailing qualities, but also for the superior accommodation she affords to first and second cabin passengers. The cabins are full with every convenience. The saloons are light and well ventilated, and that for the ladies is separate and distinct."

On her return from her fifth voyage, the Light of the Age spent a period in dry-dock where she was thoroughly overhauled and repainted, and the hull below the waterline - which had originally been sheathed and fastened with copper - was reclad with yellow metal (a copper and zinc alloy), which was copper and iron fastened. By August of 1860, Thomas R. Eldridge & Company (as the firm had become in 1857), was advertising 15th October as the sailing date for the Light of the Age's sixth voyage to Sydney (under Captain Gilson), with fares of £ 40 for first class poop cabins and £20 for second class cabins.

Cam Ford's account of the Light of the Age will continue in the October 'Bulletin'. Articles for possible inclusion in the 'Bulletin' are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor of Flat 7, 'Mount Court', Mount Road, Wallasey, CH45 9JS; telephone/fact.01\$1-638-4699 or e-mail: kingorry@globalnet.co.uk

STEAM VERSUS OIL ENGINE PROPULSION FOR DRY CARGO TRAMP SHIPS IN THE INTER-WAR ERA

This article is a précis of a paper read to the Society by Alan McClelland on Thursday 15th April, 1999:

In his criticism of policies adopted by British tramp shipowners in the interwar years, Professor S.G. Sturmey wrote in *British Shipping and World Competition* (1962) that they commissioned vessels which were never really profitable. They were 'cheese-paring by nature, meeting competitive pressures by continuous economies within traditional ship types, but rarely taking a longer view and endeavouring to reduce costs by spending money on ships designed for changed conditions.' Alan McClelland was of the opinion that this assessment still needed careful qualification which it had not always received in some quarters.

Basing his presentation on sketches of four of the tramp ship types common in the 1920s and 30s, the speaker explored some of the considerations which led to their development. Much tonnage had been lost in the First World War; owners of better class ships felt that they had been inadequately compensated for their destruction, a post-war boom had been rapidly succeeded by a slump, and it soon became apparent that, notwithstanding the strength of its lobby, the coal exporting business was in decline. The situation was undoubtedly made worse by the failure of some owners to write down the value of their surviving ships when trade took a down turn. Understandably, the thoughts of many in the maritime industries came to be dominated by caution.

The first design to be examined was the traditional three island steamer used as the basis for the first 'Fairplay' hypothetical ship in 1898 which was to act as a price guide. Such vessels powered with triple expansion engines loaded between 7,000 and 8,000 tons and had sea speeds of 9-10 knots on coal consumptions of 25-33 tons per day. Ships of this configuration featured prominently in single and two decked versions in the emergency shipbuilding programme of the First World War and continued to be built in the 1920s and 30s. Owners built them for operation on voyage and longer term time charters. Specification including size varied with owners' predilections and prevailing market requirements. Some operators took greater concern for enhancing potential sale values than others. Numbers of them were not equipped by their education and training to make informed judgements on the claims of technological innovations in hull forms, and perhaps more significantly on rival methods of propulsion.

Tramp shipping was acutely sensitive to cyclical boom-slump changes in the world economy. Large profits could be made in good times not only from freight earnings but from the sale of ships. At the onset of slump conditions careful calculations had to be made as to whether to build at cheaper prices, whether to



continue trading even at a loss and when to sell. Judgements were made the more difficult by an increase in foreign competition, some of it subsidised in one way or another, and some operating with drastically reduced costs - between 1924 and 1934 Greek owners reduced crews aboard their ships by 30 per cent and wages by 40 per cent.

The second type of tramp ship to which the speaker drew attention was that with the long bridge deck. Generally somewhat larger than the three-island vessels, these steamers provided more cargo space on a given length without any increase in draught. The full height continuous bridge deck structures covered 70% of their lengths. Under British rules there was no increase in net tonnage - an obvious advantage when dues had to be calculated. Although there were some earlier examples, Ropners' Levenpool of 1911 was essentially the forerunner of many ships which proved useful in the long distance trades before the appearance of the motor ship. Other notable examples mentioned included the Roxburgh laid down as a speculation in 1929 at the Burntisland yard on the Ayre brothers' 'Economy' principles and completed and sold to Sir Arthur Sutherland in 1935; the Clearpool of 1935 and the Hawnby of 1936 completed for Ropners by William Gray & Co.Ltd. with double reduction geared turbines (an unusual choice of machinery, the more especially because doubts existed as to the wisdom of employing double reduction gearing in cargo vessels); and finally the Egton with her Maierform bow, completed in 1938 by William Pickersgill and Sons Ltd. for Headlam and Son.

At this point attention was drawn to examples of those people and concerns involved in tramp shipping who displayed considerable ability and initiative. Amongst the shipbuilders was Amos (later Sir Amos) Ayre who, with his brother Wilfrid, founded the Burntisland yard on the Forth in 1918. A Tynesider by birth, Amos Ayre distinguished himself during his training as a naval architect, managed the Govan Employment Exchange for some time, and ultimately concentrated his attention on the production of ships designed for ease of construction, with simple straightforward lines. Hull refinements, including the Ayre Propeller Post to improve water flow, and the adoption of super heat and other proven engine refinements meant that Burntisland 'Economy' steamers loading 7,500-7,700 tons deadweight could proceed at 9-10 knots on 16-17 tons of coal per day (consumption of as little as 11 tons per day was claimed for an example in the intermediate tonnage range). At an early stage in his career Ayre was associated with Maxwell Ballard in the creation of the Arch Deck stearmer with its steel saving reverse sheer. Examples of this type continued to be built in the inter-war years, as did steamers of the Haver corrugated sided Monitor type.

Shipowners worthy of note included Owen and Watkin Williams of Cardiff, who having had their steamers converted to oil firing after the First World War, commissioned the Beardmore-Tosi oil-engined Silurian in 1924. A single decker with an outfit of sixteen 5-ton derricks, all electric auxiliary plant and engines aft, the Silurian was probably too far ahead of her time. (She was lost shortly after her disposal to Furness-Withy interests). Another owner prepared to innovate was Sir William Reardon Smith who adopted oil firing for his steamers, tried quadruple expansion machinery and went on, after some disagreement with his fellow directors, to order the shelter-decked motor ships **East Lynn** and **West Lynn** in 1928. The **Cornish City** of 1936 which was referred to in detail was the ninth of the same general type to be completed. As traditional tramp trades based on the export of coal fell into decline in the period under consideration, Reardon Smith was amongst the first British owners to cater for demands for economical tonnage on long distance routes such as those from the west coast of North America and South Africa.

Whilst he was concerned to recognise the contributions of go-ahead people to British tramp ship-owning and building in the years between the two world wars, Alan McClelland drew attention to difficulties arising from inappropriate education and training. It may be argued that preparations for responsibility at the boardroom level were not really a match for those of our competitors. The anti-industrial attitudes of people in the most privileged sections of British society affected some owners with social aspirations, and some even adopted a 'hands-off' approach. It is significant that the highly competitive Greeks retained a pattern of ownership which maintained direct involvement and often included masters and chief engineers, with their immediate practical experience of the technicalities of seafaring and of trading conditions. The British maritime industries suffered from short termism, and from a piece-meal approach to shipping policy adopted for whichever reasons by successive governments - and this in the face of rising economic nationalism which sought to impede free trade in the provision of shipping services. Difficulties were compounded by the strategic policies of various countries.

The last tramp ship type with which the speaker dealt was the shelter decker which offered great flexibility in its open and closed forms. He took as his first example the highly successful Doxford 'Economy Motor Ship' series of the mid and late 1930s and referred to their origins in concepts developed in the 1920s. The first example was the Sutherland of 1935 completed for Sir Arthur Sutherland. From being viewed as prohibitively expensive at the beginning of the period by many British owners, by 1932 a motor tramp ship cost less than ten per cent more than a steamer of the same size. In the long haul trades she could now show twice the profit on most voyages. It must be added however that cheaper, consistently reliable oil engines only made their mark in the 1930s. Experience with earlier motor ships had been paid for dearly by some tramp owners; the nature and scale of many of their business operations meant they simply couldn't afford losses due to mechanical problems which might keep vessels out of service for long periods. Between 60 and 80 per cent of British tramp companies owned five ships or less in the period between 1912 and 1950. They lacked not only technical expertise, but also resources and therefore found it difficult to change from steam to oil engine propulsion whilst trying to man and maintain 'mixed' fleets. Yet another factor which inhibited the adoption of oil engines was that much of their further development in the 1930s came to be dominated by foreign competitors, arousing fears over access to spare parts. There were also worries over securing appropriately trained engineers.

Throughout the inter-war years steam and oil engine technologies were the subjects of much attention in the technical press and in the proceedings of the relevant learned institutions. Steam engine builders tried to improve the performance of their products in a variety of ways. Maurice Gibb of the Central Marine Engine Works at West Hartlepool sought economy and balance by designing the 'Quadropod' quadruple expansion engine; W.A. White shortened the reciprocating cycle, reverting to the compound principle - the White high speed engine incorporated an exhaust turbine. Significant savings in weight and fuel were claimed for the latter but it was reported that in normal service much care had to be exercised to maintain a consistent quality of steam, which was heavily dependent on the type of coal in the bunkers. Other improvements included re-heating and the use of exhaust turbine systems which involved mechanical coupling to the propeller shaft, or the production of electricity, or a turbo-compressor. Attempts were made to promote the use of turbines but met with little success. In addition to the Clearpool and the Hawnby already referred to, the speaker commented on the Hopestar with her Simplex set, completed in 1936 by Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson for the Hopemount Shipping Co.Ltd. This last vessel was modified without permission from a classification society during her construction, and again after the Second World War; she sank without trace during a voyage in ballast across the North Atlantic in November 1948 in heavy weather.

By the late 1930s the shelter decked tramp concept dominated the market. Especially when offered with oil engine propulsion, most notably by Doxfords and the Burntisland yard, it was proving attractive not only to traditional tramp owners but to liner companies in need of tonnage for services in which a sea speed of no more than 12 knots was required. Doxford 'Economy' motor ships could load 9,000 tons plus deadweight and proceed at 11 knots on 6-7 tons of oil fuel per day. Coal fired steamers in the same tonnage range required 25-33 tons per day, unless they were of the Burntisland or broadly similar 'Economy' type. Oil fired steamers consumed 18-22 tons per day on average. Having already commented briefly on Joseph Isherwood's longitudinal framing system, the Arch Deck and the Monitor forms, the speaker made mention of Isherwood's Arcform experiments, before concluding that it was reckoned by some authorities that in the period under review there had been a 25 per cent improvement in tramp ship performance at sea, brought about by changes in hull design as a consequence of tank testing, the adoption of the cruiser stern, improved stern frames and rudders and more efficient propellers.

Acknowledgements and Sources

David Burrell, David Eccles, John Hill, Peter Kenyon and Norman West (personal communications)

[Alan McClelland made it clear that statements made in his presentation were his responsibility and did not necessarily reflect the views of any of the above] M.Beenstock & Andreas Vergottis : Econometric Modelling of World Shipping (Chapman & Hall 1993) D.C.E. Burrell: Scrap and Build, (W.S.S. 1983)
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SIXTY YEARS AGO - THE SAILING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 16-SHIP FLEE

Note: The Peveril, Conister and Cus!/ Key: D - Douglas, L - Liverpool, F - Fleetwood, Be

	THE ISLE OF MAN STEAM PAC Sailing Arrangements Monday, 7th Aug			
	Mon, 7th August	Tues, 8th August	Wed, 9th August Th	
Lady of Mann	F. to D. 1030 D. to L. 2355 & Oil	L. to D. 1030 D. to F. 1800	F. to D. 1030 - 1st D. to F. 1800 - 1st J	
Ben-My-Chree	L. to D. 0100 D. to L. 1600	L. to D. 1530	D, to L. 2355 L.	
Mona's Queen	Dublin to D. 0830 D. to Dublin 2355	Dublin to D. am D. to L. 1600 & Oil	L. to D. 1030 D.	
Tynwald	D. to L. 0030 & Oil L to D. 1030 D. to Dublin 1700 Dublin to D. pm	D. to Dublin 0830 Dublin to D. 1730	D. to Bel. 0830 D. Bel. to D. 1700 fil call Ram. to & from L.	
Fenella	D. to Ard. 2355 not Ram. Oil at Ard. Ard. to D. 1200 (call Ramsey)	D. to Llan. 0930 Llan. to D. 1800	D. to F. 1600 F. to Hey. 2100 Hey. to D. pm	
Manxman	D. to Bel. 0830 - Bel. to D. 1700 call Ram to & from	D. to L. 0900		
Viking	D. to F. 1600 & coal - 100 tons	F. to D. 1030	D. to L. 1600 Fr	
King Orry	D. to L. 0900 & Oil L. to D. 1530	D. to Ard. 0900 Call Ramsey fill up oil	Ard. to D. 1200 call Ramsey	
Snaefell	Hey. to D. 1000 D. to Hey. 1600	Hey. to D. 1000 D. to Hey. 1600	Hey to D. 1000 H D. to Hey. 1600 D	
Victoria	Workington to D. 0515 call Ramsey D. to Workington 2355 Not to call Ramsey	Workington to D. am	D. to L. 0900 & Oil L. to D. 1530	
Mona's Isle	D. to L. I730 fill up co₂l	L. to D. am D. to F. 1600 F. to Hey. 2100 Hey. to F. pm & coal	'If Required' cd F. to D. 1030 - 2nd F. D. to F. 1800 - 2nd D.	
Manx Maid	Barrow to D. 0200 D. to Barrow 2355	Barrow to L. am		
Rushen Castle			D	
Peveril	D. to L. 1700 & dock		L. to D. 1700 ex dock D	
Conister		L. to Ramsey 1700	Ramsey to L. 1700 L	
Cushag	Peel to L. 1600	L. ω D. 1700	D. to L. 1700 L	

OF THE ISLE OF MAN STEAM PACKET COMPANY IN AUGUST, 1939

ng were cargo-only steamers. - Belfast, Ard - Ardrossan, Hey - Heysham

ET COMPANY LIMITED st to Sunday, 13th August, 1939.

) rs, 10th August	Fri, 11th August	Sat, 12th August	Sun, 13th August
in D. 1030 is L. 1600 s0il	L. to D. 1030 D. to F. 1600	F. to D. 0130 - 1st D. to F. 0630 F. to D. 1030 - 1st D. to F. 1600	F. to D. 1045 D. to F. 1730
to D 1030 to F. 1800	F. to D. 1030 D. to L. 1600 L. to D. pm	D. to L. 0530 L. to D. 1000 D. to L. 1500	L. to D. 1045 D. to L. 1730
bDublin 0830 blintoD. 1800	D. to Ard. 1000 & Oil Ard. to D. 2300 not Ram. to or from	D. to L. 0630 L. to D. 1030 D. to L. 1645 & Oil	L. to D. 0145
ա.L. 0900 Նաթoil խ.D. 1530	D. to Dublin 0830 Dublin to D. 1730 D. to L. 2355	L, to D. 0600 D. to L. 0900 & Oil L. to D. 1730	Army D. to Hey 0900 Hey to D. 1400
and the Island 1430 Ramsey 1515	D. to L. 0900 L. to D. 1530	D, to F. 0730 F. to D. 1030 - 2nd D. to L. 1600	
	L. to D. 0050	D, to L. 0730 L. to D. 1130 D, to L. 1730	
jup coat	L. to F. am & coal (30 tons)	F. to D. 0130 - 2nd D. to L. 0800 L. to D. 1400 D. to L. 2355 - 1st	
	D. to Bel. 0930 Bel. to D. 1700 call Ram. to & from	D. to L. 0830 L. to D. 1530 D. to L. 2355 - 2nd	
), to D. 1000 jo Hey. 1600	Hey. to D. 1000 D. to Hey. 1600	Hey. to D. 0100 D. to Hey. 0645 Hey. to D. 1000 D. to H. 1600	
	D. to Ard. 0900 call Ramsey Ard. to D. 2330 not to call Ramsey	D. to F. 0800 F. to D. 1100	
ll at F. Io D. ann Io F. 1600	Fill up coal	F. to D. 0130 - 3rd D. to F. 0830 F. to D. 1530	
	L. to Ramsey 1345 Ram. to D. pin	D. to Hey. 0800 Hey. to D. 1030	
Ramsey pm	Ram. to L. 0830 L. to D. 2355 - 2nd	D. to Hey. 0900 & Coal Hey. to D. 1530	
∘L. 1800 & dock	L. to D. 1900 from dock	D. to L. 2300 & dock	
əD. 1800	D. to L. 2100	L. to D. 2000	
₽C'town 1800	C'town to PSM 2000	PSM to Peel 2100	

THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

This is my first letter in 'The Bulletin' as Chairman of the Society, and at this moment in time the next three years during which I hope to remain as Chairman stretch out before me like some vast plain. I am not accustomed to looking quite so far ahead these days, but I am sure that it is a fertile plain which I see before me! I do know that the help and encouragement, together with the plain hard work of the Officers of the Society, our energetic Council, and all those who have special responsibilities within the Society, will be of great assistance to me and will make my time as Chairman one of great pleasure.

One of the privileges of being Chairman is that you receive a list of the membership which I note at the time of printing came to a total of 142. I am quite astounded to see just how widely our membership is spread. One might expect it to be restricted to Merseyside, North Wales and this part of Northern England, but a quick examination of the list reveals that there are at least 19 members in the South of England, 6 in the Midlands and South Wales, 9 in the North of England, 4 in Scotland, 3 in the North East, 3 in Australia, 2 in the U.S.A., 2 in the Isle of Man, plus a member in Canada, another in Sweden and even one in Austria. With everybody dedicated to Nautical Research, we are a body of people of some consequence and the importance of 'The Bulletin' in keeping us in contact is obvious.

One area which I would like to tackle while Chairman is the attraction of new members and in particular encouraging younger people to join the Society so as to continue our work in Nautical Research. Our present age profile, along with most of the similar organisations, is quite high and although we gain from our collective experience and knowledge we must find ways of interesting the next generation and those even younger into our nautical heritage. In some ways, because of the increasing interest in history generally, and also due to the great step forward in technical assistance, the coming generations should be in a good position to continue our work.

One of the most encouraging aspects about our Society is the expertise of some of the Members with computers, the Internet and information technology generally. For those like myself who are at the edge of this swiftly developing mystery, it is all very confusing so it is very good to know that some of our Members are showing the way and keeping us abreast of this valuable instrument of communications and research.

Whilst I have been amongst ships and shipping all my life and know the fascination of nautical research I have no proven record in the field, but once I have completed my present work on the archives of the Liverpool Shipowners and Port Users' Association, I hope to burst forth into all sorts of new research and take advantage of the 'Monday Facility' in the Archives and Library at the Museum.

I am very grateful to my predecessor, Captain Graeme Cubbin, for handing over to me the honourable position of Chairman of this Society in such a gentlemanly and kindly manner, and I thank him for ensuring that throughout his years of office the Society continued in such good heart and condition, and ready to look into the new millenium.

Yours sincerely,



JUST FANCY THAT III

The Manxman was built for the Midland Railway Company in 1904 and was acquired by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in 1920. She was the second vessel to carry the name on Isle of Man services, and was the first turbine steamer to sail regularly to the Isle of Man, having direct drive turbines and three propellers. Apart from Admiralty service during the First World War, she served the Isle of Man for 35 years before war again broke out in 1939.

The Manxman was present at Dunkirk, and in October 1941, having been purchased by the Admiralty, was commissioned in the Royal Navy as HMS Caduceus. She was attached to the Navy RDF training establishment HMS Valkyrie which had been set up in hotels on Douglas promenade. The Manxman (HMS Caduceus) was fitted out as an RDF (Radar) training ship at Birkenhead and provided sea training for HMS Valkyrie. Several collisions with the Victoria Pier at Douglas, two of which necessitated a return to Birkenhead for repairs, resulted in the Admiralty memorandum which stated that "this vessel is considered far too large to be used in the port of Douglas"III The problem was solved temporarily by employing retired IOMSPCo masters to handle her at Douglas.

FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

No: 7 THE "GALLIA" OF 1879

GALLIA : Gross Tonnage: 4,809, Nett Tonnage: 3,801 Launched on 12th November, 1878 by J. & G. Thomson & Co., Glasgow Length : 430.1ft, Breadth : 44.5ft. Passengers : 300 first-class, 1,200 third-class



The Gallia was the greatest and fastest Cunarder of her time, yet she caused little or no stir on the North Atlantic and receives only scant mention in histories of that ocean. In 1879, when she appeared, the Cunard company had lost much of its prestige on the New York service. Speed records had gone first to the Inman Line and then quickly to the White Star Line.

There seems considerable difference of opinion as to the Cunard attitude between the years 1870 and 1880. Some consider that the company rested too long on its laurels, relying too much on old traditions and suffering from ultra-conservatism. Others consider it acted wisely and in the best interests of its shareholders, allowing its competitors to wear themselves out with speed records and expensive building.

There were many losses of liners on the North Atlantic service during the 1870s with something approaching 2,000 deaths of crew and passengers, yet the Cunard company lost no lives and no ships. Even with this record of reliability the Cunard ships remained in the background. Interest was centred on the Inman-White Star battle and the sudden appearance of Guion's Arizona.

Cunard started building a series of ships in 1870 with the Abyssinia and Algeria of 3,400 tons. They were straight-stemmed, flush-decked vessels with a single funnel and three masts. The Parthia, slightly smaller, followed them and in 1874-75 the Bothnia and Scythia of 4,500 tons were built. The Gallia was the last of the series a slight improvement on the previous two, a few feet longer and with another foot on

the beam. However the new Gallia had none of the glamour of the City of Berlin and was quite overshadowed by the Arizona which came out in the same year.

The Gallia was built by J. & G. Thomson (later to be John Brown's yard) with an iron hull and a displacement at her load draft of 24ft of 9,000 tons. She was the last ship to be built for the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company before it officially became the Cunard Steamship Company. There were three overall decks, with the weather deck called the promenade deck. Below that was the spar deck and below that again the main deck. The design was simple and straightforward with a straight vertical stem and a flush deck. The open navigating bridge was just forward of the funnel. The Gallia had a graceful counter stern with a certain amount of scrollwork and was steered from the bridge with steam steering gear. She reached 15.9 knots on trials and on a preliminary cruise before her maiden voyage she actually averaged 16 knots, but on normal service her speed was 15 knots.

Bunker stowage was for 1,244 tons of coal, with 500 tons more in reserve in the hold next to the boiler-room. The Gallia was extravagant and burned 98 tons a day, 110 tons when fully opened out. She was heavily rigged as a barque and it was said that her first captains made full use of sail whenever possible.

The accommodation was, as customary with all new liners, claimed to be luxurious and the company does seem to have done its best to make it as comfortable as any afloat at the time. There was room for 300 cabin passengers and 1,200 steerage. Cabins were, according to the deck plan, almost entirely for two persons only and some measured 7ft x 11ft which was certainly spacious for those days.

The Gallia left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to New York on 5th April 1879 and ran on this service for the next seven years. In 1881 she was joined by the Servia, and two years later by the Aurania. In 1884/85 Cunard introduced the Oregon, Umbria and Etruria which surpassed all its competitors' ships. The Gallia was now badly out-classed although only six years old and in 1886 she was switched to the Boston run. From 1887 the Gallia, together with other well-known Atlantic liners, was officially held at the disposal of the Admiralty in time of war as an auxiliary cruiser; a definite contract with a stiplulated rental.

In 1889 the Gallia returned to the New York service, at first the primary Saturday service from Liverpool but soon taking over - with the Bothnia - an intermediate service with Tuesday sailings. The Campania and Lucania joined the Cunard fleet in 1893 and after they had settled down the Gallia was considered too small and obsolescent for the New York service and went back to the Boston run. Up to this time she had proved completely reliable but in 1895 she broke her propeller shaft in the Atlantic and had to be towed back to Liverpool by the River Afton (J. Little & Company).

After repairs the Gallia was chartered to the Spanish Government to act as a transport and take Spanish troops to Cuba. She was temporarily renamed Don Alvado de Bazan before being returned to Cunard in 1896. On 7th October 1897 she sailed on her last voyage for the Cunard company on the Liverpool - Boston service.

The old Beaver Line had gone into liquidation in 1894 and MacIvers had taken over as managers and formed Beaver Line Associated Steamers Ltd in an effort to keep things going. It was this concern which chartered the Gallia in 1897 and on 1st November she made her first sailing from Liverpool to Halifax and St. John, New Brunswick. She was well suited to the job of carrying emigrants to Canada and next year she was purchased outright for £21,250. The Gallia retained her name and made nine round voyages on the Canadian run from Liverpool. However, Associated Steamers was not paying its way and was wound up in June 1899.

The Gallia was sold again to the Allan Line in March 1900 and sailed on 4th May from Liverpool for Quebec and Montreal. On 18th May she ran aground at Sorel Point, near Quebec. The Gallia was towed back to the Mersey but the cost of repairs and reconditioning was found to be prohibitive and she was scrapped at Cherbourg in late 1900. The Gallia was only twenty-one years old, but it had been her fate to be completely outclassed when only five years old, such was the rapid march of progress on the North Atlantic at the time.

THE END FOR THE 'ROYAL IRIS' AND THE 'MANXMAN' ???

The future of the **Royal Iris** is looking extremely doubtful. The former Mersey ferry is still lying in the Thames and is for sale for £65,000. Alternatively, her 'state of the art' diesel-electric machinery will be sold separately and the vessel scrapped. Proposed night-club venues at Stanley Dock, Liverpool, then at Cardiff Docks and finally on the Thames have all failed to materialise.

The former Isle of Man steamer Manxman (1955) has been lying at the Pallion Yard at Sunderland since September 1997. On the afternoon of Monday 12th July it was noticed that she had taken a list to starboard. Yard workers and around 75 members of the Tyne and Wear fire brigade were at the scene overnight to try and pump the water out but by the morning of 13th July the water was up to the bottom of the shelter deck windows, and the old steamer had settled on the bottom of the dock. The Manxman was finally pumped out and refloated on 15th July after having been partially submerged for nine tides.

Mr Alan Dickenson, Chairman of the Pallion Yard, said that he believed the problem was due to interference by trespassers who boarded the Manxman by boat from the River Wear. Mr Dickensen went on to deny that the Manxman is now a wreck, and said that several potential buyers are interested.

It is a great pity that the Royal Iris and the Manxman were not scrapped when their useful economic lives had reached an end. It would have been a far more dignified way to go and both vessels would then have been remembered as fine working ships rather than as derelict hulks.

EARLY IRON VESSELS ON THE MERSEY, 1815 - 1838

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

In his article 'Early Steamships on the Mersey, 1815-1820',¹ Arthur C. Wardle quotes this report from the Liverpool Mercury of 19th May 1815: "We understand an Iron Boat is now constructing for our River, to be navigated by steam; it is intended to ply between Liverpool and Runcorn." The same newspaper announced seven weeks later that: "a beautiful Iron pleasure boat has arrived here." Wardle goes on to say that evidence of the name and size of this steamer is not forthcoming, and that an effort should be made to trace her.

However, research shows that she wasn't a steam vessel at all, but a small iron pleasure boat belonging to Thomas Jevons (1791-1855), a Liverpool iron merchant and nail maker, who frequently sailed her on the Mersey. This yacht - the first iron boat launched in salt water, in August 1815 - was built by Joshua Horton of Tipton, near Birmingham, but fitted up in Liverpool by Roger Hunter and F.J. Humble, shipbuilders. According to Jevons:

"When not in use, this boat was put in the Duke's Dock, where it was open to the gaze of any passer-by; and, not being what a sailor would term 'ship-shape', owing to its being built inland, it was rather a curiosity. Its buoyant powers, however, and the remarkable ease with which it maintained its way, when once put in motion, attracted the notice of many. After having been a spectacle for the public for many weeks, this boat disappeared, and no trace of it could be discovered for a long time; but, on the next occasion of the Duke's Dock being let dry, it was found crushed up and deeply embedded in earth at the bottom of the dock. It is impossible that this boat could have been sunk without the use of some powerful mechanical aid, or of tools of some description; and the conclusion therefore is that it was injured for some malicious purpose. The boat thus ruined was got up out of the dock and sold for old iron, returning to me a fair proportion of its original cost."²

After the loss of this boat, Jevons determined to construct an unsinkable iron boat and to that end, in 1817, he made an agreement with Joshua Horton's brother, with the intention of his settling in Liverpool as an iron ship and boat builder. A suitable yard was taken but this project fell through when Horton's brother died of typhus fever in Staffordshire. Nevertheless, the following year, Jevons had a copper model of an iron life-boat made:

"which from its peculiar form would possess to a great degree the property of righting itself, in case of being blown over by a squall of wind, and also of baling itself of any water it might ship from this or any other cause. This model was exhibited in the Underwriters' Room at Liverpool, and its properties allowed to be tested in a tank of water in which it floated for that purpose."

Eventually, Jevons sent his model life-boat to Joshua Horton, and from that model was constructed the second iron boat that ever floated on sea water. This life-boat measured $17' 8'' \times 6' 0'' \times 3' 0''$, drew 14 inches of water and weighed approx.

18³/₄cwt. It had air chambers at the bow and stern, and underneath the seats and the false bottom or floor, to provide buoyancy as well as stability.

"This floor is fixed a little higher than the level of the water, even when the boat is 'set-down' with a moderate load. A pipe or well is made to pass directly down through both bottoms and through the cavity between them, so as to allow the water a free passage without admitting it into the cavity. The effect of this construction is that besides the buoyancy acquired, the boat will discharge itself of any quantity of water it may happen to ship in a rough sea. Should the boat be loaded deeper than the level of the floor, the water is prevented from rising into the interior of the boat by means of a valve."³

Unfortunately this life-boat received no better treatment than the first iron boat - at the hands of 'Luddites' among the Liverpool shipwrights, perhaps? After having been lost for some time it was found embedded in sand at dead low water of an unusually low spring tide, with a number of holes drilled into the air chambers. However, the boat was repaired and sold for further use in the West Indies.

The first iron steam vessel to appear on the Mersey was the Marquis Wellesley. She was also built in Staffordshire and brought to Liverpool in 1824. The first iron steam vessel to be actually constructed at Liverpool was the Lady Dunally, built by Messrs Fawcett, Preston and Company in 1829. Both of these twin-hulled paddle steamers were intended for use on the inland waterways of Ireland.⁴

A 50-ton iron lighter was launched from Laird's yard in Wallasey Pool in October 1829. She measured 60ft x 13ft x 7½ft and drew only fourteen inches of water, "being of less draught than that of a vessel of equal tonnage built of timber, and in many respects likely to possess advantages over flats built in the usual manner."⁵ Four more similar vessels were constructed in 1832: two were launched from Laird's yard and two from the yard of Thomas Vernon & Company, boiler makers, Regent Street, Clarence Dock, Liverpool. One of the latter was towed to Dublin by the Ballinasloe steam-packet:

"as a proof that vessels of this description, when moulded by men of science, must supersede those made from wood, she was loaded with coals in the Clarence Dock for the purpose of proving her buoyancy; and when it is said that her extreme length is only 60ft, beam 13ft 4ins and depth of hold 5ft 6ins, and that it actually took 75 tons to put her down to 4ft 6ins draught of water; no doubt can exist that, in a very few years, iron boats will be universal on our canals."⁶

In November 1833 Laird's constructed their first paddle steamer, the famous Lady Lansdowne which was 'shipped', not launched, from the yard. This vessel would have been too large to have passed through the canal from Limerick, so she was shipped out in sections, brought to Killaloe by canal boat and assembled in the dock there.⁷ Twelve months later the 263-ton steam packet Garryowen was launched from the same yard for service on the River Shannon below Limerick. She undertook trials on the Mersey and it was reported:

"Her speed was tested with several first class steamers, one of which had engines of 200 horse-power. The **Garryowen** was found to be superior to them all, and we may now consider the question at rest as to the speed to which iron vessels, from their great stiffness, would not be as fleet as timber vessels: no such result was found to be the case."⁸

The Garryowen also established public confidence in the seaworthiness of iron ships. She was driven ashore in a gale but was saved by her iron construction.⁹

The first iron sailing vessel of any size to be built on the Mersey was the **Ironside** of 264 tons nm, constructed by Jackson, Gordon & Company of Liverpool for Ironside, Johnston & Company and launched in October 1838. It was reported:

"she is destined to solve the problem whether iron be preferable to wood in the construction of sea-going ships, of which some doubts are entertained, particularly by navigators of the old school. Some are of the opinion that a greater accumulation of seaweed, barnacles etc. will occur on the bottoms of iron vessels than on wooden vessels whilst lying in warm latitudes, and that the metal will be subject to rapid corrosion."¹⁰

A few weeks later the Ironside was loading for Brazil on the west side of Brunswick Dock and 'excited much observation amongst nautical men and others':

"She is beautifully modelled, with ample beam, a fine bow and a clear run and she is painted below in imitation of copper sheathing. Her bulwarks, gunwales etc. are of wood, neatly panelled inside, and her ports are hinged with brass. She has a trunk cabin, serving as a quarter deck, and a small forecastle; and her whole deck and interior fittings exhibit great taste and no sparing of expense. She is a full-rigged ship, but peculiarly light and snug, with a Jacob's ladder abaft each topmast in lieu of shrouds. The whole of her running rigging is of white cordage, and she has a truly 'rakish' appearance - not unlike a small sloop of war. She carries her cargo on a remarkably light draught of water; and no doubt can be entertained but that she will turn out to be 'a clipper'."

By the late 1830s, several iron steam ferry boats were at work on the Mersey. It was reported that the first of these, the 95-ton Woodside steamer Cleveland, launched from Page & Grantham's Liverpool yard in 1836: "fully answers the most sanguine expectations of the advocates of this mode of constructing steam-boats."¹¹ Indeed, on one occasion, the Cleveland got ashore amongst the rocks, on an ebb tide, where she was left high and dry for seven hours, hanging entirely by the heel and forefoot, without sustaining damage either in the hull or engine.¹² But she and the other iron steamers on the River Mersey must be examined elsewhere.

References

1	¹ Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Ch	eshire,
	vol.92 (1940), pp 85-86.	

- ² Iron, as a Material for Ship-Building, John Grantham (1842) p.90.
- ³ 'The Kaleidoscope' volume 3, 8th October 1822, p.105.
- ⁴ 'Mechanics Magazine', Volume 44, 7th February 1846, p.103.
- ⁵ Chester Courant, 20th October 1829.

6	Chester Chronicle, 1 st June 1832.
7	Men of Iron: The Story of Cammell Laird Shipbuilders,
	D. Hollet (1992) p.3.
8	Chester Courant, 25th Novermber, 1834.
9	"Fossets", H.White, article in Sea Breezes, vol.26 (1958), p.188.
10	Chester Chronicle, 16th November, 1838.
11	<i>Ibid</i> , 12 th August, 1836.
12	Grantham. Iron, op. cit, p.30.

THE COST OF WAR - THREE NAMES ON A STONE

by L.N.R.S. Member David Eccles

The Battle of the Atlantic cost many lives and brought heartache to many Liverpool women including Mrs Mary Ann Marney and her daughter-in-law Christina of Allington Street, Aigburth. They were the next-of-kin of three names on the 1939/ 1945 War Memorial in St Charles Borromeo Church, Aigburth, Liverpool:-

> MARNEY, Francis, MN MARNEY, John (Sen) MN MARNEY, John (Jun) MN

JOHN MARNEY (Senior) was a 60-year old Greaser lost with the ss Ceramic on 3rd December 1942. The Ceramic was on passage from Liverpool to Australia via St. Helena and was sailing alone when she was torpedoed 750 miles W.N.W. of the Azores by the German submarine U 515. There was only one survivor when the ship sank with the loss of 275 crew and 378 passengers.

JOHN MARNEY (Junior) was a 32-year old Donkeyman lost with 49 others from the mv California Star on 4th April 1943. The California Star was on passage from Cristobal to Liverpool from New Zealand and she was sailing alone when she was torpedoed 800 miles west of the Azores by U 515.

<u>FRANCIS MARNEY</u> was the 16-year old Galley Boy lost with 40 others from the ss Empire Shackleton on 29th December 1942.

The Empire Shackleton was leading Convoy ONS.154 on passage from Liverpool to Halifax, NS, when it was attacked by a pack of 14 German U-boats north of the Azores. On the night of 28th December the Empire Shackleton was struck by two torpedoes from U 225 and was abandoned by her crew without casualty. Eleven men in one boat were picked up by ss Calgary and taken to Freetown, and 41 men in other boats were rescued by HMS Fidelity. The derelict Empire Shackleton remained afloat throughout the night despite further torpedo attacks from U 435 and U 123. She was finally sunk at dawn by gun-fire from U 435. Following this sinking, U 435 continued to shadow the convoy and sank HMS Fidelity the following morning. There were no survivors from HMS Fidelity which was the last of 17 ships in the convoy sunk over a three day period.

HMS "FIDELITY"

HMS Fidelity was a Special Service Vessel manned by a Free French crew sailing under Western Approaches Command. Named Le Rhin when built at Garston in 1920 for French owners, she was a nine-knot steamer which escaped the German occupation of France in July 1940 by sailing to Gibraltar where her master Captain C.A.M. Peri volunteered his ship and crew for Allied service. The vessel was armed for use as a Decoy ship with three 4" guns, two 75mm guns and four 21" torpedo tubes, all concealed behind collapsible structures. She also carried one 20mm and three 25mm machine guns for defence and two seaplanes for spotting. To comply with the Geneva Convention, on 29th December 1940 the Le Rhin and her crew were enlisted into the Royal Navy and the ship became HMS Fidelity (Pennant No: D.57) for Special Service Duty under the command of Lt.Peri. After service in the Mediterranean and home waters sailing alone as a decoy to attract surface attack, she was converted for coastal convoy duty in 1941. For this rôle, in which she trailed a convoy as a straggler to attract air-attack, her original armament was removed to be replaced by two twin 4" and four 2pdr anti-aircraft guns. Sailing in Convoy ONS.154 on the night of 29th December 1942, HMS Fidelity was identified by the U-boats as a Fighter Aircraft Ship flying the white ensign and she became a major target. She was equipped with Admiralty Net Defence which must have been damaged when she was struck by one torpedo from U 225 and five from U 615 during the night. A further two torpedoes from U 435 sank HMS Fidelity the following day.

HMS Fidelity did not carry fighter aircraft but she had on board two landing craft (LCV.752 and LCV.754), and a motor torpedo boat (MTB.105) fitted with Asdic. Both the landing craft sank with the ship, but MTB.105 floated clear and was later sunk by gunfire from HMS Woodstock.

The Ships

ss CERAMIC. Registered at Southampton. Official Number: 135474 18,713 gross tonnage. Owners: Shaw Savill & Albion Co.Ltd. Built in 1913 by Harland and Wolff at Belfast.

<u>mv CALIFORNIA STAR</u>. Registered at London. Official Number: 166614 8,300 gross tonnage. Owners: Blue Star Line Ltd Built in 1939 by Burmeister & Wain, Copenhagen. ss EMPIRE SHACKLETON. Registered at Greenock. Official Number: 168966 7,068 gross tonnage. Owners: Ministry of War Transport (Houlder Bros & Co.Ltd.) Built 1941 by Lithgows at Port Glasgow

<u>HMS FIDELITY (D.57) / ss LE RHIN</u>. Registered at Marseille. 2,456 gross tonnage. Owners: Cie de Nav. Paquet. Built in 1920 by H. & C. Grayson Ltd. (Yard No: 103) at Garston.

The U-Boats

U 435 was bombed and sunk by Coastal Command aircraft on 9th July 1943

U 515 was sunk off Madeira by USS's Pope, Chatelain, Flaherty and Pillsbury, and aircraft from from USS Guadalcanal on 9th April 1944.

References:

Lloyd's Records Axis Submarine Successes (J. Rohwer) The War at Sea (Capt. S.W. Roskill, RN) British & Empire Warships (Lenton)

READERS' LETTERS

from L.N.R.S. Vice-President Ray Pugh:

MORE ABOUT THE "WIMAISIA" / "WILLIAM GREGSON":

In the June 'Bulletin' I read with interest the article about the William Gregson, ex Wimaisia, ex Duchess of Abercorn. In 1949 I spent a holiday on the Clyde and remember being told the following account:

The little motor vessel **Wimaisia** had run trips between Ardrossan and Campbeltown during the summer of 1948. It was a poor summer and one evening, after a rough passage, she collided with the stone jetty at Ardrossan and smashed her bows. The failure of the engine room telegraph was blamed, and the **Wimaisia** also struck two other vessels in port.

Extensive repairs costing £20,000 were required and this led to the bankruptcy of her owners. The Wimaisia was put up for sale, and the City of Liverpool bought her for £60,000 as a replacement for the Moyles, then known as the 'Doctor's launch'. \Box

YET MORE ABOUT 'BISCUITS, SHIP AND DOG':

I was fascinated to read the article about Harrisons baking their own ships' biscuits, particularly as I own Henry Wright's old bakery at 24 Vulcan Street / 13-15 Porter Street, (Liverpool 3), now known as Hardtack House. It was known for many years as Wright's Ships' Biscuit Manufactury, and number fifteen next door was Wright and MacGregor's dog biscuits manufacturers. It was a very big business, being 20,000sq.ft. on four floors. The massive oven is gone, but the internal chimney is still in place.

The last use of Hardtack House was as a recording studio for the Liverpool band 'Echo and the Bunnymen'. Prior to that it was part of a complex owned by a Mr Bibby who was a bicycle wholesaler.

No.15 Porter Street, an Amsterdam-style warehouse, has been extensively refurbished by a very doughty lady, Sharon Walker. The building now houses a digital recording studio and a horological (clock) repair workshop.

Hardtack House is to be refurbished and used as a centre for a Marine Arts and Records Rescue Service. This will hopefully provide cheap accommodation for small businesses involved in the repair of marine artefacts.

It may be of interest to L.N.R.S. Members to learn that Harrisons have been very supportive in setting up the Indefatigable Trust. This has been formed to reintroduce the name 'Indefatigable' on to the River Mersey by providing basic boat training for young people. It is intended to use as training vessels the small ex-Admiralty tugs and pilot launch which are moored in the south-east corner of the Albert Dock. The Trust is the brainchild of the Indefatigable Old Boys' Association whose members want to see the good name and work continue.

LOCAL NEWS LIVERPOOL PILOT SERVICE

Mrs Tina Furlong, wife of the Managing Director of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, named a new pilot launch on Wednesday 19th May. Boghammar International constructed the 16 metre launch, the Petrel, in Sweden. The Rev'd John Simmons, chaplain to the Mersey Mission to Seamen, blessed the vessel at a ceremony held at Prince's Landing Stage.

FBM LAIRDSIDE

A new company, FBM Lairdside, has unveiled plans to construct two high-speed ferries for a Greek operator. Construction will take place on part of the Cammell Laird site which was retaied by Marconi (formerly VSEL/GEC) when the rest of the yard was sold to the new Cammell Laird Group plc. FBM Lairdside is a joint venture between fast ferry builders FBM Marine of Cowes and Marconi

THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Opened by The Queen on May 11th, the new National Maritime Museum offers a controversial re-interpretation of our seafaring past:

David Lister, writing in 'The Independent' on 3rd May:

Nelson still has his own gallery in the new National Maritime Museum. You turn left at the Greenpeace pod, skirt round the contemporary art sound sculptures of waves lashing a beach, and it's just past the screen showing an excerpt from 'Carry on up the Khyber', taking the mickey out of the British Empire.

Britain's naval history has been adapted, re-written and questioned. For more than 60 years this museum has chronicled how Britain's supremacy at sea was a vital force in shaping a nation's character and backbone. No longer. The establishment and you cannot get much more establishment than two of the museum's trustees, the Dukes of Edinburgh and York - are suddenly prepared to question everything about our military and mercantile maritime past, including our greatest maritime icon, Lord Nelson himself. Certainly the Nelson gallery documents his life, death and victories at sea. But what is one to make of the flashing sign at the exit of the gallery, asking: "No more heroes? Who made Nelson? Is all this propaganda?"

One historian has already reacted. Lawrence Jones, author of *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, says: "It is an appalling representation of our past. Its sole purpose seems to be to champion the values of political correctness." He adds that children will leave the museum with no pride in their country and its achievements, but with a sense of shame.

The museum's deputy director, Roger Knight, spells out the new philosophy most plainly. He says: "Traditionalists may be uncomfortable. Where are the reassuring massed displays, consistent reminders of Britian's supremacy, when the biggest and best ships carried Britain's naval power, trade and irresistable traditions to that part of the world where the sun never set? The answer must be that if they were ever there, those values were never a reality for a large part of the population and will never be accepted by the citizens of the next century."

Richard Woodman, writing in 'Lloyd's List' on 24th May:

In my youth I was a frequent visitor to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. It was magnificent and housed a treasure trove of models and paintings of ships and sailors. It was too big to take in on a single visit. It seemed infinite in its promise. One could spend an hour happily digesting the detail in a single model, crouching down and peering through the glass case.

Nor were there any equivocations about political correctness. The past was reincarcerated as it was, without spin. The cruelties were there, so were the inequities, along with the hardships and the ruthlessness and even the tawdriness of the glory. Cold canvas, cold steel, cold wind and cold water all sluiced through those grand yet bleak galleries.

The other day when I went back I found the magic had almost gone. Other things obtruded - a trembling political correctness, a trivialisation of greatness, an emphasis on the non-nautical and unrepresentative choice of subject matter. There were niches of wonder, little remnant leftovers here and there from which one was able to get a brief glimpse of past wonders. I find it hard to imagine any other nation in the world which would have done such a comprehensive job of neutering its maritime past.

The museum, driven to achieve economic rather than cultural goals and oversensitive to historical values, has followed so partisan a path in reproving the reprehensible and regrettable nature of some of our national past, that it has succeeded only in reducing the whole to the absurd.

Roy Fenton, writing in the 'Maritime Information Association Newsletter':

The new galleries represent not a refurbishment, but a radical re-think of the museum's public face. The intention is to broaden the NMM's appeal to those who might not find a conventional maritime museum attractive enough to visit.

As the typical visitor will come away mainly with impressions, it seems reasonable to list a series of this visitor's impressions.

The yacht Suhaili in which Robin Knox-Johnston sailed single-handedly and non-stop around the world. The Suhaili is not readily distinguishable from tens of thousands of other yachts at berths in British marinas and rivers, and she is not accessible internally.

A grasshopper engine from the **Reliant**, the paddle tug which was formerly the central feature of the museum's Neptune Court. The engines are described as 'very rare surviving examples'. But so was the museum's **Reliant**, the only paddle tug which we British managed to preserve, and which is now a pile of plates in a south London yard.

A Ford Ka, sectioned. Apparently this illustrates how the materials for everything require sea transport.

A pleasant, well lit gallery of marine art, with a television set endlessly showing the 1942 film 'In Which We Serve'. Whoever wrote up this gallery thinks Mountbatten, on whose story the film is based, served in a destroyer named HMS Torrin (the ship in the film), rather than HMS Kelly.

Will the new galleries achieve their purpose of attracting a new audience to the National Maritime Museum? One certainly hopes so, as the new museum runs the risk of alienating those with an existing interest in maritime history. The new exhibits have been compared to *'nouvelle cuisine'*: there are not many of them in each gallery, they look tempting but fail to satisfy the appetite, and they come with a bill for £19.6 million.

NOTICE BOARD



'THE MONDAY FACILITY'

Members' access to the Archives and Library on Mondays will re-commence in the Autumn as follows:

SEPTEMBER : 20th and 27th. OCTOBER : 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th NOVEMBER : 1st, 8th and 15th_

AND FINALLY

MEMORIAL TO THE 'TAYLEUR'

On Sunday 16th May 1999, the leader of Fingall Council unveiled a memorial at Portrane to the 375 passengers and crew of the **Tayleur** which was wrecked on Lambay Island on her maiden voyage on 21st January, 1854.

A few relics from the wreck are on display in the National Maritime Museum of Ireland at Haigh Terrace, Dun Laoghaire.

An account of the loss of the Tayleur appeared in 'The Bulletin', Summer 1997.

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Editor : John Shepherd

Volume 43, Number 3, October 1999



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Front Cover: The Empress of Britain of 1906

From the Editor:

Due to intense pressure on space, the second part of Cam Ford's series of articles on the clipper ship Light of the Age has had to be held over until December.

Some Members may recall that the deposition of Pilot Thomas Harold Webster (pages 12/15 in this issue) was included in 'The Bulletin' some nine years ago. Whilst it is definitely not editorial policy to start repeating material, it is felt that in the comprehensive account of the stranding of the Charles Livingston, this deposition forms an important part, providing as it does an unemotional account of just what happened, seen through the eyes of one of the survivors.

The next 'Bulletin' will be sent out to Members in early December, and the lead article will be Ron Evans' account of the loss of the Ellan Vannin, which occurred ninety years ago on 3rd December, 1909. j.s.

THE STRANDING OF LIVERPOOL No.1 PILOT BOAT "CHARLES LIVINGSTON" AT AINSDALE ON SUNDAY, 26th NOVEMBER, 1939

Friday, 26th November, 1999 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the stranding of the Charles Livingston and the loss of twenty-three of her crew. This article has been compiled by John Shepherd from documents loaned by LNRS Secretary P.J.H.Tebay. These include the Report of the Court of Inquiry, the Deposition of Pilot Thomas Harold Webster, contemporary newspaper cuttings and various correspondence about the disaster.

> from Lloyd's Register, 1938-39: CHARLES LIVINGSTON Steel single-screw steamer Official Number: 145885 Signal Letters: GZCN Built in 1921 by Ferguson Bros. (Port Glasgow) Ltd Gross Tonnage: 434 Nett Tonnage: 157 Length: 144.8 ft Breadth: 27.7 ft Triple expansion engine - speed 11 knots Owned by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board of Liverpool Managed by Henry Hyde Blakey, Superintendent of Pilotage



THE STRANDING

The Charles Livingston left Liverpool at noon on Friday 24th November, 1939 as first duty pilot boat to cruise outside the Bar to board inward bound vessels. Pilot A.M. McLeod was 1st Master, and Pilot Ernest Bibby was acting 2nd Master. Her crew consisted of 10 apprentice pilots, referred to as boat-hands; two engineers; two firemen; one steward; one cook and two messroom boys. At the time of her stranding, the **Charles Livingston** also had on board 11 pilots and 2 officers of the Examination Service for the Port of Liverpool.

The Charles Livingston had accommodation for 36 pilots and a crew of 20, including the 1st and 2nd Masters. The Masters' cabin and chart room were on the upper deck, with the bridge and wheelhouse above. Four boats (two punts and two lifeboats) were carried, fitted under davits on either side of the upper deck; two being motor driven and two fitted with oars, and there were two buoyant liferafts. The lifeboats on one side of the vessel were capable of accommodating 27 persons. and those on the other 28; and the liferafts each had a capacity of 14 persons. Fiftysix lifejackets were carried, readily accessible to all on board. There were 12 lifebuoys, of which 4 were fitted with self-igniting flares and an approved line throwing apparatus was provided. The vessel was fitted with two compasses. The standard compass on top of the wheelhouse was a Whyte Thomson dry card compass, and the steering compass in the wheelhouse a Whyte Thomson liquid compass. Both compasses were last professionally adjusted on 26th September 1939 and deviation cards were supplied to the vessel. Wireless telephony, capable of sending and receiving messages, was fitted, but the vessel was not equipped with direction finding equipment. She carried deep sea and hand lead lines.

At midnight on Saturday 25th November 1939 the Charles Livingston was about one mile south by east from the Bar Light Vessel. The wind was from the westsouth-west, force 6 - 7, with a rough sea. Frequent rain squalls reduced visibility considerably. The tide was two hours ebb. Just before midnight, Acting 2nd Master Pilot Ernest Bibby went up to the bridge to relieve the 1st Master, Pilot McLeod. The vessel was then on a course west by south, and after the 1st Master had drawn the attention of his relief to the position and bearing of the Bar Lightship, he instructed him to "take her down west by south to keep her quiet". The 1st Master then turned in, and Pilot Bibby, with a watch of four boat-hands, was left in charge.

In order to get better steerage way Acting 2nd Master Bibby stated that he increased the engine speed to about 5 knots through the water, and, according to his own evidence, lost sight of the Bar light 'almost immediately'. It was the third month of the Second World War, and the strength of the Bar light had been considerably reduced so that its range in normal weather conditions was about five miles. The channel buoys had been dimmed to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles visibilty. From the Charles Livingston's initial course, no buoy lights would have been visible, and all the shore lights had been 'blacked out'. She carried neither direction finding equipment nor radar.

2nd Master Bibby stated that the courses steered were :

west by south from midnight to 01.20 on Sun.26th November east half north from 01.20 until 02.00 west by south half south from 02.00 until 02.40 east by south from 02.40 until 03.30 (speed increased to 7 knots)


(Sketch chart of Liverpool Bay by Captain Graeme Cubbin)

During the whole of this period the wind was increasing, the visibility remained poor and was very limited in the squalls, and the Bar light was not seen at all. By 03.30, when he was still unable to discover the position of the Bar Lightship, 2nd Master Bibby stopped the engine, checked the way by putting it astern for a few revolutions, and had a sounding taken which showed 3½ fathoms.

Precisely what happened next is not clear. Acting 2nd Master Bibby gave three various accounts: 1] that he put the engines full ahead and the wheel hard to port to come out towards the deeper water, and then got a sounding of $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms and almost immediately felt the vessel touch the ground; 2] he put the engines full astern, hoping to back out, before the leadsman reported $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms, and then went full ahead with the wheel hard to port, and finding that the vessel was not coming off the ground again went full astern; or 3] that he did not put the engine full astern until after the $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms cast, and then did so because the bumping continued.

What is clear is that at about the time the 2½ fathoms cast was obtained, 1st Master McLeod came on to the bridge and took charge, and almost immediately stopped the engine and ordered the port anchor to be let go. Pilot Bibby left the bridge to go forward to supervise this operation. The port anchor did not hold and so the starboard anchor was let go also, but this would not hold either, and as the **Charles Livingston** was dragging it was hove up and lowered again with the gipsy opened so as to let the vessel take all the chain she needed, but she still continued to drag. She brought up temporarily with her stern to the wind, and was therefore probably aground astern. She eventually drove close inshore, partially filled with water, and grounded in a deep gulley, with a dangerous list to port.

The west-south-west wind had now increased to gale force, with a succession of very heavy squalls. Rockets and flares were fired from the bridge at intervals from 03.40 and the vessel's whistle was sounded periodically and continued to be sounded until there was no more steam available. A wireless distress signal was sent out and at 03.42 and a message was sent by radio telephone to the Seaforth Radio wireless station: 'Ashore between Bar Light Vessel and Ormes Head. We require tug and someone to stand by approximately West by South from Bar, probably more to the South. Please notify Captain Blakely and Pilot Boat No. 2'. At 04.07 the Charles Livingston again contacted Seaforth: 'Ashore at Rhyl Flats, East Hoyle or Constables (position not known, should say west by south half south from Bar). Condition of boat at present all right and punts all right. Cannot give position. Weather conditions very bad.' Between 04.15 and 04.23 the position west by south half south from the Bar was repeated to the Seaforth Radio Wireless Station several times. At 05.48 the vessel wirelessed: 'Think we are somewhere about Rhyl'. At 05.59: 'Sorry we cannot give exact position, surmise we are off Rhyl.' At 06.03: 'Captain thinks on Rhyl Flats.' The New Brighton, Hoylake and Rhyl lifeboats were all sent to the Charles Livingston's assistance.

At about 04.15 the starboard side motor and pulling boats were successfully lowered into the water, and the port side motor boat was also lowered and brought round to the shelter of the starboard side of the ship. The port side pulling boat was



smashed by the seas and the davits bent before it could be lowered. Just before daylight, the starboard pulling boat broke adrift with boat-hand Turner in it. One of the motor boats, manned by boat-hands Horswell and Waddington, was then sent out to bring the pulling boat back. This motor boat seems to have got the pulling boat in tow and to have made some progress back towards the **Charles Livingston** but her engine failed when within 60 or 70 feet of the ship and the two boats blew away to leeward and disappeared in the darkness. It appears that boat-hands Lancaster and Tully then courageously volunteered to attempt to recover the two drifting boats by setting out in the remaining motor boat, presumably with the consent of the 1st Master, but their fine effort failed. The last available boat had disappeared into the darkness and the **Charles Livingston** was deprived of all her boats. It subsequently transpired that all the boats' crews were lost.

The pilot boat was by this time hard aground. Seas were beginning to sweep over her so that she was beginning to fill with water. At 08.07 in the morning of Sunday 16th November 1939 the Charles Livingston gave her correct position for the first time: 'As far as we know, we are somewhere near Ainsdale lying on bottom at angle 45 degrees'. Shortly after that time wireless communication with her became impossible and it would seem that a little later, owing to the violence of the wind and sea and the rising tide, the upper structure began to break up and many of those on board were swept away. Boat-hand Robert Teire managed to swim ashore. The 2nd Master, Pilot Ernest Bibby, was washed overboard. He lost consciousness and was washed ashore, but was resuscitated on the beach. Pilot Webster, after once being washed out of the ship and having managed to regain the rigging, was again washed overboard and swam ashore. Those who were left on board took refuge in the rigging or in the shelter of the deck structure. Eventually, all but six were washed away.

In the meantime, the rockets and flares sent up by the Charles Livingston had been seen at about 04.00 by the night watchman at the Ainsdale Lido. He immediately telephoned Birkdale Police Station. Police Sergeant Baddeley, together with Edwin Tomlin, the night watchman, and with such assistance as they could muster, made repeated and courageous attempts to launch a small motor patrol boat, but the seas breaking over the boat put the engine out of action and eventually another larger boat was obtained. Fruitless efforts to launch this boat continued until 09.00 when the attempts were abandoned on account of the heavy breakers. At about 05.00, when the tide was low, Sergeant Baddeley, assisted by Sergeant Smithson, had obtained long lengths of rope and had endeavoured to reach the Charles Livingston by wading, but without success.

Every effort was made by the local lifeboat stations to come to the assistance of the **Charles Livingston**, and there is no doubt that these efforts in the earlier stages miscarried solely because of the incorrect position given by the pilot boat herself.

New Brighton No.2 lifeboat - the Edmund and Mary Robinson left at 04.45 to search for 'a vessel in distress between the Ormes Head and the Bar Lightship'. The station secretary, Mr W.W. Harris, asked for a more accurate

bearing and was told that the vessel was somewhere between Rhyl and the Dee estuary. The lifeboat searched the area until 11.05 when she rerturned to the Bar and hailed No.2 pilot boat to be told that the Charles Livingston had been located at Ainsdale. The larger No.1 New Brighton lifeboat - the William and Kate Johnston had been on active service from 22.00 on Friday 24th November until 12.30pm on Saturday 25th November, having been called to the assistance of the Henderson liner Pegu which had gone aground on the revetment at Crosby Bend adjacent to the 'Beta' buoy. The No.1 lifeboat had taken 103 men off the Pegu and when she arrived back at New Brighton the crew were naturally exhausted. Mr Harris instructed them to lay the boat up and to replenish the petrol supply first thing in the morning (Sunday 26th November). At 07.20 on the Sunday morning Mr Harris was again contacted and informed that a vessel, believed to be a trawler, was ashore at Ainsdale. The crew of the William and Kate Johnston returned to their lifeboat, and after refuelling, left for Ainsdale at 08.57. Neither of the New Brighton boats found the Charles Livingston - they were doubtless looking for something more substantial than six men clinging to a mast veiled in spray. Although both boats carried wireless telephony equipment, this had been sealed by the Admiralty under the wartime regulations.

Two other local lifeboats were despatched. The Hoylake boat, the Oldham, left at 05.55. She, too, failed to locate the Charles Livingston and returned to her station after a fruitless search of an area 20 miles away from where the pilot boat was stranded. The Hoylake boat was again despatched at 10.45 to search the Ainsdale area. The Rhyl lifeboat, The Gordon Warren left her station at 06.25 and spent a wasted six hours searching the wrong area due to the initial incorrect positions given by the Charles Livingston. This was the Rhyl boat's first operational mission on R.N.L.I. service, having just taken over the station from the pulling/sailing lifeboat Caroline Richardson, which had been at Rhyl from 1896 until October, 1939.

On the night of Saturday 25th November, in gale conditions, the Lytham lifeboat, the **Dunleary**, was launched at the request of St.Annes and Hoylake coastguards who reported that rockets had been observed off Southport. Proceeding along the main Ribble channel, some four miles off Lytham, they saw the lights of a vessel aground on Foul Naze, part of the bank separating the main channel from the Pinfold channel. This vessel turned out to be the requisitioned trawler **Gaul** and because of her position and the weather conditions her crew of 15 were taken off and subsequently landed at Lytham in the early hours of Sunday morning. Some three hours later, at 05.30, rockets were again observed off Southport and at the request of St.Anne's coastguard, the **Dunleary** again left her station at 07.15 to search the area. She did not sight the **Charles Livingston** as she did not proceed far enough to the south-west and returned to station at 11.30 where she was refuelled.

By now the position of the **Charles Livingston** had been established and the **Dunleary** again set out at 12.15 for Ainsdale. It was one hour after high water and the **Dunleary** sailed over the banks on the nine mile passage to Ainsdale, overtaking on her way the Blackpool lifeboat Sarah Ann Austen which had left her station at 11.00.

The predicted time of high water at the site of the stranding was 10.36. By this time, or possibly earlier, only six persons remained on board the Charles Livingston. The rest of the crew, pilots and boat-hands had been swept overboard and drowned, with the exception of the four who were rescued by shore helpers.

By noon the tide level had dropped and shortly afterwards the sea conditions allowed the survivors to come down from the rigging and to shelter in the lee of what was left of the bridge housing. At about 13.30 the Lytham lifeboat found the stranded vessel and after several attempts, went alongside. The choice was given to the six exhausted survivors to be taken off either by the Lytham boat and landed at Lytham; or to be taken off by the Blackpool boat, which had by now arrived on the scene, and to be landed through the surf on to Ainsdale beach where rescue parties and first-aid facilities were on hand. The Blackpool boat drew two feet less water than the Lytham boat and so was able to offer this option, which was the one the survivors accepted. The Lytham boat quickly left the **Charles Livingston** as the coxswain was preoccupied with limiting damage to his boat as, depite being on the leeside, it was bumping hard on Ainsdale sands.

Having regard to these facts and the misleading messages as to position that were sent out by the **Charles Livingston** herself, the Court of Inquiry considered that the lifeboat service did everything that was possible under very difficult conditions.

THE COURT OF INQUIRY

The Formal Investigation into the circumstances attending the stranding of the Pilot Boat Charles Livingston on the 26th day of November 1939 was held at St. George's Hall, Liverpool on the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th days of April 1940, and the 21st day of May 1940, before Mr John Graham Trapnell,K.C., assisted by Captain A.L.Gordon and Captain T.W. Hanney.

The Court carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the abovementioned shipping casualty, and found that the cause of the stranding of the **Charles Livingston** was the lack of proper seamanlike precautions by her Acting Second Master Pilot Ernest Bibby. The Court censured him severely for neglect and incompetence and ordered him to pay the sum of fifty guineas on account of the expenses of the investigation.

Whatever Pilot Bibby's instructions were, he ought not to have lost sight of the Bar light. The other pilot boat on duty did not do so and Bibby need not have done so; or, when he did lose it, he ought to have endeavoured to check his position by laying off his courses on the chart and by soundings, and to have continued to take soundings periodically. Pilot Bibby ought also to have called the 1st Master when he failed to find the Bar light at the end of his first easterly course. In fact, from the moment he lost the Bar light, a few minutes after midnight, Pilot Bibby was content to take no steps of any kind to ascertain his position until about 03.30 on Sunday 26th November, when the **Charles Livingston** was virtually aground and it was much too late. Pilot Bibby seems to have been content to run accustomed courses without giving proper consideration to the relevant weather conditions or concerning himself with any need for taking care. On the westerly courses the wind and tide were reducing the pilot boat's speed but giving considerable drift to the northward, and on the easterly courses wind and tide increased the speed, and also gave northerly drift.

Having considered the matter carefully, the Court of Inquiry found that Pilot Bibby failed during the whole of his watch to keep any proper lookout at all; that he failed to give any proper regard to the effect of wind and tide upon the courses steered, or, if he really knew them, to lay off these courses on the chart; that he failed to realise the danger and to call his superior officer, or to take any soundings in sufficient time; and that these neglects of ordinary seamanlike practice were responsible for the stranding of the **Charles Livingston**. The Court did not find that Pilot Bibby was guilty of disobedience to orders in steaming away from the Bar light, because the instruction *"take her down west by south"* might be construed to permit that; but it was unnecessary and unwise to lose the light and its loss was eloquent of bad lookout.

Precisely what happened when the sounding of 3½ fathoms was obtained is in some doubt, by reason of the three different accounts given by Pilot Bibby of the steps he took. It seems probable that by the time the 1st Master came on to the bridge and took charge, Pilot Bibby had already failed to get the **Charles Livingston** out of her difficulty by going full speed ahead under proper helm, and probably also full speed astern. The vessel was bumping somewhat heavily, and the 1st Master may have been justified in stopping the engine and dropping anchor in the hope of getting the vessel away without much damage on the rising tide. The Court of Inquiry found that the sole responsibility for the stranding must therefore rest upon Pilot Bibby, and the Court censured him severely for his neglect and incompetence.

The loss of life that unhappily resulted must be attributed in part to the misleading signals repeatedly sent out by the Charles Livingston from 03.40 until 08.07, giving a wrong position off the Welsh coast, some 21 miles away from her actual position at Ainsdale Beach on the Lancashire coast. At least three lifeboats wasted many hours in fruitless search and it is probable that, had an approximately correct position been made known soon after the stranding, many lives would have been saved. The Court of Inquiry found it impossible to accept the statement of Pilot Bibby that he told the 1st Master the courses to which he deposed in evidence were the actual courses he had been steering. Indeed, any competent seaman told that the vessel had been steaming for 50minutes on a course east by south at 7 knots, with gale and tide driving her northwards, must have known that the vessel was probably on the Lancashire coast.

The probabilities are that Pilot Bibby did not really know the course the **Charles Livingston** was steering when she stranded. When questioned as to whether he used a chart, Pilot Bibby replied: "No, I did not get a chart out. These courses I have spoken of we have steered for years and years; they are just to keep her southward and westward of the Bar ship, and one does not necessarily want a chart for that."

Pilot Bibby therefore may well have told the 1st Master that he thought he was on the 3 and 4 fathom tongue, some 13 miles from Rhyl Flats.

The Court noted that if the courses referred to by Pilot Bibby were laid off on a chart, and proper allowances made for the effects of wind and tide, and also the increased speed on the last course, then the result was to bring the vessel so near to Ainsdale beach as to make it probable that courses somewhat similar to those stated were in fact steered.

However, the 1st Master was in charge. After he had sent Pilot Bibby off the bridge, the 1st Master could have ascertained from those on watch just what courses had been steered, particularly the last course and speed; and such inquiries would have told him that all the positions he had given must have been wrong.

It was at 07.12 that it began to get light and those on the Charles Livingston reported that there was land to leeward. A glance at the compass would have told them that it must be the Lancashire coast, but it was not until 08.07 that the correct position was ascertained.

After the 1st Master took charge, he did have the opportunity of realising that the first positiions given were incorrect, if only by ascertaining the last course and speed and the time occupied on it. That would have told him at once that he could not possibly be on the Welsh coast. It would appear that there was ample opportunity for Pilot Bibby's error to have been corrected by others and for a more accurate position to be found, but that opportunity does not appear to have been taken.

It would not be just to attribute the loss of the five boat-hands who were carried away in the boats to Pilot Bibby. There is nothing to show that he was responsible for that series of incidents.

It is not easy to understand who really took effective charge after Pilot Bibby left the bridge. There is no evidence of any concerted systematic action either to improve the position of the vessel or to direct the crew in their duties or to organise safety measures. If the first pulling boat had been allowed to go, there was at least a chance that she might have washed ashore and that the lad in her might have been saved; and if the two motor boats had remained, it is at any rate possible that the lives of all remaining on board might have been saved. Further, no use was made of the buoyant rafts (save that one was streamed ready for use) even at daylight, when, if nothing else, a line might have been floated ashore; nor was any attempt apparently made to use the line-throwing apparatus.

If the boats had been fitted with grablines, then those who were carried away with them would have had a much better chance of reaching the shore; but their absence appears to have been sanctioned by the Board of Trade. The grounds on which this was done were not strictly relevant to the Court of Inquiry, but it is a matter of surprise that in its letter of 17th April 1939, the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board stated: 'the cruising pilot boat is considered to be in sheltered waters'. If that statement assisted to procure the exemption, then the MD&HB may have misled the Board of Trade. It is most inaccurate to apply the description 'sheltered waters' to the open sea in which the pilot boats are allotted stations under the Pilotage Bye-Laws made by the MD&HB, and the Board, through its responsible officials, ought to have known very well that it was inaccurate. The Court was informed that the Pilotage Committee was opposed to the fitting of grablines, though no very convincing reasons for its view were given. All the objections could be overcome by the use of grab battens, and the Court recommended that these should be fitted forthwith to all boats and punts used in the Pilotage Service.

The Court of Inquiry suggested that the risks attendant upon the Service would be reduced if the possession of a Home Trade Master's Certificate was in future regarded as an essential qualification for the First and Second Masters of the Pilot Boats.

There was no evidence that the line-throwing apparatus supplied to the **Charles Livingston** had ever been used. The Court recommended regular and systematic practice in the use of this appliance so that those on board the pilot boats would appreciate its value.

It was unfortunate that the Pilotage Superintendent did not get in contact with all the possible sources of information when he first heard of the casualty. The lifeboat stations, the police and the port war signal station all had valuable information, but Captain Blakey on his own admission did nothing at all beyond receiving and making a telephone call. A very little thought and effort might have led to a speedy correction of the message received at 04.07, but no steps which might have assisted in locating the Charles Livingston were apparently taken by anybody connected with the pilotage office. Even at 07.12, when the loom of the land was seen to leeward and this fact reported to Captain Blakey, it did not occur to him to ask her heading, or that the vessel must probably be on the Lancashire coast, and certainly nowhere near any of the positions previously given. Captain Blakey did not impress the Court of Inquiry as being as cognisant of the duties he was called upon to perform as their importance would seem to require, and the Court believed that had he taken active steps to check the position, instead of leaving the matter to the chance of the pilot boat sooner or later discovering her own error, he might have given valuable assistance.

THE DEPOSITION OF PILOT THOMAS HAROLD WEBSTER

Dock Solicitor's Office, 7th December, 1939

"I live at 12 Woodland Drive, Wallasey. I have held a First Class Liverpool Pilot's Licence for the past 27 years. I entered the Pilotage Service as an Apprentice Pilot in the year 1900 and was licensed as a Third Class Pilot in 1908 and as a Second Class Pilot in 1910. My age is 56. I am appropriated to Royal Mail Lines.

At 7pm on Saturday 25th November, 1 went on board No.2 Pilot Boat at Prince's Stage and proceeded in her to the Bar where I transferred to No.1 Pilot Boat at about 10.30pm. to wait to board an inward bound vessel. I went up on to the bridge and spoke to Captain McLeod and told him the name of the vessel I was expecting and the time of her expected arrival and the number of the room on the Pilot Boat in which I was going to turn in.

While I was talking to Captain McLeod I saw the Bar Light bearing about abeam on the starboard side. The weather was then fine and fairly clear, the wind west-south-west, force 7.

I went below and after a short conversation in the saloon with my fellow pilots I turned into room 4 on the port side forward. I slept until a time which I thought would be shortly after 3.am. (I looked at my watch, but the room being dark couldn't see the time). I awoke and went on deck. The weather then was wind, I don't know the direction, force 7 with heavy rain squalls. No lights were visible.

I spoke in passing to one of the firemen at the stokehold door on the starboard side, the lee side. I asked if we were boarding pilots on any vessels because I could feel the vibration of the engines going astern and he replied to the effect that the engines were going full speed astern. On looking over the side I noticd that there was sand churned up in the backwash from the propeller - and from that I judged that the Pilot Boat was in very shoal water. I had not identified any bumps as indicating that the Pilot Boat was actually hitting ground - I had felt the effect that is usually felt when the Pilot Boat is backing into a sea, and for that reason I made the remark I did to the fireman.

I said to the fireman: 'We're either ashore or very near it' and on that I went below to dress. On my way along the alleyway I called into the pilots' room intimating to them that I thought the vessel was ashore. I got fully dressed with overcoat, oilskin and boots and took my bag up into the Saloon. I also had a life jacket over my arm - later the rest of the pilots and the two examination officers came into the saloon.

I then went up on the bridge. Both Captains McLeod and Bibby were there. The wind was then about force 7 with heavy rain squalls. No lights visible. Heavy sea - wind and sea were hard on the port quarter.

I did not go into the wheelhouse so I did not see the compass. I assumed the direction of the wind was the same as when I turned in which would give the Pilot

Boat a north-easterly heading - but that is assumption. I asked Captain McLeod where he thought we were and his reply was to the effect somewhere on Rhyl Flats. I had no further conversation with respect to her position. Knowing the general practice of keeping the Pilot Boat's head to sea, it didn't seem to me to be an unreasonable assumption. The navigation of the vessel was, of course, in the hands of Captain McLeod and the crew.

I returned to the lower deck and advised various people to get their lifejackets - my idea being that although there was then no danger they might be necessary later on. I observed that at about this period Captain Bibby was on the foredeck with one or two apprentices working on the windlass attending to the anchors.

At about this time the Pilot Boat was bumping and lurching and listing first to starboard and then to port, and continually driving to leeward. The port motor boat was lowered into the water and brought round the stern on to the lee side., and the port pulling boat left hanging on its davits. The starboard motor and pulling boats were also lowered into the water on the lee side.

Previous to the boats being lowered, several distress signals had been detonated, sending up a shower of white stars, and red flares burned. These signals had been used soon after the vessel touched and were continued at intervals. The wireless generator could plainly be heard, but I didn't hear any definite messages at this time although later I heard messages being transmitted.

I assisted in getting lifelines ready if anyone went overboard and ropes out to the three boats, and in keeping the boats as far as possible from fouling each other - so that they would be ready for emergency.

At this time particularly and throughout the whole of the episode the capability, conduct and courage of the apprentices was of so high a character that I must draw attention to it. There was a quiet acceptance by everyone on board of the situation and help was willingly rendered by everyone.

Four apprentices were in the boats. One in the pulling boat, two in one motor boat and one in the other motor boat attending to them while alongside. The Pilot Boat which up to this time had lain with the wind abaft the beam on the port side probably due to some uneveness of the ground slewed round and brought the wind on to the starboard quarter, which caused the starboard side to become temporarily the weather side, with the result that the sea was running against the starboard side causing the pulling boat to break adrift. One of the motor boats went after it and disappeared in the darkness and after what seemed a longish interval 1 saw her return to about 50 feet almost ahead or slightly on the starboard bow with the pulling boat in tow. It was dark but I could see the motor boat's lamp and could see the dark hulls in the white of the breakers. During their absence, Lieutenant Wallace and I prepared lines procured by apprentice Teire and another apprentice ready to throw to these boats on their return but they did not come within heaving distance. They stayed in view for a short period and I heard a hail from the motor boat that the engine was conking out. They then disappeared from view in a heavy sea and I did not see them again. Lieutenant Wallace, myself and Teire waited right in the bows for the boats to come in closer.

The other boat was alongside under the starboard fore rigging, the Pilot Boat having again slewed and made a lee on the starboard side. Very shortly after, apprentice Lancaster came on to the foredeck and asked should he go in the remaining motor boat to the rescue. I replied that he should not go without permission. He returned to the bridge and I presume received permission because he went over the starboard bow down a lifeline and cast off. The boat disappeared into the darkness to leeward and after a considerable interval we observed her on the port bow returning apparently alone, moving head to sea - we could see her light and her dark hull in the white water distant about 100 feet. She turned to run before the sea, I presume to come under our lee and in turning disappeared from view. I can't say what happened to her.

During this time the Pilot Boat was still driving to leeward, bumping over the ground and shipping heavy water over the port side.

As there was nothing more I could do on the foredeck I returned to the bridge. Everyone was very wet with the rain and spray. There were several pilots on the bridge. The wireless was transmitting and receiving messages. From what I could hear of the wireless operator's voice, I gathered an Irish boat was in communication and also that three lifeboats were out looking for the Pilot Boat. Owing to the absence of apprentice Lancaster, who I presume had been detonating the maroons, I took this duty on myself and proceeded at intervals to fire them. During this time I heard Pilot Trott's voice repeating messages apparently received on the wireless from the Irish boat. The Irish boat intimated that he had all hands on the look out. We replied: 'Will fire next rocket in five minutes from now - please look out'. At the end of that period I detonated a maroon. This process was repeated, Trott keeping contact and giving me the time. My idea is that either Pilot Hoppins or apprentice Hollis were operating the wireless.

The Irish boat asked if she could be of any assistance. I heard Captain McLeod say that he did not think she could be of further assistance.

At about this time I, along with others, observed a dark object bearing forward of the beam on the starboard side. My first idea was that it was Perch Rock Battery, but as the light grew it was identified as Ainsdale Lido and we knew we were on the Lancashire coast. Up to this time it was the general idea on board that we were to the southward of the Bar ship.

In conversation with several of my colleagues we estimated that the Pilot Boat was not less than a quarter of a mile from the dry shore. We discussed the possibility of swimming ashore and discounted it because of the distance and the heavy breakers.

At about this time, i.e. round about dawn, the vessel's drive to leeward had ceased and she was fast aground with a very dangerous list to port; the port side of the boat deck under water, the seas breaking over her whole length and carrying away the port pulling boat and much of the woodwork. The Chief Engineer had a talk with Captain McLeod who said there was nothing more the Engineer could do as the water was over the fires. The masthead signals were still burning.

Up to this time no-one had gone overboard. There were a number of pilots, the engineers, firemen and maybe others under the lee of the chartroom and various people on the bridge.

The two liferafts were lowered from the bridge and one moored alongside and the other kept on the starboard side outside of the rails on the boat deck.

As time went on the top structure began to carry away and I observed the interior fittings and structure of the chartroom carry away.

I was standing under the lee of the of the chartroom with others. I don't know at what period exactly those rescued from the rigging had taken to it. The seas were enormous and lifted us to the underside of the bridge deck and dropped us in the water again. I saw that the port leaves of the engine room skylight were swung back by the sea, leaving the engine room open and full of water.

A sea which seemed larger than the others lifted the Pilot Boat bodily, driving her on to an even keel and apparently into deeper water, so that what before had been the high (starboard) side now became totally submerged.

I saw Fireman Lawler washed overboard. He managed to hang on to the liferaft and he asked to be pulled back again - which he was.

With the rising tide and consequently rising sea, I saw that the ability of those with me to hold on was getting less and a subsequent sea which carried overboard Bibby and Teire washed me over the rail to which I hung on outboard and from there made my way forward to the forward rigging, into which I climbed below Steward Roberts. Above him were those saved by the Blackpool lifeboat.

Then I could see the bridge and wheelhouse. There were McLeod, Trott, J.Currie and Hoppins and maybe Lawler on top of the wheelhouse, with Cockram holding on to the starboard bridge stanchions. The port and forward rails of the bridge had disappeared. The doors, panels and windows of the wheelhouse had gone leaving only the uprights and deck. My colleagues on the lee side of the chartroom had disappeared. I hung on for some time until after 9.45am. During this time I saw Cockram washed over from the bridge and climb back again obviously in an exhausted condition, and later after a sea had swept over I did not see him. I saw Hoppins washed from the wheelhouse roof and climb back again. I saw the top of the firemen's scuttle on the foredeck level with water, indicating the extent to which she was submerged.

I entwined my right leg in the ratlines to keep me from being washed away when the lamp standard on the bridge washed across my left hand causing me to lose hold and I fell backwards with my feet still entangled. A subsequent sea tore the ratlines away and when I came to the surface I was about 20 yards from the Pilot Boat, and realising that I could not get back, I turned and swam for the shore. Owing to my injured right leg and the character of the shore I was unable to get up. I don't know how long I lay there, but I was eventually picked up in an unconscious condition. I came to in Southport Infirmary."

POSTSCRIPT

The Charles Livingston was refloated on 12th December 1939 and towed back to Liverpool. After being refitted she returned to the Liverpool Pilotage Service until October 1950, when she was laid up in the Albert Dock, Liverpool. She was sold in the following year to Captain L. Truberg who, with a group of fellow Estonian seamen, planned to register her in Honduras under the name Aura. Their intention at the time was to sail her to Canada and then possibly to the Gulf of Mexico.

Following the recommendations of the Court of Inquiry, the Minister of Shipping considered that arrangements should be made as soon as practicable for all lifeboats to be fitted with keel rails and hand grips (ie. grab battens) to enable persons to cling thereto should the boat be upturned. This recommendation particularly applied to the lifeboats on pilot vessels, having regard to the extensive use made of the boats. Also, all lifeboats should be equipped 'with a line securely becketed round the outside of the boat' (ie. grab lines).

The four apprentices (boat-hands) who went to the rescue of one of their fellow apprentices who was swept away when the lines of the pulling boat parted were posthumously awarded the Carnegie Hero Award.

The coxswains of the Lytham and Blackpool lifeboats were awarded the silver medal of the R.N.L.I., and the bronze medal was awarded to the mechanics on both these boats. There were monetary awards to the crews of all six lifeboats involved in searching for the **Charles Livingston**.

As to the three pilots and and two apprentices who survived the disaster, four subsequently followed exemplary and lifelong careers in the Liverpool Pilotage Service. One eventually retired as senior pilot of the service, one became the shoremaster and the other two became senior masters of the pilot cutters.

And finally..... in a tragedy of this kind almost always some myth evolves which with the passage of time gets embellished out of all proportion. In the case of the **Charles Livingston** the myth concerned the Official Bridge Log Book which was reported lost and was not available for the Court of Inquiry. However, an apprentice claimed to have seen it being dried out in front of the fire in the Pilotage Office at Canning Pierhead.

John Tebay writes:

"There was much suspicion about the disappearance of the Official Bridge Log Book. In practice, a <u>slate</u> log was kept on the bridge for a 24-hour period, after which a designated junior apprentice in the evening 6 - 8 watch would take the slate log down below and copy it into the Official Log in 'a fair hand'. Thus, the <u>slate</u> log covering the important period would have been washed overboard when the wheelhouse went. The Official Bridge Log Book would have been either down below in the apprentices' accommodation, or in the Master's room and would have been written up only until about 18.00 on Saturday, 25th November."

LIST OF THOSE LOST IN THE "CHARLES LIVINGSTON" DISASTER

The Master

Alec. N. McLeod

<u>Pilots</u>

Engineers

Frederick Leonard

Albert L. Jones

Thomas W.R. Cockram Thomas L. Evans Cecil H.F. Tebay John Currie Harold P. Yates David Whitehead Richard N. Hoppins

Apprentice Pilots

John K. Lancaster Thomas V. Ward Harry Hollis William H. Turner Peter M. Horswell Frank S. Waddington John S. Tully John W. Liddell

<u>Crew</u>

John F. Lawler (Fireman) James Lawler, Jr. (Fireman) Hugh L. Jones (Steward) Thomas Hampson (Steward) George L. Jones (Steward)

THE SURVIVORS

Pilot Ernest Bibby Pilot John M. Trott Lt. John Wallace, R.N.V.R. Pilot W.F. Currie Apprentice R. Patterson

Pilot Tom Webster Lt. Arthur Robson Cross, R.N.V.R. Pilot W.L.O. Thomas Cook John Roberts Apprentice Robert H. Teire

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THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

I believe this is quite an interesting time to be living on the banks of the Mersey because there are many green shoots to be seen in the nautical field. I apologise for mixing my metaphors, but in spending much of our time looking backwards we might not see the small but significant developments going on around us.

The success of shiprepairing and conversions on the Mersey has once again been confirmed by the gaining of another large contract by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead and there has even been some talk about the possible revival of shipbuilding on the Mersey. There are four recently built freight ferries operating daily across the Irish Sea by relatively new owners in the trade, and P.& O. has just ordered new vessels for its service. The new ferry terminal to be built off Birkenhead will further boost the ferry activity in the river. High-speed craft such as the SuperSeaCat are very busy in the Mersey, and each successive year the craft are changed for something larger and newer which is all quite bewildering!

We see new container lines coming to Seaforth, the mountains of scrap metal never seem to decline and with the departure of the largest general cargo vessel for many years to West Africa, the port continues to prosper. It is a pleasure to see the occasional cruise ship anchored off the Pier Head, even though these days passenger ships may look very elaborate, their lines do not have the elegance we remember of years ago.

I see a third building is now emerging on the Princes Dock site and of course an attempt has been made to acquire some of the public space at the north end of the Pier Head for use as a vehicle handling area for the Isle of Man and Dublin ferries. The number of sailing craft and yachts in the various marinas within the docks seems to increase all the time, and while on the general theme of transport, even Liverpool Airport seems to be doing well.

I apologise for this long list of new developments, no doubt I have missed one or two, but I do think optimism should be emphasised.

Whilst our interests are principally in researching the past, what we see today is the past of tomorrow, and inevitably we will have our own views and opinions as things change. We probably will not agree with many of these changes, and here I think we have to be careful for it is so easy to offend other people and organisations in particular when voicing our opinions which may later appear in the press or other media. We all have the right to express our views, but I believe we should be careful when using the name of 'The Liverpool Nautical Research Society' to ensure that what we say is not construed as the formal opinion or position of the Society itself. I have to be careful when expressing my own opinion not to use my title as Chairman in any way in which it might appear to be the Society's view on any particular topic.

You will now all have a copy of 'The Programme of Meetings for 1999 - 2000', and once again there is a series of most interesting talks. The list of 'Members Special Interests and Fields of Research' is a very valuable document and will be of much assistance in the furtherance of our various interests. The Society is very grateful to those Members who contributed to the list.

Finally, I would like to include a 'plug' for the Annual Merchant Navy Service which will be held in the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool on Remembrance Sunday, 14th November 1999 at 3.00pm. Usually there are about 500 people in the congregation and this year the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool are to be the Honoured Guests.

With my best regards,





BOOKSHELF

L.N.R.S. Member Leslie Leigh has suggested that there might be room in 'The Bulletin' for a small regular feature where Members could buy and sell books. Most Members have a collection of maritime books and occasionally are looking for a particular out-of-print book, or have one they no longer require and might wish to dispose of. The Council are happy to go along with Mr Leigh's suggestion, so if you have a book you wish to sell, or you are looking for a particular volume, then please contact the Editor and the details will be included in 'The Bulletin'.

To 'start the ball rolling', Leslie Leigh would like to buy a copy of "Coolie Ships and Oil Sailers" - this should be one of the earlier editions, c 140mm x 210mm to match his other Lubbock books, (not the larger 1981 reprint). He would also like to sell a copy of George Chandler's "Liverpool" (Batsford, 1957).

Mr Leigh points out that antiquarian book shops offer miserable prices if you want to sell, and charge grossly inflated prices when you buy a volume. This scheme could steer a middle course to mutual satisfaction. *Contact the Editor*!

SHIPS OF THE LARRINAGA SHIPPING COMPANY

by David Eccles

This article is a précis of an illustrated talk given by LNRS Vice-Chairman David Eccles at the opening meeting of the 1999/2000 Season on Thursday, 16th September.

The house-flag with its three clasped hands was designed in 1870 and represented partnership between three Basque ship-masters, Olano, Larrinaga and de Longa. Later it recognised partnership between Larrinaga's daughter Maria and her brothers Miguel and Domingo.

During the 19th century Liverpool brokers chartered Spanish vessels to trade to Spain's colonies because of high tax levied on cargo carried in foreign ships.. These activities attracted Spanish settlement in Liverpool.

In 1863 Jose Olano and Ramon Larrinaga trading independently as shipchandlers went into partnership to enter Spain's colonial trade as merchants. With support from families in Bilbao they purchased an iron barque from Belfast shipbuilder Edward Harland and appointed Larrinaga's brother-in-law Juan de Longa as master. Using a loading broker the vessel was placed on packet service to Manila. The enterprise was successful, and by the time the Suez Canal opened in 1869 Olano, Larrinaga and Company owned seven barques on packet service to Cuba and the Philippines; those sailing to Cuba returning with cotton from the Southern United States.

In 1870 the company ordered three steamships for the Philippines trade. These carried cargo from Liverpool to Manila and Singapore, calling at Cadiz and Barcelona for Spanish passengers and mail. They were the first Spanish vessels to use the Suez Canal. Although the vessels were built in Sunderland, they were designed by Liverpool Marine Architect Gilbert S. Goodwin. These early steamers were soon followed by larger ones which carried over 100 first-class passengers in great luxury.

Anticipating that its tender for the official Spanish Eastern Royal Mail contract would be accepted, in 1878 the company ordered six small mail-steamers to extend its service from Manila to Singapore, Hong Kong and Ammoy. By then Olano, Larrinaga and Company had eight passenger/cargo steamers in trade; three on the Cuban service and five to the Philippines. These included Spain's largest merchant ship which had been granted Royal permission to carry the name **Reina Mercedes**.

In 1879 the company was devastated to learn that it had lost the Eastern mail contract to a wealthy financier, the Marquis de Campo (who was not a shipowner). De Campo quickly purchased eight old passenger steamers from British owners, appointing Paris and Company as his Liverpool agents to ensure that two of his ships were in port to load any cargo for Manila. Because of this, Olano, Larrinaga & Company decided to withdraw from the Philippines trade in 1880 and the following year sold its three largest steamers, designed for the trade, to De Campo. Following the sale of these ships Jose de Olano and Juan de Longa retired to Spain and in 1882 sold their shares in the company to the Larrinaga family who then renamed it Larrinaga & Company. The new company had a tragic start when on 1st April 1882, 30 Spanish and 23 British lives were lost when the company's **Yruracbat** and the R.M. company's **Douro** sank after a collision off Cape Finisterre.

The Larrinaga company continued a passenger/mail service from Manila to Hong Kong and Singapore, and employed one steamer to establish the Spanish Royal Mail service between Puerto Rico, Cuba and New York.

Exmo Don Ramon de Larrinaga, who had been knighted by King Alfonso XII in 1883, died at his Liverpool home in 1888. A widower aged 61, he left six children, five of whom were taken to Spain to be cared for by relatives. The company continued in business managed by Don Ramon's brother Pedro and elder son Feliz. Later in 1888 the company sold its Puerto Rico/New York mail service and the following year purchased its first steel steamer named **Ramon de Larrinaga**. When the Manchester Ship Canal opened in 1896, the company commenced direct sailings from Galveston to Manchester. In 1897 the Manila office was closed.

When Don Ramon's Will was finally proved in 1897, his children Anselma, Maria, Miguel and Domingo returned to Liverpool to inherit the Company. Pedro and Feliz remained in Liverpool to enable Miguel, Domingo and Maria's husband Teodoro (who held Spanish law degrees) to gain shipping experience.

The first British ships owned by the family were four 6,500 deadweight steamers ordered from Clydeside for the Cuban trade in 1897. They were managed by the Miguel de Larrinaga Steamship Company registered in Liverpool in February 1898. This was two months before the Spanish-American War in which Larrinaga & Company lost the **Buenaventura**.

The Spanish-American War lasted for four months, after which trade from Liverpool to Cuba declined However, that from Galveston to Manchester increased, which necessitated ballast passages. Because of this four 7,000 dwt shelter-deckers were ordered in 1901 to carry coal outward to Montevideo where they loaded general cargo for Cuba and U.S. ports before returning to Manchester. By this time Teodoro, Miguel and Domingo were managing the company.

In 1907 the company purchased a three-islander from Russell & Company. Completed to a high standard, the 8,300 dwt vessel was named **Esperanza de** Larrinaga and was the first Larrinaga steamer fitted with Marconi Radio. In the following year, 1908, three 8,500 dwt shelter-deckers were ordered for the American trade.

In 1910 Domingo de Larrinaga was appointed honorary vice-consul at Liverpool for Uruguay. In that year company vessels sailed from Montevideo to India and Australia before returning to the UK, but the trade did not develop.

Miguel became head of the company in 1912 following the death of Don Teodoro. Three 9,600 dwt shelter-deckers were then added to the fleet which totalled fifteen when war was declared in August, 1914. A month later, following the opening of the Panama Canal two Larrinaga steamers, the Jose and the Ventura, sailed from New York to load at San Francisco for the UK, but any chance of developing this trade was curtailed due to the War. During war-time the yellow funnel bands on Larrinaga's British ships were painted black, but the two Spanish steamers continued trading from Liverpool as neutrals until 1917 when one was sunk and the other sold. In 1915 five older steamers were chartered as Admiralty colliers, and in the following year five modern steamers were chartered as tankers. These 'tankers' carried fuel oil in double bottom and deep-tanks for discharge in Ireland *en-route* from Galveston to Manchester laden with cotton and wheat. U-boat attacks were responsible for the loss of four ships and badly damaged three others. Sixty-nine sea staff were lost during the war. Two masters and a chief engineer received awards for bravery. In December 1918 the Miguel de Larrinaga sank in the Atlantic after her cargo shifted, and 28 of her crew were rescued.

To replace war losses the Japanese built 10,000 dwt three-island steamer War Nymph was purchased in 1919 and renamed Pilar de Larrinaga. Two similar sized shelter deckers were ordered from the Clyde for the American trade. One of these was to be renamed Empire Mersey in 1941.

In February 1921 the Esperanza de Larrinaga disappeared on passage from Galveston to Italy whilst laden with grain. This incident inspired novelist Helen Forrester to write '*The Liverpool Basques*'.

Because of high British shipbuilding costs in 1924, three 8,000 dwt steamers were ordered from a Danzig shipyard. In 1927 two pre-war vessels were purchased from Prince Line, and a modern Canadian built three-island steamer was acquired from Norwegian owners and renamed Jose de Larrinaga. The following year, 1928, four steamers were sold to be replaced by four 9,000 dwt Clyde built single deckers which entered service at the start of the Great Depression.

With seven ships laid up including three for sale, the Miguel de Larrinaga Steamship Company amalgamated with Larrinaga & Company to form the Larrinaga Steamship Company in 1931 with Don Miguel as its chairman. The Depression lasted until 1936 during which time the company was fortunate in finding continuous employment for three ships trading between Galveston and Manchester, and five others from South Wales to the River Plate, returning via northern Europe. Between voyages the ships usually laid up at Bideford where they were maintained by the ships' officers. By 1936 all fourteen ships were trading, mainly with coal from South Wales to the River Plate, returning with bagged cargo to northern Europe. In February 1939 the Maria de Larrinaga was laden with grain when she sank with all her 36 crew during a North Atlantic storm on passage from Galveston.

When war was declared in September 1939 the company owned thirteen steamers, and this number was maintained throughout the war as torpedoed ships were replaced by managed M.O.W.T. ships. The company was managed by Ramon de Larrinaga until he was accepted for military service in 1943 aged 41. Then Don Miguel, aged 70, and William M. Clarke, aged 86, took over the management.

The company lost nine of its ships during the War, plus eight ministry steamers. These cost the lives of 227 sea staff and 21 servicemen. Company sea staff

were awarded 1 DSC, 4 OBE's, 7 MBE's, 11 BEM's and 11 Commendations. The company also lost its collection of ship models when its head office in the White Star Building was destroyed by fire in May 1941.

When peace was restored in 1945 the company was left with three steamers, but declined the offer to purchase any of the seven war-built steamers it managed. In May 1946 the Mount Revelstoke Park was managed for eight months to carry grain from Hudson Bay. This had been in storage at Port Churchill since 1939 and was taken to Hull.

The three family heads died shortly after the War - Donna Maria in 1947, Don Miguel in 1948 and Don Domingo in 1953. Maria's son Ramon became company chairman in May 1948 with Miguel J (son of Don Miguel) and Richard (son of Don Domingo) as joint managing directors. Under their management the old coal-burners were quickly sold to be replaced by five oil-fired Liberty ships which were employed in the tramp charter market and proved to be a very good investment.

A five year plan to replace the Liberty ships by similar sized motor vessels was foiled by slow production at the shipyards which raised the cost beyond family means. However, two motor ships designed by Goodwin, Hamilton and Adamson for general trading were delivered by Pickersgill in 1955, followed four years later by one from Short Brothers. When the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in the Spring of 1959, the **Ramon de Larrinaga** was the first 'salty' to visit the most western port on Lake Superior when she loaded at Duluth.

The container revolution had a devastating effect on European cargo ship fleets. Because of this the two Pickersgill vessels were sold after 15 years service to be replaced by the Austin & Pickersgill SD.14, the British 'Liberty replacement', designed to carry 14,000 tons at 14 knots. Larrinaga was the first British company to place an order for these ships. Three were delivered which were placed on Far East charter. The SD.14s were in great demand by Greek shipowners, and within nine months of entering service in 1972 one of the Larrinaga vessels was sold to a Greek owner.

Following a five fold increase in the price of fuel oil in 1974 and the difficulty in finding British crews for ships on Far East charter, the managing directors, who were now aged 72, 65 and 61, decided to sell the company. In November of that year it was purchased by London Greek shipowner George Vergottis who agreed to change the company name. It was renamed Oceanverg Shipping Company Limited.

The three managing directors did not survive long after their company. Both Ramon and Miguel J. died in 1977, and their cousin Richard, a Welsh sheep farmer, died in 1982.

The three SD.14s traded for over twenty years, ending their days under foreign flags. The **Rupert de Larrinaga** as the Maltese Virginia was wrecked off Turkey in December 1991. The **Ramon de Larrinaga** was scrapped at Alang as the Nassau registered **Sangita** in September 1994, and the **Miguel de Larrinaga** was also scrapped at Alang two years later as the St. Vincent registered **Citi Ventura**.

FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

No:8 THE "EMPRESS OF BRITAIN" OF 1906

from Lloyd's Register, 1906-07:

EMPRESS OF BRITAIN Official Number: 120940 Signal Letters: H G C J Steel Twin Screw Steamer 14,189gross 8,024nett : length 549' breadth 65.7' Built in 1906 by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company at Glasgow Twin screw, 2 x 4cyl quadruple expansion engines : speed 18 knots Owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company



The Empress of Britain was renamed Montroyal in April 1924. In 1921 the funnels were painted plain buff and the title for the operating company became Canadian Pacific Steamships Limited.

There can be little doubt that the first Empress of Britain was regarded with great affection on the Western Ocean, for she was not only the first Atlantic 'Empress', but she was really the first Canadian Pacific trans-Atlantic passenger ship. Plans for the Empress of Britain and her sister-ship Empress of Ireland had been commenced as soon as the company had reached agreement with Sir Alfred Jones regarding the transfer of the Beaver Line on 27th March 1903. Even with the Beaver Line's ships under Canadian Pacific ownership, it could not be said that compared with its main trans-Atlantic competitor - the Allan Line - that it was in a very good position. Despite the fact that the Allan Line had gone ahead with plans for the famous Virginian and Victorian, the first turbine-driven Atlantic liners, Canadian Pacific did not hurry its plans for building the two Atlantic 'Empresses'. Very careful plans were prepared before the order for the two ships was given to the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company. When the final details had been agreed it was decided to build the ships as speedily as possible and so the Empress of Britain was ready for launching within a year of being laid down.

On completion the two ships were the largest in the Canadian Pacific fleet by about 2,000 tons. The **Empress of Britain** was required to carry 6,500 tons deadweight on a draft limited to a mean of 27' 6" including stores, but excluding the coal required for the trans-Atlantic voyage. The design embodied a satisfactory compromise between speed and the provision of sufficient cargo space for favourable financial results.

With four decks and a shelter deck, the Empress of Britain was a very high ship with a topgallant fo'c'sle calculated to keep her dry even in the worst Atlantic seas. She had 'V'-shaped bilge keels designed to prevent excessive rolling, these being about 27 inches deep. Aft of the wheelhouse, and divided from it by a barrier rail, was a promenade or airing space for the firemen, with a shelter for use in bad weather and direct communication with the boiler rooms.

Passenger accommodation was for 310 first-class, 470 second-class and 500 third-class, all these being on or above the main deck. In addition there was space for 270 steerage passengers on the lower deck forward. The remainder of the lower deck with the whole of the orlop deck and hold was fitted for cargo space and two of the 'tween deck holds were insulated for the carriage of frozen meat. The lower and upper promenade decks amidships were entirely devoted to first saloon passengers.

The Empress of Britain's main propelling machinery consisted of two sets of quadruple expansion reciprocating engines designed by her builders to produce a speed of 18 knots, although she attained a speed of 20 knots on her trials on the Skelmorlie measured mile in April 1906.

The launch of the Empress of Britain took place on 11th November 1905, the ceremony being performed by Mrs Arthur Piers, wife of the general manager of Canadian Pacific Ocean Services. On trials the following April, progressive runs over the Skelmorlie mile were followed by 12-hour full speed and 12-hour coal consumption trials. One report stated: 'Representatives of the Canadian Pacific Railway who were on board throughout the trials were delighted with the ship and her performance, and it was freely felt and expressed that the Fairfield Company had achieved another notable triumph'.

The first Atlantic *Empress* sailed on her maiden voyage from Liverpool on 5th May 1906, and a month later she completed what was described at the time as 'one of the fastest passages ever made in the Canadian trade'. She arrived at Rimouski (the St. Lawrence pilot station) from Moville, County Donegal, on 18th June 1906, having made the passage in 5 days, 21 hours and 17 minutes, some 63 minutes better than any previous record. In July 1906 she made the voyage from Father Point (St. Lawrence pilot) to Liverpool Bar in 5 days, 12 hours and 15 minutes, this being a new record. A few months later she established another westbound record when she crossed from Liverpool to Halifax, N.S. in 5 days, 18 hours and 18 minutes, and it was stated at the time that it was 'easily her best passage since being completed'.

On 27th July 1912 the Empress of Britain was in collision with the steamer Helvetia, (W. Lowden & Sons) off Cape Madeleine in the lower St.Lawrence. The smaller vessel sank and the Empress of Britain had her stem smashed, bows stove in

and her forepeak filled with water. Mails and 200 passengers were transferred to the Allan liner **Pretorian** and the *Empress* returned to Quebec for inspection and survey.

On 16th August 1914, the Empress of Britain was commissioned as an armed merchant cruiser under the command of Captain Charles Pyddoke, RN, with her peace-time master, Captain J. Turnbull as a commander, RNR. She served on Atlantic patrol as part of Admiral Stoddart's South Atlantic Squadron protecting the River Plate food ships. Early in 1915 she was sent to join the squadron protecting commerce between Cape Finisterre and the Cape Verde Islands. She was released from naval service on 11th May 1915 and afterwards served as a troopship. The main reason for her conversion to a troopship was the situation that then prevailed in the Dardanelles and required every suitable transport. In October 1915 the Empress of Britain was damaged by fire whilst at anchor in the Mersey. Trooping continued to occupy the Empress's attention until after the Armistice, and she went to all parts of the world carrying British, Canadian and American troops, having been allocated to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In all it is recorded that the Empress of Britain carried in excess of 130,000 troops, and she came under attack on 12 occasions. On one particular voyage with 5,000 Canadian soldiers on board, two torpedoes narrowly missed her, one passing within five feet of her bows.

In March 1919 the Empress of Britain was paid off and sent to the Clyde to be refitted by her builders for return to the Canadian trade. She was converted to burn oil fuel and this increased her boiler efficiency by 7% and enabled her to bunker for a round voyage. Her stokehold crew was reduced from 120 men to just 27. The round voyage bunker requirements were of the order of 3,700 tons.

Considerable alterations were carried out in the accommodation to bring it up to modern standards. A number of the first-class cabins had beds instead of the usual bunks, and all first-class staterooms were provided with running water. The first-class passenger total increased to 348, the second-class became 276 and third-class 730. The last-named were accommodated in two, four and six-berth cabins. An unusual feature of the accommodation was the provision of 'tandem cabins', which gave the upper berth to one cabin, and the lower berth to another. In other words, when viewed from the cabin, the berth appeared to be in a recess in the bulkhead. This principle enabled a pair of single-berth cabins to occupy a minimum of space, being reduced in fact by the width of one berth.

The Empress of Britain re-entered service with the plain buff funnels which now became standard for Canadian Pacific Ocean Services on both the Atlantic and Pacific vessels. In 1921 she logged the then fastest Canadian Pacific round voyage Liverpool-Quebec-Liverpool in 15 days, 9 hours and 30 minutes. In 1922 the *Empress* was transferred to the Southampton-Quebec service.

In April 1924 the Empress of Britain was converted into a 'cabin ship' and a few weeks later was renamed Montroyal, as all the cabin ships were being given 'M' names. Under this name she proved as popular as ever on regular mail and passenger services, and also on cruises to the West Indies and Norway. In April 1927, she and the Montnairn replaced the Minnedosa and Melita on the AntwerpSouthampton-Cherbourg-Quebec route, and later in the month the Montroyal's master, Captain H.Sibbons, was presented with a gold-headed stick when his ship became the first to dock at Quebec on the re-opening of the St. Lawrence after the winter ice.

In 1928 the Montroyal was transferred to the Hamburg-Quebec service via Southampton, but early in 1929 she was placed on the Liverpool and Greenock route to Quebec. In September 1929 the Montroyal made her last sailing for Canadian Pacific and as then laid up off Southend. In June 1930 she was reported sold to the Stavanger Shipbreaking Company for £37,000.

READERS' LETTERS

from L.N.R.S. Member Jim Cowden of Lower Heswall:

"I read the last issue of 'The Bulletin' with much interest paying particular attention to David Eccles' article <u>'The Cost of War - Three Names on a Stone</u>'. I note that the ss Calgary is mentioned and I should like to add that she was owned by Elder Dempster Lines, and at the time of the rescue of the eleven men from the ill-fated Empire Shackleton, the Calgary was commanded by Captain W.R. ('Teapot') Brown. On being landed at Freetown, the survivors were looked after by Mr Eric Wheeler, the Elder Dempster Agent at that port, who was responsible for their accommodation and onward repatriation to the United Kingdom."

from L.N.R.S. Member Olive Williamson of Mossley Hill:

"Many Members will recall the Flying Enterprise saga of 1952, and the part played by the ocean salvage tug Turmoil. Some information recently came to hand about the Turmoil:

The 1945-built tug **Turmoil** was chartered to the Overseas Towing and Salvage Company between 1946 and 1957. She was eventually sold to Greeks in 1965 and renamed **Nisos Kerkyra**, and was resold again (to Greeks) and renamed **Matsas** in 1971. The tug was sold to I. Katimerjoglou & Co. O.E. who commenced demolition work on her in the Trias Shipyards at Megara, Greece on 15th January, 1986."

THE WIND TURBINES ON THE SEA WALL AT ROYAL SEAFORTH DOCK

Each of the six towers is 50 metres (163ft) in height. Each tower has three 22 metre (72ft) long blades which always face into the wind and quietly rotate at a steady speed of about 29 revolutions per minute and automatically stop if the wind is too strong or too light.

MANIFESTS

by Robert Taylor

At the turn of the century I joined the Dundalk and Newry Steam Packet Company. It was the very job I wanted. From my stool in the office at Collingwood Dock, Liverpool, I could see the ships across the dock. They were smaller, more varied, and much more interesting in those days; a considerable tonnage was under sail and many paddle craft entered the port.

As an employee of the firm I felt that I had a certain proprietary interest in its affairs, a sense of responsibility much stronger, I am sure, than is ever felt by the employees of a modern co-partnership venture. Although no share certificates were ever handed to me, when I saw one of our little vessels - the **Dundalk**, the **Bessbrook**, the **Iveagh**, or the old **Earl of Earne** - at the quayside, I was proud they were ours.

After a few months I was made assistant manifest clerk. I now know that preparing a manifest is really a simple sort of job, but at the age of 15 there was a good deal of solemnity about it. Senior clerks still produced magnificent documents in 'copper-plate' hand.

Work was regulated not so much by the clock as by the tides. We had to be there when a ship came in. Pressure ebbed and flowed, but one thing was certain - the manifest had to be placed on board each ship before it sailed and it was my lot, as the youngest and fleetest of the staff, to run down and hand over the manifest just before the gangway was taken away. A ship sailing without a rudder was nothing to one leaving without a manifest.

Once, I recall, when a ship was due to sail at 9.00pm, the manifest had been prepared and tied up in a canvas bag ready for delivery. For some reason, one of the senior clerks asked me if he could examine it. I gave it to him and resumed my work. We locked up just before nine when I went down to the **Iveagh** and passed the bag on board. I was nearly all of my five miles walk home when I suddenly remembered the episode in the office. I stopped in my tracks: the bag I had passed on board had been empty!

Panic seized me. My whole career seemed ruined. I dared not think what the manager would say or how I could ever face my colleagues again. They had all had confidence in me and I had betrayed them. For years the affairs of the company had been conducted with acumen and foresight.

Fortunately I knew where the senior clerk lived and I ran to his house. He answered the door to my furious knocking and listened to my breathless tale. He then scratched his head and considered. I waited impatiently, knowing that each second took the ship further and further away. At last he hit on a plan.

Returning to the office, we found the manifest on the table and delayed only as long as it took to place it in an envelope and address it to our office in Newry. Then we set off to the Head Post Office in Victoria Street. I remember the inescapable feeling of guilt as the senior clerk fished in his pocket for the price of postage. I offered to help, out of the coppers which remained of my pocket money, but he would not hear of it. He paid the express rate and the manifest was entrusted to the Royal Mail. It went the same night via Holyhead and was actually in the hands of our Newry people when the **Iveagh** steamed into harbour.

Later I was involved in another adventure. I only had seconds to get a manifest on board and I lept on board the **Earl of Earne** so quickly that the dockside men never saw me. When I came to go ashore there was a stretch of dark water between the ship and the quay.

The crew were very good to me. I was given a cabin and after supper I settled down for the night, prepared to make the best of things. The crossing was as calm as one could have wished. I began to fancy that I was a born sailor. It took the return trip to disillusion me. We had a cargo of cattle on board. They moaned all night as rough weather buffeted us. I was terribly sick, with the smell of oil lamps making me worse. "What a terrible night," I told the mate at Liverpool. He responded: "Since I've been to sea, there's been more salt water through my moustache than I saw during the whole of last night." The next day I was back at my desk!

THE "ROYAL IRIS" ON THE THAMES



The former Wallasey ferry **Royal Iris** is currently lying at a tidal berth on the Thames, adjacent to the Thames Flood Barrier. She is for sale for £65,000. Attempts to use her as a floating restaurant/nightclub at Liverpool, Cardiff and on the Thames have all failed.

WRITING FOR 'THE BULLETIN'

Articles for possible inclusion in 'The Bulletin' are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor, John Shepherd, Flat 7 'Mount Court', Mount Road, Wallasey, CH45 9JS, or e-mail < kingorry@globalnet.co.uk >.

In the interests of accuracy, a proof will be sent to the author for correcting, before the article appears in '*The Bulletin*'. - j.s.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

NOTICE BOARD



'THE MONDAY FACILITY'

Members' access to the Archives and Library on Mondays continues as follows:

OCTOBER: 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th NOVEMBER: 1st, 8th and 15th

AND FINALLY

MILLENNIUM CRUISE ON THE "ROYAL DAFFODIL"

Members with £200 to spare might like to consider the idea of seeing in the new Millennium on board Mersey Ferries newly revamped **Royal Daffodil** (formerly the **Overchurch**). Just 250 tickets at £200 a head are available for a cruise which will leave Woodside at 20.30 on 31st December, returning at 02.00 on New Year's Day. A spokesman for Mersey Ferries said: 'Mersey Ferries is offering a cruising entertainment giving a magical window into the next millennium in the heart of a magical city'!!! Well, just fancy that.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Editor : John Shepherd



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(e-mail: < kingorry@globalnet.co.uk >)

Front Cover : The Ellan Vannin as she appeared in 1909 from an original drawing by Ron Evans.

From the Editor:

I should like to thank the regular proof-readers Graeme Cubbin and Alan McClelland for ensuring that 'The Bulletin' is as accurate as possible when it is sent out to Members. As Editor I find that when staring at my computer screen I regularly 'see what I want to see', and not what has actually been written! Graeme and Alan correct my clumsy constructions and check the accuracy of the articles. However, if anything does slip through, please let me know and a correction will be published. <u>j.s.</u>

THE LOSS OF THE "ELLAN VANNIN"

by L.N.R.S. Member Ron Evans

from Lloyd's Register, 1908/09:

ELLAN VANNIN Official Number: 27260 Signal Letters: P Q M G Built as an iron paddle steamer with simple oscillating engines by Tod & McGregor, Meadowside, Glasgow in 1860, and named Mona's Isle (2). Converted to twin-screw steamer in 1883 by Westray, Copeland & Co. of Barrow with 4-cylinder double compound engines. Renamed Ellan Vannin on 16th November, 1883 Gross Tonnage: 380, Nett: 128 Overall length: 207ft Breadth: 22ft

> Oh Ellan Vannin of the Isle of Man Company Oh Ellan Vannin lost in the Irish Sea

Few Manx men now remember The third day of the month of December The terrible storm in 1909 Ellan Vannin sailed for the very last time'

So goes the last verse of the song immortalised by The Spinners - 'The Ellan Vannin Tragedy'. In this 90th anniversary year of the loss of the Ellan Vannin, the story of the disaster is remembered with perhaps some further explanations as to how it happened.

The sinking of the Ellan Vannin on 3rd December, 1909 with the loss of all 14 passengers and 21 crew, mail and 60 tons of cargo, was the worst peacetime disaster in the 169 year history of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

In answers to questions the Court of Inquiry stated 'the **Ellan Vannin** was in good seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment when she left Ramsey. Her cargo was properly stowed and secured from shifting, and the weight so distributed as to make the vessel easy in a seaway. She had the required freeboard and was in good trim for a voyage to Liverpool'.

In the absence of any direct evidence as to the circumstances under which the vessel foundered it was impossible for the Court of Inquiry at the time to express a decided opinion as to the cause of the loss of the Ellan Vannin. To this day her loss remains something of a mystery.

The question has always remained as to why the disaster occurred so swiftly and without warning to a vessel which under the command of many experienced captains of the IOMSPCo. had made this voyage on countless occasions over the previous 49 years in all kinds of weather and in perfect safety. The Ellan Vannin had become known affectionately as the 'Li'l Daisy' by Manx sailors who thought of her as the mascot of the Manx fleet, and passengers and crew had every confidence in the vessel.

It may further help to explain the disaster by retracing the voyage with reference to sketch charts of the Irish Sea and the approaches to the River Mersey along with the synoptic chart for 07.00 on 3rd December 1909. The captain at that time did not have access to present day weather forecasting data and radio communications. It is therefore of some significance that Captain Teare of the Ellan Vannin would not have had any reliable weather forecast other than that obtained from the barometer reading of 28.30 inches (958 millibars) when leaving Ramsey.

VOYAGE TO DISASTER

The Ellan Vannin left Ramsey at about 1a.m. on Friday 3rd December 1909 bound for Liverpool in weather which was described as 'dirty' with sleet falling but only a moderate wind, the barometer standing at 28.30 inches. There was no suggestion made by Captain Teare that the weather was unfit for the vessel to leave.

Ramsey is a sheltered port in a north-west wind and dries out at low water. The **Ellan Vannin** would have had to leave the harbour at about high tide. According to present day Admiralty charts, with high water at about 1a.m., tidal streams would have been in the vessel's favour. With the following wind the **Ellan Vannin** would have cleared the shelter of the Isle of Man in about an hour and a half. She was probably running quite easily before the following wind and tide, and as the wind increased she would have been too far into her voyage to change course and return to the shelter of the Island.

The 60 nautical miles from Ramsey to the Bar Lightship were covered in about five hours at an average speed of 12 knots, close to the vessel's maximum of 13 knots.

It appears from evidence given by those on board the Bar Lightship and other vessels in the vicinity that at about 4 a.m. a severe gale from the north-west sprang up, reaching force 11 with frequent rain squalls and a very rough sea. These conditions continued until about 8 a.m. with the waves becoming more dangerous and reported as up to 24 feet in height. The wind and waves were meeting the strong ebb tide from the Mersey estuary.

Shortly after 6.30am an inward bound steamer passed the Bar Lightship about half a mile to the northward. The lightship's crew saw her lights for about five minutes before they were obscured by heavy rain squalls. Taking into consideration the course usually taken by the **Ellan Vannin** from Ramsey to the Mersey Bar, and the direction from which the steamer was approaching, it is highly probable that the lights seen were those of the **Ellan Vannin**. At about 6.45am one of the seamen on the Bar Lightship saw what he described as a flash lasting about one second in the vicinity of the Bar. No other flash was seen although the seaman and the master of the lightship watched for about twenty minutes.



At 11.30am a report was received by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board that Q.1 Black Buoy was adrift. The Board's tender Vigilant went out to recover the buoy, and when she was off the Rock Lighthouse at about 1.30pm a lot of wreckage and several dozen lifebelts were sighted. The Vigilant recovered some of this wreckage, including a package of mails. At about 3.30am on the following day, 4th December, lifebelts marked 'Ellan Vannin', more wreckage and dead sheep were found by the coastguards at Blundellsands, and later the ship's clock, attached to some panelling, was found. The clock had stopped at 6.50.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE WRECK

(extract from Annex to the Report of the Court of Inquiry)

The wreck of the Ellan Vannin was located on 4th December 1909, 1,170 yards from the Bar Lightship and 1,000 yards from the position of Q.1 Black Buoy on a direct line between them, and broadside on to the tide. The wreck was heading about West by South; the fore end was broken off about 35 feet from the stem and was separated from the after part by a space estimated at about 6 feet. The after portion was nearly upright; the forward portion had a list to port of from 15 to 20 degrees on the first examination. This list was increased to about 45 to 50 degrees on the 12th December when the last examination was made. The break, the whole way round from rail to rail was a straight one mainly in the line of the rivets, varying not more than 6 or 8 inches either way, except on the port side where the stringer waterway and sheer strake was attached to the forward part, and projected aft about 4 feet. The keel of the fore part at the fracture was bent up about 3 to 18 inches. The deck in the wake of the fracture was torn across except where the butts come; there the butts were torn but taking the deck bolts with the planks. Two divers reported an indentation of a part of the two plates below the sheer strake on the port side of the fracture, of about 18 inches in length in a vertical direction, the broken edges of the plates being bent inwards from 3 to 6 inches. One of the other divers did not notice any such indentation, and the fourth denied that it existed, but stated that some of the plates in the neighbourhood of the bilge were bent slightly inwards and upwards. The Court, however, does not attach much importance to the evidence on these points. The davits on the starboard lifeboat were stated to have been swung and guyed out. The boat was gone from the chocks. This boat was found the day after the wreck on the beach at New Brighton bottom up, cover on, and all her gear in. The davits of the port lifeboat were swung out but not guyed, the boat was gone, and no trace of her has been found. The divers found that the square house (which contained the saloon entrance and smoke room) on the after deck was completely washed away, only the whaling pieces on the deck being left to indicate where the house had been.

Here it may be mentioned that a theory was advanced that the Ellan Vannin fouled the Q.1 buoy. The buoy was reported by the master of the ss Heroic to have been in place when he passed it at about 6.am. It was missed from its position by those on board the Bar Lightship at 10.am. This buoy was recovered on the 4th December, but no marks were found on it, and the light was still burning. Therefore the Court is





unable to accept this theory, nor from a careful consideration of all the facts in evidence can it conclude that the **Ellan Vannin** was in collision with another vessel or with any wreckage whatever.

The twin-screw steamship **Heroic** made the passage from Belfast to Liverpool on the night of 2nd and morning of 3rd December, passing the Bar Lightship just before 6.am. The master, Arthur Porter, reported that the weather he experienced when approaching the mouth of the Mersey was of most exceptional violence and that during his experience of 11 years he had never known it so bad. The wind was from the north-west blowing with hurricane force, the sea broken and most dangerous.

T.S.S. Heroic 1906 1,869 tons Belfast Steamship Co.Ltd. Length bp: 320·2ft Beam: 41·3ft Depth(mld): 16·8ft Speed: 18 knots. Service: Belfast/Liverpool. T.S.S. Heroic was a much larger and more powerful vessel than the Ellan Vannin and had a full poop, bridge deck and forecastle.

The Q1 Black Buoy was 12ft diameter x 15ft high overall and weighed 9 tons 15 cwt.
Iron keel plate 1¼ inches thick, base ¾ inch and 5/16 inch thick; superstructure
3/16 inch thick plate. Moored with 1.5/8 inch iron cable, 5 fathoms formed bridle next to buoy, 30 fathoms in addition with anchor at end.

<u>r.e.</u>

THE FINDINGS OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY

The Ellan Vannin appears to have been kept in good repair and condition. She was periodically surveyed by the Board of Trade Surveyor who gave evidence and who had certified the vessel to be in a good seaworthy condition in September last, when she showed no signs of weakness. In that month the Board of Trade Certificate was renewed for one year. Plates had been removed from time to time and these were said to be in good condition. A plan has been put in showing the results of drilling a large number of plates in various sections of the vessel in 1902, and from this it appears that up to that date there had been no appreciable wasting of the iron. The fact, however, cannot be ignored that this vessel was 50 years old. Possibly some corrosion may have occurred at some places that were difficult to access (for example, the chain locker), and may have led to her breaking at this particular place, although there was nothing to indicate that such was the case. The chain locker was about 26 feet long, and had a wooden platform on which to stow the chain. It is well known that if corrosion took place at all this is the most likely part for it to do so.

The fact that the **Ellan Vannin** when examined by the divers was found to be partly across the channel and nearly at right angles to the wind and sea at the time she foundered indicates that she broached to before sinking.

In answer to the Board of Trade question (3): 'what was the cause of the loss of the Ellan Vannin and the loss of life?', the Court gave the following answer:
In the absence of any direct evidence as to the circumstances under which the vessel foundered, it is impossible for the Court to express a decided opinion as to the cause of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**, but after carefully considering all the theories which have been suggested by various witnesses and weighing them in the light of the evidence produced, the Court is of the opinion that the following appears the most probable explanation of what occurred:-

The vessel passed the Bar Lightship at about 6.45am on the 3rd December, the weather at the time being very bad; the wind was hurricane force, the sea of a height of about 24 feet, and generally the weather the worst ever experienced in that vicinity. The wind and sea were slightly on the starboard quarter. Before reaching QI buoy the **Ellan Vannin** broached to and was probably swept by heavy seas which washed away the after companion, filling the after part of the vessel and causing her to sink by the stern, leaving the bows out of the water. While in this position the heavy seas striking the fore part of the ship would account for the bows being broken off as described by the divers.

The Court does not consider there is any evidence of the ship being previously in collision either with another vessel or with floating wreckage, nor does it consider that the fact of the bows breaking off under such exceptional circumstances implies structural weakness.

The catastrophe by which the vessel was overtaken must have been so sudden that there was probably no time for those on board even to put on lifebelts or to take other steps to save life, which accounts for the unfortunate loss of all on board.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DRAWINGS OF THE "MONA'S ISLE" (2) AND THE "ELLAN VANNIN"

On the following two pages, drawings by Ron Evans of the Mona's Isle (2) and the Ellan Vannin are reproduced. As has already been stated the Mona's Isle was a paddle steamer built in 1860. In 1883 she was converted into a twin screw steamer and renamed Ellan Vannin.

The recent maritime tragedies involving modern, well-found, purpose-built car ferries have shown the cataclysmic effects of a large inflow of water into vehicular decks. This information and experience was not available at the time of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**.

The Annex to the Report of the Court of Inquiry stated: 'It may be noted that the original plans and specifications were not produced to the Court and it would seem that they had long since ceased to exist.'

A comparison between the reconstructed drawings (by the author) of the paddle steamer **Mona's Isle** (2) and the twin screw **Ellan Vannin** show many of the modifications which could have resulted in changes to the stability of the vessel, and in the ability of the vessel to resist a large inflow of water and some of these modifications may be summarised as follows:



 Fleet List Ref: 09.
 Name: MONA'S ISLE (2).

 Type: Iron paddle steamer, simple oscillating.
 Signal Letters: PQMG.

 Official No: 27260.
 Signal Letters: PQMG.

 Bulders: Tod & McGregor, Meadowside, Glasgow.
 Launched: 10.04.1860.

 Yard No: Not known.
 Yard No: Not known.

 Tonnage: 380 tons gross.
 Cost: £10,673.

 Dimensions: Los: 2080 time. Lbp: 200ft.6ins. B: 22R.2ins. D: 10ft.7ins.

 Machlaery: Simple oscillating, 2/cyls.44ins.diameter, 48ins stroke, 25psi.130nhp. 12kts.

History:

1860 May 25: Trials, attained a speed of 12kts.

1882: Main mail carrier for 23years from Ramsey to Whitehaven, Liverpool and Scotland.
1882: Taken out of service for conversion to a twin screw vessel. Cost of conversion about £9,000.
1883 Nov.16: Renamed Ellan Vannin after conversion by Westray, Copeland & Co., Barrow.
1891 Dec: Special overhaul at the Naval Construction Works at Barrow, costing £2,914.
1900: After a collision, repairs by A & J Inglia, of Partick, Glasgow, cost of about £800.
1900-1909: General repairs by the owners from time to time, including new main deck cost £5,000.
1900 Dec 3: Left Ramsey for Liverpool with 14 passengers, a crew of 21, mail and 60tons of cargo A severe north-westerly gale reaching Force 12 blew up as she was approaching the Mersey. She passed the Bar Light Vessel before 7a.m. Foundered shortly afterwards with the loss of all on board

Model Notes: The first vessel in the Company with simple oscillating engines instead of side lever. The ship had a raked stem, schooner rigged with two masts, and single funnel abaft the paddles.

Plans: Reconstructed by the author from paintings and photographs in the Manx Museum and also from a survey and photographs of the shipbuilders model in the Merseyside Maritime Museum.



Fleet List Ref: 09. Name: ELLAN VANNIN [ex Mona's Isle (2)]. Renamed Ellan Vannin 16.11.1883: Converted from an iron paddlo steamer into a twin screw steamer by Mesara. Westray, Copland & Company, of Barrow, fitted with inverted vertical compound engines. Tonnage: 379.53 tons gross. 128.30 tons net 304 tons under deck. Cost: £10,673 as built. Cost of conversion £9,000 approx. Dimensions: Loa: 207ft.0ins. Lbp: 198ft.6ins. B: 22ft.2ins. D: 10ft.7ins. Machlnery: Compound engines, 4cyls.18ins.34ins.dia_24ins.stroke,80psi.100rhp.500ihp.12kts. 2/single ended bollers 10ft.9ft.6ins. 80psi. 4/furnaces 2ft.9ins.dia. firegrate area 55sqft. Heating surface 2004sq.ft. Coal consumption 9tons/24hours, bunkers 18tons. Passengers: 1^{at} 134, 3^{rt} 165, total 299. Crew: 14.

Further Particulars: Schooner rigged, two masts, height deck/truck, fore 60ft.0ins. main 68ft.0ins. Hull: Iron, single bottomed, one deck, 4/iron bulkheads, 2/waterballest tanks total capacity 44tons. Raised quarterdeck with new deckhouse over saloon companionway. Bridge deck amidships with wheelhouse, steering by hand, no steam steering gear. Engine room skylight 9ft, long x3ft.2ins., high. Topgallant forecastie under which was the steerage. Forward of the steerage was the forecastle. Below the forecastle was a chain locker and water ballsst tank, between these compartments and forehold was an iron bulkhead. Iron bulkheads each end of holds. Height main deck/bridge deck 7ft.4ins. Bulwarks 4ft.6ins., high, 4/freeing ports, one each side 14ins.x9ins., and 24ins.x24ins. Three hand bilge pumps.

Cargo holds: Capacity:- Fore hold 6441cu.ft., 161tons. After hold 4830cu.ft., 120.7tons. Hatches: Fore hatch 15ft.0ins.x6ft.10ins., after hatch 12ft.0ins.x6ft.4ins., coamings 15ins., high. Lifeboats: 2/21ft.6ins.x6ft.3ins.x2ft.Sins.Capacity 382cu.ft.38 persons. 320 life belts, 6 life buoys. Draught: Draught on leaving Ramsey on last voyage, aft 10ft., forward 7ft.6ins. Mean draught 8ft.9ins. Freeboard 2ft.9ins. Freeboard assigned by the Board of Trade 1ft.10ins. Twin Screws: Cast iron, each 7ft.3ins.diameter, and 13ft.9ins. pitch, surface are 17sq.ft.

Plans: Reconstructed by the author from photographs and from plans of contemporary vessels.

- 1] Oscillating engines were changed to vertical compound engines requiring repositioning.
- 2] Boiler dimensions and positions were changed resulting in changes to their CGs.
- 3] Forecastle and Bridge Decks were added to form a well deck.
- 4] Paddles and sponsons were removed reducing the overall deadweight by about 60 tons.
- 5] Beam overall sponsons reduced from 43ft 6ins (approx) to beam (moulded) 22ft 2ins.
- 6] Twin screws instead of paddle wheels could have made the very narrow hull difficult to handle in very severe sea conditions especially if rudder dimensions were unaltered.
- 7] Beam to length ratio was 8.95 and beam to draught ratio was 2.535 compared with the Fenella (1) of 1881 of 7.69 and 2.30 respectively, indicating that the Ellan Vannin had a very slender hull of shallow draught compared with her contemporaries.
- 8] Hatches fore (15' x 7') and aft (12' x 6'6") were twice the size of comparable vessels.
- 9] Deck structure over aft companionway to the saloon. Referred to in the Inquiry, but taken in conjunction with the very large after-hatch and the large skylight, a feature of the early paddle steamers, these could have provided many large openings for the inflow of water.
- 10] The Ellan Vannin, for her size, had a greater cargo capacity than her contemporaries, and it was also at one deck level. Cargo capacity:- Fore hold 6441 cu.ft., 161 tons. After hold 4830 cu.ft., 120.7 tons. At the time of her loss, the Ellan Vannin only carried 60 tons of cargo.
- 11] It will be noted that the **Ellan Vannin** was trimmed with a deeper draught aft than forward, many photographs refer. The deeper draught aft could have made her more vulnerable to following seas; the steps down to the main deck below the new bridge deck could have made the engine and boiler room more liable to flooding from aft, by-passing bulkheads.
- 12] The Ellan Vannin had the minimum of four bulkheads recommended at that time positioned at each end of the cargo holds and between engine room / boiler room. The forward bulkhead would also have served the dual purpose of a collision bulkhead.

EPILOGUE

The previously unpublished divers' reports provide a unique visual view of the wreck, which today would be provided by deep-sea submersibles and remote controlled video cameras. This evidence, in the light of present day knowledge and experience of recent maritime disasters, and research into stability and performance of paddle steamers versus screw steamers support without further 'direct evidence' the most probable cause of the loss of the Ellan Vannin reached by the Court of Inquiry.

Chris Michael in his book 'The Wrecks of Liverpool Bay' locates the wreck of the Ellan Vannin in position $53^{\circ}32.02$ 'N, $3^{\circ}16.90$ 'W, which confirms the position stated by the divers in evidence (chart refers). The wreck was dispersed soon after the vessel sank by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board using explosives, so as not to be an obstacle to shipping. It is possible that the wreck site is now covered in sand and silt; the depth at low water is 11 metres to the seabed, but some wreckage may still remain.

The loss of the **Ellan Vannin** should no longer remain a maritime mystery. Certainly the tremendous power of the sea should never be underestimated and the causes of these disasters must always be investigated to answer the question: 'What caused the vessel to sink?'

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BOOKSHELF

L.N.R.S. Member Charles Dawson would like to obtain a copy of Spratt 'Birth of the Steamboat' (London 1958). If any Member has a copy to dispose of, please contact the editor with the asking price, etc., and the details will then be passed on to Charles.

INFORMATION WANTED

L.N.R.S. Member J.V. Woollam of Axminster, Devon, would like information about the Atlas Shipping Line of Liverpool which operated a service from New York to the Caribbean. Mr Woollam thinks that the company was formed in about 1873 and was bought by the Hamburg-Amerika Line in June 1901. If any member can help, please contact the editor at Flat 7, 'Mount Court', Mount Road, Wallasey CH45 9JS, or email: < <u>kingorry@globalnet.co.uk</u> >

THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

Anybody entering the Merseyside Maritime Museum at present will certainly be impressed when they see the section of a liner's hull which has been built inside close to the main entrance. It is a foretaste of the new 'LIFELINES' exhibition designed to tell the story of the Merchant Navy, its seafarers and its ships. All the other exhibits are hidden at present behind white boarding except for a very large and splendid model of the 'Berengaria'. The new exhibition is to be opened before the end of the year and having visited a number of maritime museums around the world, and knowing that our museum in Liverpool is among the finest, it is certain that the new 'LIFELINES' exhibition will further enhance its worldwide reputation.

Many Members of the Society spend time in and around the Maritime Museum here in Liverpool and are able to see the continuous work in progress restoring and maintaining the small collection of vessels which are either owned by the Museum or are berthed securely in the area. Amongst these are the coastal sailing vessel 'De Wadden', the estuarial cargo ship 'Wincham', the tugs 'Brocklebank' and 'Kerne', and of course in drydock the Liverpool Pilot vessel 'Edmund Gardner'. Various groups spend much time and effort working on these vessels and they make it a very valuable collection.

Whilst as a nation we are very successful at preserving these smaller vessels and in particular preserving warships both large and small, I often hear people say that it is a pity that not even one large merchant vessel has been retained to mark its place in our history and to show the coming generations yet another aspect of our nautical heritage. In the United States they have two 'Liberty' ships preserved with one actually operational, a 'Victory' ship which is part operational, and there are reports that two further 'Victory' ships are to be opened to the public. In Hamburg the 'Cap San Diego' of the Hamburg South America Line is a fine example of a 1961 cargo liner, and in Japan they have the 1929 passenger ship 'Hikawa Maru' berthed at Yokohama. I believe that the 1960 British liner 'Oriana' is still somewhere in China, albeit as a theme park. It is very regrettable that we in this country did nothing to conserve one of our fine larger ships, and now it is a little too late.

As Chairman of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society I should probably not officially recommend publications to Members, but I think I can make an exception with 'Ships in Focus Record 10' which is published by John Clarkson and Roy Fenton. This edition of the magazine includes fine articles by Geoffrey Holmes, John Shepherd and John Hill, all of whom are Members of our Society, and their work is a good illustration of the standard of research produced by our Members. I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year and look forward to many interesting and enjoyable meetings in the coming year. In the meantime we have the Christmas Lunch on 7th December and the Christmas Social and Quiz on 16th December to anticipate with pleasure.

I wish you all good prospects for the new Millennium,

My best wishes to you all,



JUST FANCY THAT !!!

SUCTION PAD DOCKING

The 'New Scientist' has reported on suction pads that dramatically reduce the time it takes for ships to dock. These have been tested successfully on the ferry which operates between New Zealand's North and South Islands. The pads replace the mooring ropes which normally tie ships to bollards on the quayside.

The massive suction pads automatically reach out and attach themselves to the side of the vessel as it comes into dock. The pads are mounted on rails in a box on the side of the quay, enabling them to move up and down with the tide and any swell. These boxes are in turn mounted on horizontal rails so that the vessel can be moved along the quayside.

The main savings are in time and efficiency, says John Hadcroft who set up Mooring International in Christchurch to develop the idea with co-inventor Peter Montgomery. It takes only 4 seconds to 'tie-up' and 2 seconds to cast off. Saving time is very important for ferry companies which are constantly trying to speed up turn-round times.

2000 WESTERN SHIP MODEL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

The fourth Western Ship Model Conference and Exhibition will be held on board R.M.S. Queen Mary at Long Beach, California between 31st March and 2nd April, 2000. The conference is being hosted by the Ship Modellers' Association, located in Sourthern California. Further details are available from the L.N.R.S. Secretary.

THE STORY OF THE CLIPPER SHIP

"LIGHT OF THE AGE"

by LNRS Member Cam Ford

part 2

By August of 1860 Thomas R.Eldridge & Company was advertising 15th October as the sailing date for the Light of the Age's sixth voyage to Sydney (under Captain Gilson), with fares of £40 for first class poop cabins, and £20 for second cabins. There was apparently no rush for bookings, since by late September the departure date had been put back to 31st October, on which date it was stated that the vessel would definitely sail 'whether full or not'. She finally sailed on 1st November carrying 27 passengers and arrived in Sydney on 29th January 1861 after a voyage of 90 days.

Berthed at Circular Quay, the Light of the Age began to advertise for passengers and a wool cargo for the return trip to London, but on 14th February a new advertisement appeared, stating that 'under contract' and at short notice, the Light of the Age would be saling for Auckland instead, for which destination she duly departed on 8th March. She was carrying supplies for the British Army which for the past twelve months had been engaged in fighting the First Taranaki War (one of the many sporadic conflicts [1845-1881] collectively known as the Maori Wars); a campaign which was by this time in its final days. The Light of the Age's arrival in Auckland on 24th March was duly noted by the Auckland Southern Cross, which on 26th March reported that:

"The ship Light of the Age, Captain Gilson, arrived in harbour on Sunday morning from Sydney, sixteen days out. She brings 175 horses - out of 180 shipped - for the use of the artillery. The greater part were landed yesterday, and although they are, as might be expected, in a poor state, they seemed on the whole fine serviceable animals."

The Light of the Age's stay in New Zealand was a brief one. Leaving Auckland on 28th March she sailed on to India, arriving at Bombay on 23rd May and departing on her return voyage to London where, after 89 days ('the quickest passage of the season'), she arrived on 5th November 1861.

The ownership of the Light of the Age then passed to Houlder Brothers & Company who advertised her next voyage to Sydney (again under Captain Gilson) in the London *Times* of 7th November 1861, describing her as:

"This celebrated ship, by her passages to and from Sydney of

74, 85, 88 and 79 days, has proved herself the fastest on the berth, and as she has always delivered her cargoes in the finest order, never having had to extend a protest, she presents the best opportunity for the shipment of fine and seasons goods of any vessel now loading."

Following a remarkably quick turnround in dock, the Light of the Age sailed on her seventh voyage to Sydney on 11th December 1861; just too early to be able to bear the news of the untimely death of Albert, the Prince Consort, (14th December) to the colonies. The graceful clipper was by this time under the command of Captain Thomas Reid Porter (who had previously been her chief officer for three years) instead of Captain Gilson. Captain Porter, a hard drinking man, was to stay with the Light of the Age for the rest of her career, and was ultimately to be responsible for her loss six years later.

After leaving the Downs on 20th December 1861, the Light of the Age arrived in Sydney on 17th March 1862 after an uneventful voyage of 97 days. She immediately began advertising for passengers to London and taking on her usual wool cargo, giving the rather optimistic sailing date of 1st May. Almost three weeks after that date, on 19th May, the Light of the Age at last weighed anchor for London, arriving there on 19th August 1862.

Having made just the one voyage for Houlder Brothers & Co., the Light of the Age was sold to T.M.MacKay, a partner in MacKay, Baines & Company's famous Black Ball Line of passenger ships. The external colour scheme of the Black Ball vessels was a simple one of a black painted hull with blue waterways; white painted masts, black spars and mastheads, and white internal timbers; so it is highly probable that the Light of the Age would have been painted in these colours at one stage or another during her four years of service with the line. Thus it was that, now flying the Company's distinctive red flag with its central black ball, the Light of the Age set sail from London on 22nd October 1862 (again under Captain Porter) on her eighth - and last - voyage to Sydney.

After being delayed for several days by 'severe weather' in the Channel, the Light of the Age made an excellent run of 80 days from Plymouth to Sydney, arriving on 19th January 1863; an overall passage of 90 days. Berthed as usual at Circular Quay, she began taking on wool from Talbot's Store and advertising for passengers to London, with a projected sailing date of 31st March. Bookings were slow and, with cabins still to let, the sailing date was put back to 9th April and then postponed for yet another week, her voyage being advertised as the 'only ship for the July wool sales'. The Light of the Age was finally towed out into Sydney Harbour to begin her return trip to London on 17th April 1863, arriving, as promised, at Gravesend on 19th July, 1863.

Passenger bookings to and from Sydney had been declining for some time, so upon her return, MacKay, Baines & Co. decided to transfer the Light of the Age to the new and profitable migrant run to Moreton Bay (Brisbane). The Queensland Government, through its London office, had given MacKay, Baines & Co. an exclusive contract to transport all such migrants, and to date the Black Ball Line had transported some 15,000 passengers to the colony in a little over two years, at the rate of one vessel per month. Queensland had become a separate state at the end of 1859 and had embarked upon an ambitious programme of encouraging immigration by offering free land to responsible migrants who paid their own fares to the colony. Simply put, the scheme was to issue passengers with Land Orders at the rate of one acre for every £1 of fare paid; children under 14 were carried at half fare, and thus were entitled to half the allotment. A family with two parents and three children (one under 14), for example, might pay a total of £90 for their passage, and would thus be entitled to Land Orders for 90 acres. At this time, unemployment in the Lancashire cotton mills was high as the result of the blockade of Confederate ports during the American Civil War, which prevented the export of cotton from the Southern States. It was hoped that a new cotton industry might be established in Queensland and, with this in mind, additional free passages to Queensland were offered to young men 'eligible by occupation', especially those with experience in cotton production. Such passengers, however, had no right to Land Orders.

Thus it was that the Light of the Age began her new - and less glamourous - rôle as an emigrant ship. She was dry-docked for a full survey and remetalling of her hull, while carpenters began fitting her out to accommodate more than twice as many passengers as she had ever carried before. She was advertised in *The Times* of 8th August 1863 thus:



The 'patent distilling apparatus' mentioned above was developed in 1855 by W.H. Gravely as a means of converting sea water into fresh drinking water and was carried on all Black Ball vessels. By law, every person on board ship was entitled to 1½ gallons of fresh water per day for drinking, cooking and washing. In previous

years, this supply was carried in a number of wooden kegs in the hold which were refilled whenever the vessel put into port. With the advent of non-stop passages, however, the space to store enough water for the entire journey became astronomical. For example, the **Light of the Age's** forthcoming four month voyage to Moreton Bay would have required a total of 91,500 gallons of water in 2,542 x 36 gallon casks to supply her 500 passengers; an obvious impossibility.

The Gravely apparatus was designed to augment the water supply and consisted of a coal-fired boiler which heated sea water to boiling point and distilled the steam into '8 - 10 gallons of beautifully pure water every hour'. On the Light of the Age, the steam from the boiler was also used to heat the cooking equipment in the two galleys. The purifier usually ran for fourteen hours a day, producing a recorded average of 240 gallons per day which was stored in an iron tank on deck. On occasion, it was run around the clock, producing about 350 gallons per day. These figures are about twice the average claimed for the original apparatus, which suggests that either it was an improved, larger model, or that there were two purifiers operating, each serving one galley.

The revised system of passenger accommodation was arranged in four classes: First Cabin (Saloon) at £45 to £50 per head; Second Cabin at £25; Intermediate at £20 and Steerage at £15. The Black Ball Line's agents boasted that the quarters for married couples, single females and single men were entirely separate, and fully complied with the Passenger Acts. It was also stated that three matrons were carried in addition to the Surgeon Superintendent, and that the ship even carried 'a library of well selected books for the use of all the passengers'. However, an intending passenger, seeking to return to Australia, was not impressed; writing sourly to the Manchester Examiner that:

"I came prepared to go by the Light of the Age, advertised to sail on the 25th of this month; but, on inspection, thought I would wait. In the second cabin, I think, two couples were placed together. In the intermediate, six or eight married couples are huddled together (the usual arrangement), bunk over bunk, and side by side, and without the slightest partition. When we consider the many offices, private and delicate, required to be performed by the married and families, such an arrangement as 12 to 16 persons of both sexes being cooped up in the same cabin without screens or secrecy, is simply a filthy one. In the steerage, things are worse. Now this is not done to such an extent on other vessels. Even in the great (gold) rush, at the commencement of the diggings, in the vessel in which I sailed, each married couple had a compartment to themselves, however small and box-like it was. I need scarcely say that at the period of my visit to the Light of the Age, scarcely any of the intermediate berths were taken, and their space was being mainly allotted to second cabin passengers. The conditions are such I think merely to drive the steerage passengers into the intermediate cabin, and this again made as uncomfortable as possible for the like end, viz., to drive them into the second cabin."

On 27th September 1863, the Light of the Age sailed from London via Queenstown on her ninth voyage to Australia, carrying 477 emigrants bound for Moreton Bay. It was to be longest journey of her career as it would be more than two years before she returned to England.

The passage had its share of controversy; a week after the ship's arrival in Brisbane on 27th January 1864, the Surgeon Superintendent, Dr Angus Mackay, was arraigned before an inquiry of the Immigration Board, being accused by many of the passengers of frequent insobriety during the voyage, especially on Christmas Eve. Terms such as 'elevated', 'excited' and 'addicted to intemperance' were used to describe his condition, but the most damning circumstance was the fact that, on several occasions, Dr Mackay had had to request one of the passengers, the Rev'd. Mr Arthur Cass (who testified that he had been 'educated as a medical man') to attend to his patients when he was in no fit condition to do so himself. Captain Porter, in a statement which incidentally reveals more about his own drinking habits than it does about Dr. Mackay's, testified on the doctor's behalf that:

"I have never seen him drunk on the voyage; never under the influence of liquor. I may have been under the influence of liquor myself, so as not to have been able to observe it. The sale of liquor was stopped because some gentlemen were going too fast. The surgeon was not under the influence of liquor on Christmas Eve. I was slightly under the influence of liquor myself that night, and may not have observed him no formal complaint has been made by the passengers against the surgeon; I have never even heard casual complaint against the surgeon at the mess table. He performed his duties satisfactorily on board. I have never been the master of an emigrant ship before."

The Court decided that the complaints against Dr Mackay were partially proven and ruled that he should never again be entrusted with the medical charge of an emigrant ship. It was also resolved that £25 should be deducted from his fee and given to the Rev'd. Cass in acknowledgement of his rôle as acting Surgeon during the times when Dr Mackay was incapable.

In a port as small as Brisbane, the arrival of a new Black Ball immigrant ship every month posed the company's agents the problem of finding sufficient payload and passengers to fill the excess return capacity available. Even as the Light of the Age began discharging cargo, there were already two Black Ball clippers in port loading and advertising for passengers and freight. These were the Wanfell (777 tons) and the Fiery Star (1,361 tons, which was sadly, but aptly, to be destroyed by fire the following year on her next homeward voyage from Brisbane); whilst two more, the Ariadne (670 tons) and the crack clipper Flying Cloud (1,782 tons) arrived shortly after. In such a situation, the usual solution was for some vessels to leave empty and seek a return cargo at another port, which was the course of action the Light of the Age was instructed to take. After unloading she began taking on ballast with a projected departure date of mid-March for Point de Galle in Ceylon. On 4th March, her agents, J. & G. Harris, briefly advertised in the Brisbane Courier that the Light of had:

"room for Conveyance of a few HORSES, at reasonable rates"

On 16th March 1864, in ballast and without passengers, the Light of the Age sailed to Calcutta for another brief stop, arriving on 22nd May before departing for Hong Kong on 5th July. From Hong Kong, the Light of the Age then sailed north to Woosung Island at the mouth of the Whangpoo and Yangtze Rivers near Shanghai, arriving on 19th October. By 6th December she had returned to Hong Kong where her crew spent Christmas and New Year before making the short voyage back up the coast to Amoy, mooring there on 22nd January 1865. The purpose of these short voyages is unclear, but since the Black Ball Line was at that time involved in shipping volunteer contract labourers from Calcutta to work in the West Indies, it is quite possible that Captain Porter was recruiting Chinese coolies to work in the canefields of his ultimate destination - the British colony of Honduras in Central America.

After leaving Amoy, the Light of the Age headed south, passing through the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra on 25th March, before turning west to round the Cape of Good Hope and heading for the mid-Atlantic island of St. Helena where she arrived on 10th May, perhaps to replenish water and supplies for her coolie passengers. From St. Helena, the Light of the Age sailed on to Honduras - where she would have presumably landed her coolies - before crossing the Gulf of Mexico to the port of New Orleans in the former Confederate state of Louisiana.

Although the American Civil War had come to an end some weeks before, New Orleans had been in federal hands for more than two years, having fallen undamaged and without a struggle after being cut off from the Confederacy by Union seapower in 1863. There the **Light of the Age** took on a cargo of 1,598 bales of cotton before returning to England, arriving in her new home port of Liverpool on 18th October 1865. After an absence of 25 months from home waters, she was to spend just one month in port before setting out for Moreton Bay again.

In the meantime, the Queensland Government's immigration programme was in trouble. The Land Orders offered to intending settlers were supposed to be nonnegotiable, but in fact a flourishing black market trade in them had sprung up, with Land Orders being openly offered for sale in the *Brisbane Courier*. In addition, a group of speculators called 'land jobbers' had arisen in England; agents who offered to pay the balance of passage money for prospective migrants who could only afford part of the fare in exchange for their allocated Land Orders. Thus, an intending migrant only able to raise, say, £5 of his £15 fare, would be offered the remaining £10 by a land jobber in return for his £15 Land Order. The speculator would then resell the Land Order for at least £15 - making a clear profit of 50%. This practice resulted in unscrupulous squatters being able to illegally increase their land holdings at the expense of many almost penniless migrants who would subsequently arrive in Queensland to become a liability on the State. In September 1864, the Queensland Government signed a revised exclusive contract with the Black Ball Line which was intended to run until at least 1st January 1868. The method of payment was altered; the fares of assisted passengers were to be paid half in cash or Queensland Government debentures and half in Land Orders, the latter being redeemable. Baines & Company was to accept a reduced cash payment of one pound from each immigrant, with a bonus for passengers going north of Brisbane by steamer.

By the terms of the new contract, unmarried male and female passengers were not to be carried on the same ship without specific permission of the Emigration Commissioner, unless they were first-class passengers or with their parents - although the implication that the wealthier first-class passengers were, by definition, any more moral than the rest of the passengers is certainly open to debate! Each year there were to be nine vessels laid on for Queensland from Glasgow, Cork or Plymouth, and not less than half of the passengers were to be landed at Moreton Bay. In 1865, the Black Ball Line carried most of the 9,414 passengers arriving in Queensland.

On 18th November 1865, the Light of the Age sailed with emigrants from Liverpool on her tenth voyage to Australia, calling at Glasgow to pick up further passengers. On 10th December she sailed from the Clyde with 3 officers, 39 crew and 512 passengers (the greatest number she was ever to carry) on her second emigrant voyage to Moreton Bay. Although progress was slow and no storms or bad weather were encountered on the way, it still proved to be an eventful passage. There were many fights and arguments among the steerage passengers over rations and conditions, as well as continual gambling and petty thefts.

On 14th March 1866, the Light of the Age rounded the southern coast of Tasmania and, carrying a broken top gallant mast, arrived in Moreton Bay on 26th March 1866.

(to be continued)

COBH PILOT DELIVERS THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

by John Shepherd

After the end of the St. Lawrence season, the Cunard Line usually arranged for either the **Carinthia** or the **Sylvania** to make one December round voyage from Liverpool to New York via Cobh and Halifax, N.S. As an assistant purser with the Cunard Line during the 1960s I sailed on several of these December voyages and almost invariably the Cobh pilot came with us. It took only the slightest hint of bad weather for him to decide that it would not be possible to disembark to the launch outside Roche's Point. The pilot brought clothes for the voyage and all the Christmas presents for his friends and relations in the United States. The pilot was signed on ship's articles at one shilling a month and given first-class accommodation. In those days the **Carinthia** or **Sylvania** spent about ten days in New York at Pier 94 - ample time for our pilot to go visiting. On arrival back at Cobh, some three weeks later, he piloted the ship in and went home, having thoroughly enjoyed the experience!

REPORTS ON MEETINGS

OCEAN WEATHER AND CLIMATE

by Graham Alcock of the Proudman Oceanographic Institute (Thursday, 21st October, 1999)

Graham Alcock opened his talk to a well-attended meeting by saying that the original Liverpool Observatory was built in 1845. This was later demolished to make way for dock development, and the present observatory was built on Bidston Hill in 1867. In the 1970s the Proudman Building (named after a professor of mathematics at Liverpool University) was added.

Liverpool Bay experiences the third largest tidal range in the world after the Bay of Fundy and the Bristol Channel. There are two tides a day, whereas in some parts of the world such as Manila and Vietnam, there is just one tide every twenty-four hours. Some parts of the UK are very vulnerable to tidal flooding such as East Anglia, and nearer to home Moreton on the north Wirral coast is susceptible. Tidal surges can occur given certain conditions - for instance the East Coast Floods at the end of January 1953 were caused by a deep depression (976mb) moving across the North Sea from a point to the north-west of the Shetlands and settling down over the Low Countries. The Dover Strait acted like a 'brick wall' to the surge, and the water piled up on the Dutch and East Anglian coasts, with sea levels over six feet above prediction. The Tharnes Barrier has now been constructed in an attempt to protect the London area, and the barrier has been raised 'in earnest' on 26 occasions since its construction in the 1980s. Another tidal surge disaster occurred on 26th February 1990 when three depressions (two with central pressures of 947mb) in the North Artlantic combined to surge water into the Irish Sea, causing the sea defences at Towyn, near Rhyl, to break. Graham Alcock also explained that 'negative' tidal surges occur - for instance on 26th February 1990, there was half a metre less water than predicted off south-west Ireland.

Attempts to predict when events may happen are assisted by a mathematical model on computer at the Met. Office at Bracknell. Data from a nationwide network of tide gauges is received at Bidston every 24 hours.

Climate is weather on a much larger scale, and changes in climate are resulting in a rise in global sea level which has risen by 10 - 20cm over the last 100 years. There are 300 sea level gauges around the world which regularly supply data to Bidston. Some anomolies have occurred: the sea level at Stockholm and Aberdeen appears to be falling but one has to take into account that the land there is actually rising following the last Ice Age, and compensation must be made. In south-east England the land is sinking, giving the impression of a large rise in sea level. Merseyside is on the 'tilt line' between the rising and falling land areas.

Global warming is the result of increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. However, some CO2 is necessary to maintain a comfortable temperature;

without any CO2 in the atmosphere the earth's mean temperature would drop to -18°C. The rise in global temperature has not been constant - between 1900 and 1920 it actually fell. Volcanic eruptions on a large scale can cause temporary cooling. The 'El Niño' effect off the coast of Chile results in higher sea temperatures and the ocean then gives off more CO2. The 'La Niña' has the opposite effect and cools the ocean. Britain's climate is regulated by the Gulf Stream which draws in warm water over cold dense water. Should the Arctic icecap melt significantly, the fresh water released could divert the Gulf Stream and have the effect of cooling Europe's climate.

It is estimated that mean sea levels will rise by 49cm by the year 2100, which is four times as much as in the last 100 years. The rise will be due to thermal expansion whereby the volume of sea water expands as it warms up. Another factor will be the melting of ice. Much of Antarctica is covered by 4 kilometres of ice and contains 99% of the earth's frozen fresh water. However Antarctica is so cold that there is very little water vapour in the atmosphere, resulting in little or no precipitation. Should a rise in global temperature result in more precipitation falling and freezing over Antarctica, then there could be a global <u>fall</u> in mean sea level of about 1cm. Another factor is the ice shelves breaking away, and as a result more icebergs 'calving'. In a worst case scenario, should all of Antarctica melt, then there would be a global rise in sea level of 65 metres!

Graham Alcock's fascinating talk was received by an enthusiastic audience, and had time permitted, the 'question and answer session' could have gone on well in to the late afternoon. <u>j.s.</u>

FROM 'QUEEN ELIZABETH' TO 'KING ORRY'

by John Shepherd (Thursday 18th November, 1999)

John Shepherd presented 'an autobiographical slide show' covering the fifteen years he spent at sea with the Cunard Line, Harrison Line and Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. John joined the Cunard Line as an assistant purser on the **Queen Elizabeth** in March 1962 and moved on through the Cunard passenger fleet to become Staff Purser of the **Franconia** in 1968. Slides of most of the Cunard fleet of the 1960s were shown and there were shots of 60ft seas taken through the clear-view screen on the **Carinthia's** bridge, and icebergs photographed from the **Sylvania**. Having decided that cruising was not for him, John moved on to the Harrison Line in 1968 and spent a happy few years sailing to South Africa and the West Indies. He sailed on most of the Harrison fleet of the late 1960s early 1970s and met both Captain M.D.R. Jones and Captain Graeme Cubbin who were Harrison Line masters at that time. Living on the Isle of Man, it was perhaps a natural move to sail with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, and John spent the summers of 1973, 74 and 75 sailing as 'seasonal purser' of the 1946 built **King Orry**.

FORGOTTEN LINERS LIVERPOOL

No:9 - THE "HILARY" OF 1931

from Lloyd's Register, 1933/34: HILARY Official Number: 162350 Signal Letters: L II F D Steel Single Screw Steamer, 7,403gt 4,350nett Built by Cammell Laird & Co., Birkenhead in 1931 Owned by The Booth Steamship Company Limited Length: 424·2ft Breadth: 56·2ft Registered at Liverpool Triple Expansion 3-Cylinder Engines Low pressure turbine with double-reduction gearing & hydraulic coupling



The Hilary was completed in August 1931 by Cammell Laird & Co.Ltd. at Birkenhead at a cost of £219,000. Her construction was an act of faith in the future by the Booth Steamship Co.Ltd., for at that time the shipping industry was in the depths of the great trade depression during which the company sold no less than 11 ships. As the third vessel to bear the name in the Booth fleet, the Hilary was a handsome ship, originally having accommodation for 80 first-class and 214 third-class passengers.

Her single screw was driven by a triple-expansion engine and a low-pressure turbine with double-reduction gearing and hydraulic coupling giving a speed of 14 knots, and she soon established a popular reputation with passengers on the service between Liverpool and Manaus on the Amazon, calling at Oporto, Lisbon, Madeira and Belem. There was always a considerable number of round-voyagers on the passenger list, attracted by the Booth Line's slogan "1,000 miles up the Amazon", coined by the then passenger manager.

During the Second World War, the Hilary remained on commercial service until the end of 1940, and in January 1941 she was fitted out at South Shields as an ocean boarding vessel for service in home waters. On 3rd May 1941 she stopped the Italian tanker **Recco** some 350 miles north of the Azores, but the crew scuttled their ship. A week later the Hilary intercepted and captured the Gianna M of the Cia Italiana Trasporto Olii Minerali of Genoa and placed a prize crew on board who sailed her to Belfast Lough. In April 1942 the **Hilary** was paid off and reverted to the Booth Line, narrowly escaping destruction in October 1942 when an enemy torpedo struck the vessel in the engine room but failed to explode. Again requisitioned for service in March 1943, the **Hilary** was converted into an infantry landing ship at Birkenhead, necessitating considerable structural alteration before she was ready to sail for the Mediterranean to take part in the invasion of Sicily (Operation 'Husky') on 10th July 1943, acting as headquarters ship under the flag of Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian. On 10th September 1943, she took part in the Salerno landing, with Commodore G.N. Oliver flying his pennant in the vessel, commanding the Northern Attack Force. Nine members of the **Hilary's** crew were later decorated or mentioned in despatches for service during these landings.

In December 1943 the Hilary returned to the U.K. and was based at Portsmouth until, in June 1944, as flagship of Force 'J', again under Commodore G.N. Oliver, she took part in the Normandy landings. On 23rd June, Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian transferred his flag to the Hilary after the cruiser Scylla had been damaged by a mine. Returning home in January 1945, the Hilary proceeded first to the Clyde and later to the Mersey where she was reconditioned for normal commercial service. Her re-designed passenger accommodation provided for 93 first-class and 138 tourist-class passengers, and following the purchase of the Booth Steamship Co.Ltd. by the Vestey Group in 1946, a replica of the houseflag was placed on either side of the hitherto plain black funnel.

A further refit, carried out at Antwerp early in 1956, included more alterations to the passenger accommodation, reducing the number of first-class berths to 86 and tourist-class to 122; the space thus gained was used to incorporate new facilities. At the same time the ship's hull was painted white - the only one of the Booth passenger fleet to adopt this style. The reason for this was that she was chartered to Elder Dempster Lines for some months to supplement their West African passenger service between Liverpool and Lagos.

On 12th September 1959, the **Hilary's** distinctive triple-chime whistle, so well-known on both the Mersey and the Amazon, was heard on Merseyside for the last time as she sailed for the Firth of Forth under her own power.

The Hilary arrived at the Inverkeithing yard of Thos. W. Ward, Ltd for demolition on 15th September but was soon in the news again when a serious explosion occurred on board the Swedish tanker Saint Gobain, which was berthed alongside her. This caused the Hilary to be set on fire and some of the men dismantling her superstructure received injuries.

'HUFFDUFF' - BRITAIN'S SECRET WEAPON

by L.N.R.S. Vice-President Ray Pugh

Little has been said about Britain's secret weapon 'Huffduff', a term concocted from H.F./D.F. (High Frequency Direction Finding). It was a well-known technical fact that wireless direction finding did not operate on short waves - frequencies higher than 3,000 kilohertz. The U-Boat strategy relied on the use of these frequencies and the boats surfaced to make convoy sighting reports believing that they could not be located. In actual fact, in making these signals their radio operators were often signing their boats' death warrants.

After Britain had lost a vast number of merchant ships and their crews, our 'back-room boys' perfected 'HuffDuff'. Our destroyers and frigates, but not yet corvettes, were fitted with the 'HuffDuff' gear, evidence of which was the parrot cage aerial on mastheads. It was soon found, after using the usual goniometer (an instrument for measuring angles) that the bearings of U-Boat signals could be shown on a cathode ray tube. The bearings were shown as a straight line if in horizon range, and as a shallow ellipse if at a greater distance, say, up to 300 miles. These bearings could be shown as fore and aft of the ship taking them, or as a compass bearing.

I worked on HF/DF callibrations aboard **Hiniesta** for the last three and a half years of the war. The escort to be calibrated would anchor west of Portrush and a motor boat would be sent across to our 'customer' carrying a liaison officer and one or two university technicians with good mathematical skills. There was much small boat work.

The radio bearing was compared to the visual bearing and graphs made on each of the frequencies used by U-Boats. To do this, the **Hiniesta** had to make a complete half mile radius circle round the escort, perhaps ten times per total calibration. The British obtained the German frequencies from a U-Boat which had failed to scuttle herself in time, and HMS **Bulldog** did a clever piece of work by recovering an 'Enigma' coding machine. I have calculated that in the course of this work I travelled over 20,000 miles in circles as sole operator!

In 1941 the Hiniesta was escorting the large tanker Lucellum (of H.E. Moss & Company of Liverpool) past Bardsey Island when the tanker was attacked by enemy bombers and set on fire. She blazed for a week and was eventually towed into Holyhead. The Hiniesta was in disgrace and was laid up at Glasson Dock in late 1941, before she was considered as the best calibration vessel available, being able to accommodate all of the necessary technicians for calibration purposes. She was an excellent weather boat and withstood a large freak wave which approached us from Inishtrahull in an otherwise moderate sea. The Hiniesta was unarmed and had a crew of 24. In 1945 she became the Royal Yacht, carrying King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two Princesses from Lissahally to Londonderry. After the war she became the private yacht of the President of the Liberian Republic.

I started my radio interest in 1922 and had proved at a very youthful age that short wave could not be d/f'd, so I at least knew what it was all about. I remain amazed that the Germans simply did not realise that we had beaten nature! On its formation in 1932, I joined the Royal Naval Wireless Auxiliary Reserve and was made rating-incharge of the small Liverpool Unit as Acting Petty Officer Telegraphist. The R.N.V.R. had its own wireless training unit in HMS **Eaglet**. Members of the R.N.W.A.R. were wireless amateurs to be called up in time of war. We did not wear uniform and the captain of **Eaglet** would not allow us to train there. Service was entirely voluntary until 1938 when Hitler made his threats and the R.N.V.R. and R.N.W.A.R. amalgamated to form the R.N.V.(W)R. and was much enlarged. We could then train in **Eaglet**!

THE SCARWEATHER LIGHTSHIP AND MAGNETIC MINES by Alfred Locke

Scarweather Sands lie across the southern approach to Swansea Bay, extending to a position 6½ miles WSW of Sker Point. The Scarweather Light-vessel is moored 1½ miles SW of the W end of Scarweather Sands. (West Coasts of England and Wales Pilot, 1974)

It was within sight and sound of the Scarweather lightship in 1939 that the first magnetic mine was swept and detonated and the lessons learned on that occasion eventually led to the menace being overcome. After a series of abortive sweeps at various points around the coast, the Scarweather success was regarded by the Admiralty as a really momentous occasion, for until then they were without any antidote to deal with the weapon.

On the outbreak of the Second World War, two of H.M. minesweepers, the **Kennett** and the **Blackwater**, were based at Swansea and their normal duties consisted of daily searching sweeps using the standard sweeps, up and down the approaches to the South Wales ports. At dusk, more often than not, they made for Swansea Bay and anchored under the Mumbles.

At about 9.00pm on the evening of 2nd October 1939 a signal was received from the Port War Signal Station to the effect that the Scarweather Lightship had reported a submarine in her vicinity motoring about seemingly at random on the surface. The **Kennett** and the **Blackwater** saw nothing. However, almost immediately ships were in distress in the area and nobody appeared to have the slightest idea as to what the trouble was. Suggestions of sabotage at Cardiff and Avonmouth circulated, presumably under the impression that explosives were being placed in cargoes whilst loading, for strangely enough it seemed that only deep drafted ships were suffering the reason of course becoming obvious once the cause had been ascertained.

It was not until 10th October that the Kennett and the Blackwater had any idea of what was afoot. About 11pm that evening, while the sweepers were coaling in the fish dock, an Admiralty lorry pulled up alongside with what appeared to be an amazing collection of junk. An officer from the Admiralty Minesweeping Department accompanied the lorry and he wasted no time in calling a conference of all officers and senior ratings, and placing the 'magnetic sweep' aboard the **Kennett**. After four days of trials a reasonable state of proficiency was achieved with the result that at 10am on 14th October, the **Kennett** and the **Blackwater** put to sea for their first sweep under service conditions. The original orders stated: "Being in all respects ready for sea, you will proceed to a position two cables to the south-west of the Scarweather lightship. You will alter course to 234 degrees true, steam for two miles and drop the first dan buoy" The instructions went on to detail the laying of further dans which eventually made a box about eight miles long by one mile in breadth. This was the first area to be swept, and few on board had any hope of success at the first attempt. It was rather a dull day with a slight mist and smooth sea when the sweep was passed from ship to ship; then with tails towards the Scarweather they set off, very gingerly at first about a cable apart, but gathering confidence as they went along.

At the end of the first leg of the sweep a turn of 180 degrees was necessary. The two ships worked back into position, steadying on a course of North 60 degrees East, heading back towards the Scarweather. No traffic was about, other than a small coaster steering to pass the Kennett about three cables to port. Suddenly there was a mighty explosion midway between the two sweepers, and before the water and debris had subsided, another terrific explosion took place under the Kennett's port quarter. For a while there was complete silence; then the implications of the explosions were understood. A third mine detonated between the Blackwater and the coaster, but the only result was a dense cloud of black smoke erupting from her funnel as she piled on every ounce of steam to clear the area as soon as possible!

Within a period of two months, every approach channel in Great Britain was being swept daily with similar equipment to good effect, and the same gear as had been tried and experimented with off the Scarweather was in use until the end of the war in Europe.

TIDAL POWER IN 1895

The famous Irish Mail 'Province' steamer Leinster operated on the Holyhead-Kingstown service for almost 40 years. After a period of lay-up at Belfast, a scheme was dreamt up for her in 1895 to harness the tides of Strangford Lough, and provide power for the town of Portaferry. A thousand years ago, raiding Vikings had discovered the tidal stream which they called the 'Strang-Fiord'. Twice a day the large Lough, more than fifty square miles of it, fills up and empties itself through the narrow half-mile channel at Portaferry. It was suggested that the Leinster's machinery could be removed with the exception of the crankshaft and the paddles, and these could be geared up to dynamos to generate electricity. The hull would be anchored in the middle of the fairway, right in the tide-rip, and free to swing. The paddles would drive the shaft. The scheme came to nothing and the power of Strangford still flows, unharnessed, out to sea.

A CENTURY OF COMPANY STAFF SOCIALS

by L.N.R.S. Member T.D. Tozer

The approach of the 'festive season' once again is an appropriate time to review the ritual of the Company Staff Social

On Monday 14th December, 1896, the inaugural Dinner for the Head-Office staff of Lamport & Holt was held at the Junior Reform Club in Liverpool. Perhaps it was felt, after 51 years of trading, that a staff social party should take place as part of the family Christmas festivities. In 1896 Lamport & Holt owned some 38 ships, and with ten vessels chartered from the Bell Line, operated services between Europe and South America, as well as to New York.

At least 37 staff from twelve departments ranging from the Accounts Department to the Transit and Manifest Department attended that Dinner. Among seven apprentices were C. Sydney Jones (later 'Sir') of the Chartering Department, who seconded the Toast to the Staff, which according to the record, was honoured 'con amore'. He and Alfred King of the Freight Department then proved themselves 'pianists of no mean order'. S.Heywood Melly (later 'Colonel') [of George Melly, jazz singer family] of the Coal and Dock Department, proposed the Toast to 'The Queen'. The Toast to 'The Firm' was drunk 'in very excellent champagne', with musical honours and cheers. W.G.Sprigings of the Insurance Department 'also delighted his audience by the sweetness of his voice'.

Although the menu card has not survived, it is known that the donors of the cigars, flowers and wines were toasted as gifts of the most generous kind. Adjourning to the Music Room, there followed a programme of 'music hall' entertainment provided by the staff. The party pieces included operatic arias on the English concertina, piano and violin solos, and vocalists both serious and humorous. Recitations by seven of the staff filled in the intervals. It would appear that none of the Partners attended, so as to allow those attending to relax more thoroughly. One would like to believe that it was entirely a sober and relaxing occasion causing no interference with work the following morning! There was a generally expressed desire that the Dinner should be held annually.

To be noted is the brief period between agreeing on the date of the Dinner, and the Dinner actually taking place. A hotel had to be booked, the menu printed, the entertainment programme produced and the names of those able to attend collected. The second Dinner was discussed on 18th January 1898 and it was agreed that it would be held at the Alexandra Hotel on 1st February 1898. For reasons unknown, the committee decided that a charge of 2s.6d (13p) should be made, perhaps to keep out the undesirables, although a similar number attended as at the first. The Partners provided the cigars, flowers and wines. The usual loyal toasts were duly honoured. An English concertina and a violin were again played, and with dramatic sketches all helped in the entertainment. The evening ended with the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne'. By the following year a routine had been established; this time the Dinner being held on 13th February 1899 at the same hotel. The menu and the 'in house' entertainment programme indicate that an effort was made to suit all tastes, as the printed menu card indicated.

At the 1904 Dinner, Mr Walter Holland, one of the senior partners, was asked to attend and to respond to the toast of 'The Firm'. He declined, writing: "that you should all of you adopt what has been the previous custom, and feel to be altogether unrestrained in your enjoyment without myself or any one of my partners being present with you".

These staff dinners continued annually to 1912 with two exceptions: 1908 due to the death of C.W. Jones (one of the partners and father of C. Sydney Jones), and 1910. It was in 1911 that Sir Owen Phillips (later Lord Kylsant) took control of Lamport & Holt, so perhaps the staff in 1910 were otherwise occupied. At the 1912 Dinner, (the year the Company was established in the newly completed Royal Liver Buildings), the Lamport & Holt six-piece Orchestra was inaugurated, under the baton of the 'in-house' musical director Mr O. Baragwanath. No further annual staff dinners of this type were held; conceivably the orchestra was not to everyone's liking. Certainly this was a period of management changes when the Company became part of the Royal Mail Group.

After the upheaval of the First World War, life at Lamport & Holt was heading into further crisis but, by 1922, with some 14 vessels laid up, further thought was given to a renewal of these staff socials. A 'Hot Pot Supper' was organised at the Angel Hotel in Dale Street on Friday 1st December 1922. A full turn-out for work on the following day was not required! The usual comprehensive menu was printed, but for the sixty-two who turned up expecting a sumptuous meal, there was disappointment. On the elaborately printed menu all the items were withdrawn except the hot pot, apple tart and custard, cheese, biscuits and celery! A charge of 3s.6d $(171/_2p)$, excluding drinks, was made to everyone who attended. An entertaining programme of eighteen acts and monologues was performed by members of staff, including Norman Sprigings, who later became general manager.

This new series of hot pot suppers was short lived, for it seems that the last was held in the Carlton Rooms, Eberle Street, on 15th December 1926. This time the charge was set at 4s.0d (20p) per head. In May of 1926, some 27 members of head office staff had volunteered to work on the docks during the General Strike, so possibly that December's social was particularly relaxing! Following the turmoil of the mid 1920s, Lamport & Holt came upon a disastrously rocky shore, from which it took some years to recover. As the Company's fortunes were being restored, the Second World War intervened, at the end of which the Blue Star Line had taken control.

It was not until 15th September 1978 that another company function was arranged when a luncheon for 47 pensioners of both Lamport & Holt Line and the Booth Steamship Company was held at the Adelphi Hotel. Mr Edmund Vestey, the chairman of the two companies reported on the past, present and future. This routine of pensioners' luncheons lasted until 7th November 1995.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

NOTICE BOARD

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Thursday, 16th December, 1999 CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND QUIZ (Mike Stammers)

Thursday, 20th January, 2000 WILLIAM WHEELWRIGHT - THE MAN *(John Lingwood)*

Thursday, 17th February, 2000 RISE OF LIVERPOOL SHIPPING IN THE 19th CENTURY (H. Hignett)

'THE MONDAY FACILITY'

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Maritime Museum on Mondays will resume in 2000 as follows:

JANUARY : 24th and 31st FEBRUARY : 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th MARCH : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th

AND FINALLY

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has had a windfall (or a 'landfill') of some £3million as a result of filling in part of the old dock system, particularly at the Prince's Dock and Trafalgar Dock sites. Some 50,000 lorry loads of rubble at £60 a load have been used to fill in the old docks.

The volume of water in the enclosed dock system has been reduced to the point where locking out a vessel at Gladstone River Entrance at around low water presents problems. The amount of water required to refill the lock chamber now reduces the entire system by about a foot: before the filling in of redundant docks commenced, the water level in the system fell by about one inch.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Editor : John Shepherd

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(e-mail: < kingorry@globalnet.co.uk >)

Front Cover : The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's Viking of 1905, from an original drawing by Ron Evans.

Articles for possible inclusion in '*The Bulletin*' are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor. The next edition of '*The Bulletin*' will be sent out to Members in early April and articles will include "*Entry Into Steam*" - an account of Captain F.J. Thompson's service on board the **Ranza** in 1900; a summary of the seemingly insoluble problems of providing river berths in the Mersey; a survivor's account of the loss of the King Orry at Dunkirk on 30th May, 1940, to mark the 60th anniversary of 'Operation Dynamo'; the concluding part of the story of the Light of the Age; and a look at the ultimate fates of twelve 'Liverpool Liners' built between 1948 and 1961.



THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BLOCKADE RUNNER "DENBIGH"

by Barto Arnold

Director of Texas Operations Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A & M University

DENBIGH : Iron Side-Wheeler Built by John Laird, Sons & Co., Birkenhead; Yard No: 268 Official Number: 28647 Gross Tonnage: 250 Length from the forepart of the Stem under the Bowsprit to the aft side of the Head of the Stem-post : 182 Feet, 6 Tenths. Main Breadth to outside of Plank : 22 Feet, 5 Tenths. Depth in Hold from Tonnage Deck to Ceiling at Midships : 8 Feet, 7 Tenths Name and Residence of the Owners, and Number of Sixty-fourth Shares held by each Owner : Fenton Marrynall of Manchester in the County of Lancaster : 64



Robert Gardner of Manchester commissioned the **Denbigh** and first approached John Laird, Sons & Company of Birkenhead on 28^{th} January 1860. After correspondence outlining the detailed specifications and terms of payment, the order was confirmed by Gardner on 15^{th} May 1860 and acknowledged by the shipyard on the following day. The total purchase price of £10,150 was to be paid in five equal parts of £2,030 each, the first instalment being due on 19th May. Subsequent instalments were to be paid when the **Denbigh** was framed, plated, launched and completed. The scheduled completion date was 15^{th} September 1860, exactly four months after Gardner's letter confirming the order. The new side-wheel paddle steamer was assigned the Laird hull number 268.

Correspondence continued between Gardner and Laird during the steamer's construction. The shipyard added additional expansion gear and steam jackets to the engine cylinders, and at an additional cost of £200 installed a superheater to the boiler. The **Denbigh** was fitted with diagonal steam engines and feathering sidewheels in a complex and distinctive arrangement allowing the angle of the individual paddle blades, or 'floats', to be adjusted for maximum efficiency as the wheels turned. Several

atterations were made during construction to the ship's cabin layout. She was originally designed with a ticket office in the captain's cabin, but this idea was abandoned on 1st September in favour of two offices, located port and starboard in the steamer's paddle boxes.

The **Denbigh's** frames were in place by 14th June 1860 and she was launched on 18th August. She set out on her first trial run on Wednesday 26th September. The builders carefully noted that she was completely outfitted and equipped at this point, with her water tank full and ten tons of coal on board. The measured course for the **Denbigh's** trial ran from the Rock Light off New Brighton to the Formby Lightship, a total distance of 8.525 statute miles. She covered the distance in 27 minutes 55 seconds at a speed of 18.32 miles per hour. The **Denbigh** then sailed the same course in reverse, this time against wind and tide, in 38 minutes 2 seconds at a speed of 13.45 miles per hour. Taken together, the two runs worked out to a 'steam speed' of 13.7 knots, with the Denbigh's feathering sidewheels making 38-40 revolutions per minute.

The 'Mechanics Magazine' dated 26th October 1860 contained an article about the **Denbigh**:

THE NEW RHYL STEAMER "DENBIGH"

Many attempts have been made to connect the flourishing watering-place of Rhyl with Liverpool by sea, the connection by rail being complete; but, although these efforts have been, says the Liverpool Courier, creditable on the part of those who made them, the inhabitants and visitors to Rhyl are indebted to Mr Napier for the introduction of a new order of things. "A boat will be forthwith placed upon the station which will do her work well and speedily, and which will open up an entirely new order of communication to those persons who go thither by water." It appears that Mr Napier ordered of Messrs. John Laird, Sons, & Company of Birkenhead, a new boat for the station. This vessel, the **Denbigh**, with her engines, was constructed by the builders already named, and her trial trip took place on Wednesday, September 26.

"The **Denbigh** is propelled", says the Liverpool Courier, "by a pair of diagonal disconnecting engines, of the nominal power of 100 horses, similar to those built by Messrs. Laird for the South American steamer **Inca**, which worked at such a small outlay of coal, and such a high rate of speed. The indicated power is 500 horses. The new boat is fitted with the superheating apparatus and a jacketed cylinder, with efficient cut-off valves, and has feathering floats. In her external form the new steamer is almost the counterpart of the celebrated **Countess of Ellesmere**, which made so great a reputation on the Mersey, and which from her noted doings attracted the attention of a Russian Prince Royal, who coveted the steamer, and who eventually purchased her for a royal yacht."

The speed and sea-going qualities of the **Denbigh** were tested by several runs on the Mersey, which were most successful individually and comparatively. The graceful form of the steamer became thus an object of admiration to the number of persons who witnessed her performance from the shore, and whenever other vessels came into competition with her in speed she left them behind with the greatest ease; the Brother Jonathan, one of the fastest tug steamers out of Liverpool, and the **Prince of Wales**, the Bangor steamer, a vessel of noted speed, being equally beaten in the run up.

George IV refused to trust his royal person on a steamboat which would have taken him to Scotland, but he accepted the services of a towboat for the royal vacht; whereas his niece Queen Victoria would never dream of any sea conveyance which was not performed by a steamer. We regard steam power as in its infancy, and we take the Rhyl steamer as the most modern example of the advance of steam navigation, in which the great principle of machinery is further developed, namely, the making of a pound of coal do more work than before. This is the aim of constructors of machinery, and we find a gradual progress going on in the improvement of machinery, which enables it to be worked at a lighter cost, and which makes a given quantity of coal do more work than formerly. The new Rhyl boat, as we think, is not only to be regarded as a great boon to the station for which she is intended, but she will act as an incentive to other Channel stations to possess themselves of steamers of a similar character. Whether people perceive it or no, we have arrived at an age of marked change in steam communication, and a new class of boats being required by the public which must be provided by steamboat proprietors. The Ulster at 21 miles an hour, and the new Rhyl boat at 16 miles an hour, will exercise an influence far beyond their particular stations, and their individual qualities.

The **Denbigh's** history after being taken over by her owners is not known in detail, but it is assumed that she was for a time running a regular service between Liverpool and Rhyl, in which she was "so favourably known as an extremely fast boat". At some time, possibly in September 1863, the **Denbigh** was taken out on trials again, this time on a run between the Rock Light and the Northwest Lightship and back, a round distance of 32 miles. The **Denbigh** averaged 12.2 knots and it was noted that the small paddle steamer "at her greatest speed exhibited the stability and freedom from vibration only to be found in structures of high class workmanship". A newspaper report noted that the **Denbigh** was being prepared for service in China but this may have been a cover story for her conversion to a blockade-runner. The **Denbigh** had been fitted out, however, with an expanded schooner rig, complete with squaresails and trysails, and this seems an unusual modification for blockade running at that stage of the War.

Of course the **Denbigh** was indeed fitted out as a blockade runner, a fact which was probably widely rumoured along the Liverpool waterfront. The European Trading Company, who planned to run her between the neutral Spanish port of Havana and Mobile, Alabama, was supervising her conversion. The European Trading Company had recently been formed as a partnership between H.O. Brewer Company of Mobile, a commission merchant in that city; J.H. Schroeder & Company of Manchester; and Erlanger & Company of Paris (*Wise, 1988: pp.175-76*).

At about this time the **Denbigh** came to the attention of Thomas Dudley, the U.S. Consul at Liverpool. American diplomatic officials in ports throughout the U.K.

were continually on the watch for ships being converted to blockade-runners or Confederate warships; all took detailed notes on such ships and, in some cases, had them photographed for later identification. The notes compiled by the diplomats were forwarded to the U.S. State Department, which passed them on to the Navy for distribution among the blockading fleet.

Thomas Dudley prepared a detailed physical description of the Denbigh, making a careful note of her deck equipment, rig and colours. Dudley recorded that in 1863 her master's name was McNevin, and said that she was owned by Abner M. Godfrey (*sic*), coal agent for the Confederates in Cardiff. The Denbigh's crew of 20, according to Dudley, consisted of the master, two mates, two engineers, six seamen, seven firemen, a cook and a steward. Finally, Dudley recorded that the Denbigh sailed from Liverpool on 19^{th} October 1863.

On 7th December 1863, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, G.V. Fox, forwarded to S.P. Lee, commander of the U.S. North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, a list of 42 vessels believed to be running the blockade, including the **Denbigh**. On Christmas Day, Lee distributed to vessels under his command off the entrance to Wilmington, North Carolina, detailed descriptions of blockade-runners compiled by the consular officers at Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Southampton and Tenerife. Thomas Dudley's description of the **Denbigh** was amng those sent to the blockading fleet.

Shortly after the New Year, the **Denbigh** made her first run from Havana, Cuba into Mobile, Alabama. She arrived on 10th January 1864, this date coinciding with the new moon. On her first attempt to run out through the blockade, however, she ran aground in thick fog near Fort Morgan at the entrance to Mobile Bay. The Federal blockading ships spotted her and opened fire but only hit her once, with a single shot passing through the **Denbigh's** wheelhouse without causing significant damage. The battery at Fort Morgan rerturned fire, reportedly hitting one of the Federal vessels three times and driving the others off. The **Denbigh** remained stranded on the shore for several days, enduring a continuous long-range (and ineffective) bombardment from Federal warships while efforts were made to get her off the shore. Troops from Fort Morgan were put on board to defend against any Union raiding party that might attempt to interfere, and light artillery was stationed on the beach to dissuade Federal gunboats from coming in too close. The **Denbigh's** crew eventually managed to offload enough of her cargo to refloat her, and she returned safely to Mobile.

By early March 1864, the Denbigh was back in Havana loading cargo for her next run to Mobile. The cargo consigned to the Confederate government included nearly 1,500 French wool blankets and 1,100 pairs of 'best English double-soled copper-pegged shoes', worth in aggregate \$4,764. In this case, as in all subsequent voyages for which the Denbigh's government cargo manifest has survived, the document was signed by the Confederate States consul at Havana, Charles J. Helm.

The **Denbigh** successfully passed through the blockade at Mobile on 14th March and after a brief turnround, sailed again for Havana two days later. The **Denbigh** made four more runs into Mobile over the next four months. Her arrivals at the Mobile wharf became so routine that she earned the nickname 'the Packet', and the grudging respect of the Federal naval forces tasked with her capture. Although when new she was known as a fast vessel, when running the blockade the **Denbigh** appears to have relied more on stealth than speed. On at least some, and perhaps most, occasions the **Denbigh** used the Swash, a narrow channel running eastward along the Gulf shore from the mouth of Mobile Bay, rather than the main and deeper entrance channel. A contemporary painting of the **Denbigh** done about this time shows that her rig had been cut down substantially, with only the foremast remaining. Stripped of all sails and gear, it served only to support a lookout platform. With her low profile and light draft, the **Denbigh** could easily run between the beach and the ships of the blockading fleet and, at night, count on being nearly invisible against the loom of the land behind her.

There can be no doubt that the regular coming and going of the **Denbigh** from Mobile, and later on from Galveston, was frustrating for the U.S. Navy. In the formally worded official correspondence of the blockading fleet there are regular references to the **Denbigh**, which suggest the irritability that she engendered. In fact, frustration over the **Denbigh**'s continued ability to elude the blockade reached all the way up through the Navy's chain of command. The U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, must himself have been bothered by her seeming immunity to capture; in June 1864 he had forwarded to Admiral Farragut a report from the U.S. consulgeneral at Havana in which the latter urged that: *'some effort should be made to put a stop to the career of the Denbigh.* For some time past her arrival here, when due, has been looked for with the same degree of certainty of any steamer running regularly to this port, and so far she has not disappointed expectations'.

The **Denbigh's** seventh and last visit to Mobile came in July 1864, just as the Union fleet was marshalling its forces to seize control of Mobile Bay and close off that city's access to the Gulf of Mexico. The **Denbigh** managed to slip out again through the blockading fleet on 26th July, the last blockade-runner to escape from Mobile. The Federal attack began at dawn on 5th August when Admiral Farragut conned his flagship **Hartford** past Fort Morgan and by dusk Mobile's rôle as a blockade-running port was over, and Galveston alone remained open to such efforts in the Gulf.

By this time, evidence suggests that the **Denbigh's** days as a fast steamer were well past. Two Federal despatches, both written in August 1864, indicate that the **Denbigh** was not capable of reaching much more than eight knots. After nearly a year of operating in the Gulf of Mexico, far from good maintenance facilities and without marine engineering expertise, the **Denbigh** was beginning to show the effects of overwork and infrequent care.

The **Denbigh's** owners now turned their attention to Galveston. At the beginning of the war, Galveston had been a small but growing Gulf port, handling increasingly large volumes of cotton annually. But the Union blockade of Galveston, which began with the arrival of the USS **South Carolina** on 2nd July 1861 abruptly changed Galveston's prospects. With hopes of resuming a normal trade gone, and anticipating a Federal invasion at any time, a large segment of the population left for places inland. Union forces succeeded in taking possession of the city in the autumn of

1862, only to be driven out again on New Year's Day 1863, although the Confederate victory did little to change the overall strategic situation. The blockade continued, but Galveston was too far removed from the centre of the main conflict to have been of much use, at that time, as a port for blockade running. The Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864 changed that situation almost overnight. With Mobile no longer accessible, Galveston became the only remaining Confederate port of significance on the Gulf of Mexico. Whereas only a dozen steam blockade-runners had come into Galveston during the first three years of the war, after August 1864 there was a runner in port almost every week.

The **Denbigh** first ran the Federal blockade into Galveston in late August 1864. Conditions in the island city were already bad and would continue to deteriorate for the remaining nine months of the war. There were shortages of everything - food, fuel, medicine and clothing. Compounding the problems, an epidemic of yellow fever swept through the town in Autumn, 1864. Over 100 soldiers and an unknown number of civilians died of the disease.

In all the **Denbigh** made six successful round voyages between Havana and Galveston. As at Mobile, she managed to slip past the Federal blockading fleet, even though the latter at times consisted of ten, twelve or more vessels. And, as at Mobile, there was at least one close call. On the evening of 19th April 1865, ten days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox and five days after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the **Denbigh** ran aground on a shoal while trying to pass through the blockading squadron with a load of cotton for Havana. The crew managed to get her off by heaving overside 200 bales of cotton, most of which was picked up by ships from the blockading fleet. The **Denbigh** returned to the protected waters of Galveston harbour, and successfully ran the blockade to Havana nine days later.

On the night of 23rd/24th May 1865, whilst trying to enter the harbour at Galveston, the Denbigh ran hard aground on Bird Key, a sand shoal just off the Bolivar Peninsula shore, to the north and east of Galveston. Bird Key was a hazard to local navigation, but between it and the Bolivar shore ran another narrow but relatively deep swash channel which was well-suited to a blockade-runner's purpose. The event was a near repeat of the Denbigh's grounding near Fort Morgan some nine months before, except that this time there was no Confederate battery to protect the grounded blockade-runner. At daybreak a lookout aboard the Federal flagship Fort Jackson spotted the stranded Denbigh, and Captain Benjamin F. Sands ordered the gunboats Cornubia and Princess Royal to open fire. Simultaneously, Sands ordered boats from the blockaders Seminole and Kennebec to board and destroy the Denbigh. The Denbigh's crew, seeing that they had been spotted, took to their own boats and successfully reached the Bolivar shore. Between them, the two shelling gunboats fired forty rounds at the **Denbigh**, although it is not recorded how many shots hit the stranded vessel. The boat's crew from the Seminole boarded the blockade-runner and, after seizing the ship's papers, set fire to her. The only casualty of the operation was a seaman from the Seminole, who was killed instantly when his own firearm

accidentally discharged while he was leaving the wreck. The entire episode was over by 7.am.

The same morning that the **Denbigh** went aground on Bird Key, the Lairdbuilt blockade runner **Lark** managed to slip past the Federal fleet and into Galveston harbour. At the wharf civilians and soldiers alike, all desperate to seize anything of value, swarmed on board her. Even after the **Lark's** master had the vessel warped away from the wharf and out into the anchorage, people still clambered aboard from small boats. Once the ship had been stripped of virtually anything removable, the **Lark's** master stopped briefly at another wharf to pick up the **Denbigh's** crew, just arrived from the Bolivar peninsula and then the **Lark** slipped back out to sea, becoming the last blockade-runner to clear a Confederate port.

The Denbigh's destruction, along with the rescue of her crew by the blockade-runner Lark closed the final chapter in the story of blockade running during the Civil War. The Denbigh was not built as a blockade runner, and did not share many of the common features associated with vessels engaged in that line of work. She was not particularly fast, nor did she possess a great cargo capacity.

Nevertheless, the **Denbigh** epitomized the successful blockade-runner in many ways. She was able to slip through the Federal fleet almost with impunity, and earned the grudging respect of the officers who were charged with her capture. At least twice she went aground within sight of a Union blockading fleet and managed to escape. Her masters often took remarkable risks with her, running through narrow and obstructed channels, and with daring and not a little luck managed to reap rich rewards. Only the **Syren** exceeded the **Denbigh's** number of successful runs through the blockade.

THE "DENBIGH" PROJECT ARCHAEOLOGY OF A CONFEDERATE BLOCKADE RUNNER

The DENBIGH PROJECT is an effort by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A. & M. University to identify, document and preserve the wreck of the **Denbigh**, one of the most successful blockade runners of the American Civil War.

In a way, the **Denbigh** was not really lost. The wreck, stranded on the edge of Bird Key, was a harbour landmark at Galveston for many years after the Civil War. An 1880 Corps of Engineers map, for example, clearly marked the location of the wreck with its name, and sports divers and fishermen have known about it for many years. Yet few people recognised the deteriorating remains for what they were in 1997: the physical remnants of one of the Confederacy's most successful blockade-runners.

The **Denbigh** lies today in shallow water on the north side of Bolivar Roads, not far from Fort Travis, a post-Civil War fortification that is now a county park. The wreck is ordinarily under water, but on rare occasions when the tide is extremely low, the upper part of the sidewheels and part of the boiler protrude above the surface. The wreck was located in mid-December 1997 and recorded as archaeological site 41GV143. Texas Antiquities Permit 1916 covers the investigations.

The Denbigh Project was initiated mainly for reasons of pure research. Nevertheless, education and public-awareness interests were nearly of equal importance. For one thing, students of the Texas A & M University, where the Institute of Nautical Archaeology's headquarters are located, would be able to take part in excavational and training activities close-by, without the cost of foreign travel. It was also hoped to increase the public's appreciation of maritime heritage by press coverage, volunteer participation and other methods.

The State of Texas has several interesting Civil War shipwreck sites including the USS Hatteras, the USS Clifton and the blockade-runners Acadia and Will-o'the-Wisp.

A fathometer survey of the **Denbigh** wreck-site has been conducted. The data shows that the **Denbigh** lies on a very flat, shallow bottom, sloping gradually to the south. There is a scour in the immediate area of the exposed wreckage, taking the general 4-6 feet water depth down to 11-12 feet. The deepest scour is by the aft face of the boiler, exposing just the tops of the furnace openings. The bottom contours have changed substantially from those of 1865 as a result of the influence of a nearby jetty. The nineteenth-century swash channel through which the **Denbigh** was entering the harbour when lost has been filled by current changes. In an effort to determine the extent and condition of the **Denbigh's** iron hull buried in the mud, a sub-bottom sonar survey of the wreck site has been carried out. This penetrated the mud to a depth of about two metres. A full analysis of the data is pending.

Recent work on the Denbigh Project has included digging (by hand) in a few places and for specific reasons:

1). Just inboard of the port side, just inboard of the 18-ft diameter paddlewheel hub in order to take a circumference measurement on the shaft and to calculate the diameter accurately.

2). About 50-60ft along the top of the starboard hull remains, centred fore and aft on the paddlewheel hub, buried about 18-inches, to begin tracing the extent of the surviving hull.

3). Along the longitudinal members heading aft above the engine space in order to trace and record the structure.

4). On the port crank to determine if the piston rod is still attached.

An excellent beginning has been made on discerning the history of the **Denbigh**, her mechanical details and her place in the technological context of the early 1860s. Much was learned in the predisturbance phase of fieldwork, largely by remote sensing and mapping of the remains exposed above the bottom.

The wreck of the **Denbigh** has the potential to produce considerable archaeological and historical information. During the next field season, the Institute of Nautical Archaeology hopes to proceed to the project's test-excavation phase during June and July. Still to be learned about is the status of the cargo and the condition of the fore and aft ends of the hull. Moreover, more in the way of technological detail is wanted, as is evidence about life on board. The results of the test excavations will, one hopes, point the way for further seasons of extensive excavation of the **Denbigh**, one of the Confederacy's most famous and successful blockade-runners.

The Denbigh Project web-site: < <u>http://nautarch.tamu.edu/projects/denbigh/denbigh.html</u> >

From the Editor:

Barto Arnold is hoping the L.N.R.S. may be able to assist him with details of the **Denbigh's** early years before she sailed for Havana on 19th October 1863. The **Denbigh** ran her trials on 26th September 1860 and then was supposedly placed on a service from Liverpool to Rhyl. This would have been an odd time to commence such a service, as the Liverpool to North Wales routes were summer seasonal only, especially now that the railway was in place. Also a fast 'crack' ship like the **Denbigh** would have been more suited to the profitable Llandudno route. Rhyl, with its difficult access and severe tidal restrictions, was usually served by worn-out Clyde steamers. I have checked all the usual sources such as F.C. Thornley's 'Steamers of North Wales' and Duckworth and Langmuir's 'West Coast Steamers', but there is no mention of the **Denbigh**. I have looked further afield to the Irish and Clyde services, and once again there is no mention of the **Denbigh**. So, just what did the **Denbigh** do between September 1860 and October 1863? Any information, please, to the Editor who will pass it on to Barto Arnold. <u>j.s.</u>

THE "ARNET ROBINSON" SAILS ON

The former Liverpool pilot cutter **Arnet Robinson** is still sailing and currently operates as a Turkish passenger vessel named **Fatih**. The **Fatih** operates from Tasucu, southern Turkey, to Gime, northern Cyprus for Fergun Denizcilik. The 'Rough Guide to Cyprus' (1996 edition) says: "Fergun's broken-down tub the **Fatih** (cars carried) is worth avoiding if you have the choice; it leaves Tasucu Sunday through Monday at midnight, arriving in Girne (Kyrenia) the next morning" An overnight crossing in a ship not built for passengers can hardly be comfortable. The **Fatih** was reported in 'Lloyd's List' as leaving Iskenderun (Turkey) on 9th February 1999 for Tasucu - presumably after a refit.

JUST FANCY THAT !!!! RICE PUDDING ON THE MENU AT PORT ERIN

On the night of 1st November 1999 the Coastal Container Line's **Coastal Breeze** was on passage from Liverpool to Dublin in heavy weather and lost four 20ft containers overboard. One of these subsequently stranded at Bradda Head, Port Erin, Isle of Man, and the contents, a consignment of Ambrosia Creamed Rice, washed up on the local beaches. The local coastguard advised the public that taking goods from the container was illegal, and anything removed should be handed to the police.

FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

No: 10 - THE "VIKING" OF 1905

by L.N.R.S. Member Ron Evans

VIKING Official Number: 118604 Signal Letters: H R C S Steel Triple Screw Steamer Tonnage: 1957 gross; 827 nett built in 1905 by Armstrong, Whitworth & Co.Ltd., Newcastle-upon-Tyne Dimensions: Length: 350.0' Breadth: 42.0' Depth: 17.3' Triple screw, 3/sets Parsons direct acting turbines : speed 22.5 knots Owners : Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Limited



The Viking of 1905, from an original drawing by Ron Evans

The Viking and Ben-my-Chree (3) were as well known in their day in Liverpool as the great liners of Cunard and shared the same landing stage. It is said that on some occasions passengers mistook one for the other, but which one has never been clarified!

The end of the 19th century saw a tremendous increase in holidaymakers from the great industrial towns of the north-west of England as the railways opened up access to the ports of Heysham, Fleetwood, Blackpool, Silloth, Barrow and Liverpool.

The railway companies added to this newfound freedom with fast crosschannel steamers to link in with the railways, and posters advertising holidays began to appear. The posters illustrated, painted by artist Richard Oliver for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, in association with the Great Central Railway, feature the Viking (1905) and the Ben-my-Chree (1908) for the Fleetwood and Liverpool services respectively.

Coincidental with this increase in passenger traffic, Sir Charles A. Parsons, OBE, had developed a steam turbine, a new method of propulsion, which was to bring to an end paddle steamer propulsion for fast cross-channel services. The **Turbinia** was the first vessel to be propelled by turbine machinery to be quickly followed by the first turbine cross-Channel passenger steamer **The Queen** (1903) for the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company. In 1904 the Midland Railway ordered two new turbine


Lower profile of the Viking illustrates modifications by the Admiralty as seaplane carrier HMS Vindex

Particulars of HMS Vindex (ex Viking)

26.03.1915. Chartered by Admiralty from the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. Ltd. 11.10.1915. Purchased by Admiralty after conversion into seaplane carrier

Displacement (deep):- 2950 tons.

Dimensions:- Length (bp) 350.4f. (oa) 361.6ft. Beam 42.0ft. Draught (deep) fwd. 13.8ft. aft. 13.6ft. Flight deck dimensions:- Length 64.0ft.x25.0ft. reducing to 9.0ft. wide at the bow. Performance:- SHP: 11000. Speed: 23knots. Fuel: 475 tons (coal). Endurance: 1125 (nautical miles). Armament:- Four 12pdr 18cwt guns (130rpg) and one 6pdr Hotchkiss anti-aircraft gun (55rpg). Complement:- 144 Aircraft:- Forward: Two single seat wheeled Bristol Scouts armed with anti-Zeppelin Ranken darts. These planes were dismantled for rapid assembly and were fitted with floatation bags for recovery. Aft: Four large Short floatplanes and two small Sopwith Baby floatplanes. Modifications:- Large hanger aft and a smaller hanger forward of the bridge. Two electric cranes were fitted aft. Twin masts with derricks forward for plane handling. Lifeboats were replaced with four 22ft cutters and two 35ft motor boats. Searchlights fitted above forward hanger and bridge raised above hanger. Disposal:- 12.02.20. Sold back to the original owners, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. Ltd. driven steamers, the Londonderry and the Manxman, for its Heysham services. The Admiralty also, in its 1902 and 1903 programmes, adopted the new steam turbines for Amethyst and Sentinel class cruisers.

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company carefully studied the performance of these vessels and the development of direct drive steam turbines to replace its paddle steamers. In 1905 the company had seven paddle steamers, all except the Empress Queen over twenty years old, and the direct drive turbine seemed the solution to the problem. The Viking was built in 1905 and the Ben-my-Chree (3) in 1908, in a period which saw an increase in passengers to the Isle of Man from 711,544 in 1903 to 1,152,048 passengers in 1913.

In an appendix to this article entitled 'The Search for Speed', comparison is made with many of these vessels with an indication of where the development in crosschannel steamers was to lead. The appendix also includes further particulars of the Viking from the Company's records. Turbine machinery was more economical in space than paddle steamer machinery, as the appendix illustrates, allowing passenger accommodation to be increased. The Viking had accommodation for 1,950 passengers and 86 crew when first registered; this was reduced to 1,600 passengers and 80 crew in 1945. The saloon accommodation was aft and steerage forward as was standard practice in paddle steamers and this was a feature throughout her long career.

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company placed the order for its first turbine steamer with Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Ltd., Walker Shipyard, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Yard No. 759. The Parsons Marine Turbine Company, Wallsend-on-Tyne, supplied the direct drive turbines. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Ltd. were more associated with the construction of warships rather than cross-channel and excursion steamers and were the builders of HMS Amethyst, featured in the Company's studies of turbine performance. The Viking was the only Isle of Man Steam Packet Company ship to be built in a North East Coast yard and was the only Steam Packet ship to be named Viking. It was more usual for the Steam Packet Company's vessels to be given Manx names.

The Viking was launched on the 6th March 1905 and on trials on the 10th June she achieved 23.53 knots. She went into service on the 26th June 1905 with a maiden voyage from Liverpool to Douglas. The Viking was ordered for the Fleetwood-Douglas service in opposition to the Midland Railway Company's turbine steamer Manxman which ran from Heysham to Douglas, and when the Ben-my-Chree came into service in 1908 on the Liverpool-Douglas service, the Viking became the principal vessel on the Fleetwood-Douglas service. Her three screws were driven by Parsons direct-drive turbines, the centre shaft being directly coupled to the highpressure turbine, which exhausted into the low-pressure turbines on the wing shafts. The nominal horsepower was 1,100 and the indicated horsepower 10,000 which was a much grater ratio than in reciprocating engines. Four double-ended Scotch boilers working at 160lbs pressure supplied steam. The Viking could carry 196 tons of coal in her bunkers and consumed 60 tons on the round trip between Fleetwood and Douglas. She remained a coal burner throughout her long career. Plans in company records



Posters advertising Isle of Man Steam Packet Co.Ltd. services to Liverpool and Fleetwood



Tr.S.S. VIKING and P.S. QUEEN of the NORTH at Victoria Pier Douglas (Ron Evans collection)





suggest that consideration was given to a change to oil fuel in the 1930s, as with her contemporaries, but this never materialised.

The Viking had a registered speed of 22 knots; the Company's own records claim 22.5 knots, and she was known to have achieved 24 knots on occasions. Only some of the Cunard liners and the **Ben-my-Chree** (3) when she came into service were faster; the **Ben-my-Chree** being accredited with 24.5 knots on trials.

The Viking set a record for the passage from Fleetwood to Douglas on the 25^{th} May 1907 when she covered the distance from the Lune Buoy to Douglas Head in 2 hours 3 minutes, an average speed of 24 knots; and completed the entire journey in 2 hours 22 minutes at an average speed of $23 \cdot 2$ knots. On the return journeys on 22^{nd} and 24^{th} July 1907 she completed the passage in 2 hours 24 minutes at an average speed of $22 \cdot 6$ knots. These records stood until the introduction of Seacat services on 24^{th} June 1994. On the 28^{th} June of that year SeaCat Isle of Man recorded a passage from Douglas to Fleetwood of I hour 34 minutes, an average speed of 35 knots.

Competition in the years before World War I became very intense between the Fleetwood and Heysham services. The Midland Railway Company sent its tug/ tender Wyvern from Fleetwood to Heysham each day to transfer passengers to the Manxman on the Heysham-Douglas service, and occasionally the Wyvern would visit Douglas. A photograph from the author's collection illustrates the Viking at the Victoria Pier, Douglas, with the Blackpool Passenger Steamboat Company's P.S. Queen of the North berthed ahead of her, both ready to embark the very large number of passengers queuing on the pier. The Queen of the North became a minesweeper during the War and was lost in 1917.

Profiles indicate how the Viking's appearance altered in the years before World War 1. As built the forepart of the shelter deck was open, but a windbreak was constructed extending and enclosing the front of the shelter deck to prevent passengers being subjected to the strong wind when steaming at full speed. Two additional lifeboats were fitted at this time on a short boat deck adjacent to the after funnel, and following the **Titanic** disaster in 1912 this boat deck was extended to take four boats, as shown in the profile (*as modified*).

On 26th March 1915 the Viking was requisitioned by the Admiralty and purchased outright on 11th October 1915. She was converted to a seaplane carrier by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead and renamed HMS Vindex. She joined the Harwich force of aircraft carriers and served off the Dutch and Belgian coasts. In June 1917 HMS Vindex was attached to the Harwich force (5th Light Cruiser Squadron) and in June 1918 she was assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet (Malta) in the company of HMS Engadine, Manxman and Riviera.

HMS Vindex was repurchased by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in 1919 and restored by Cammell Laird to her original appearance and completely refitted; an extensive contract which included two new decks, cabins and woodwork as well as a complete overhaul of machinery. The work was completed in June 1920 and the Viking, with her name restored and with all her old speed, sailed from Douglas on 25th June 1920 to recommence the Douglas-Fleetwood service. Machinery trouble in September 1925 required her to transfer her passengers to the King Orry (3) and to proceed to Barrow for her winter lay-up. The Viking remained on the Fleetwood-Douglas route until the Lady of Mann (1) was built in 1930, when she reverted to general services although still serving Fleetwood. In July 1934, when at Princes Stage, Liverpool, the Viking was damaged in a collision with the Ulster Queen which was docking into Princes Half-Tide Dock.

On the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939, the Admiralty again requisitioned the Viking for trooping services from South Wales and Western English Channel ports to France, but she did not take part in the evacuation from Dunkirk as she was undergoing repairs at the time. The Viking played an important rôle in the evacuation of British troops from Le Havre and Cherbourg and was subject to many heavy bombing attacks, fortunately without serious damage. On the fall of France in June 1940, she had an unusual mission to the Channel Islands from whence she brought 1,800 children from St Peter Port, Guernsey, to Weymouth.

In May 1941 the Viking was laid up at The Tongue, in the inner harbour at Douglas, and this was probably the only occasion when this occurred according to the Douglas Harbour Master logs. In peacetime the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company would lay up a number of its vessels for the winter at The Tongue, for repairs and maintenance to be carried out by Gelling's Foundry. Frequently to be seen there were the Victoria and Mona's Isle, but the Viking was much the largest ship to berth at The Tongue, and she usually went to lay-up for the winter at Barrow. The Viking returned to trooping services to the Orkneys and Shetlands, and saw some service off the French coast on D-Day, and later on 28th June 1944 she was seriously damaged by a V1 flying-bomb in the Thames.

The Viking was de-requisitioned in May 1945 and sailed to Barrow where she was refitted. She resumed the Fleetwood service in June 1945. She had a major overhaul at Birkenhead in 1949, and over the winter of 1950/51 her turbines were rebladed at Cammell Laird's shipyard, Birkenhead.

The Viking's final passage to Fleetwood and back to Douglas was made on 14th August 1954, and on the 16th August, under the command of Captain J.E. Quirk, she left Douglas for Barrow under her own steam to be broken up by T.W.Ward Ltd, after 49 years service.

The Viking's long association with Fleetwood was commemorated on 24th May 1955 with the formal presentation of the ship's bell, engraved with details of the Viking's services, to the Borough of Fleetwood, and this bell now hangs in the Viking Bar, Marine Hall, Fleetwood.

Armstrong, Whitworth & Co.'s builder's plate for the Viking, Yard No. 759 is preserved in Blackburn Museum.

Shipbuilder's models (as built) to scales of 1:48 are on display in Blackburn Museum and in the Armstrong Building, Newcastle University.

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Appendix:- Further Particulars of Vessels from Company Records:- The Search for Speed.

With the increasing demand for the rapid transportation of mail and passengers, hull design, propulsion and engine development, all contributed to ever faster ships. The introduction in the early 1900's of Direct Drive Turbines enabled the Steam Packet to reach its zenith in terms of fast steam packet ships. The Viking, Ben-my Chree (3) and Manxman (1) were some of the fastest steam packet ships ever built.

The paddle steamers had also reached the optimum in their development, the *Empress Queen* being the last paddle steamer built for the Company and the largest and fastest paddle steamer built for any cross channel steam packet service. Comparison from the Company records illustrates the criteria, which were under constant review to keep in the forefront

of the rapid changes taking place, in the constant search for speed.

History has turned full circle in that today nearly 100 years later similar comparisons might be made in diesel engines, gas turbines, and HSS vessels for the fast car and passenger vessels of the future.

Name	Empress	Viking	Веп-ту-	Manxman	HMS	Ben-my-	Lady of
	Queen		Chree (3)	(1)	Amethyst	Chree (4)	Mann
Built	1897	1905	1908	1904	1905	1927	1930
Tonnage. Net/reg	849	827	1017	835		1043	1258
Gross	2140	1957	2550	2030	3000(displ.)	2586	3104
Under/deck	1597	1418	1733	1413		1824	2029
Dimensions:-							
Length o/a	372'0"	361'0"	389'0"	341'0"	373'9"	366'0"	371'0"
Length b/p	360'1"	350'0"	375'0"	330'0"	360'0"	355'0"	360'0"
Breadth (mld)	42'3"	42'0"	46'0"	43'0"	40'0"	46'0"	50'0"
Depth (mld)	17'0"	17'3"	18'6"	18'0"		18'6"	18'6
Draught (light)	12'9"	10'3"	13'0"	11' 7 '		11'9"	11'5"
" (loaded)	13'5"	11'2"	13'8"	13'10"	14'6"	13'6'	13'3"
Displ. (light) tons	2640	2130	3227	2236		2925	3130
" (loaded) tons		2409	3433	2825	3000	3475	3630
Block coefficient	0.52	0.511	0.501	0.512	0.51	0.55	0.54
Machinery:-							
Engines	compound	direct drive	direct drive	direct drive	direct drive	geared	geared
-	diagonal	turbines	turbines	turbines	turbines	turbines	turbines
NHP	1290	1100	2000	1300		1317	1880
IHP	10,000	10,000	14000	10000	17,500	12,400	12,700
Boilers	4/19.2x16.0	4/19.6x15.0		3/22.0x15.7		4ar.	4nr
Working pressure	140psi	160psi	170psi	200psi	260.6psi	220psi	220psi
Furnaces	32 (3.5dia.)	24(3.10dia)	32	15 (3.0dia.)		_	
Fire-grate area	645sq.fL	590sq.ft.	754sq.ft.	400sq.ft	493.5sq.ft.		
Heating surface	23,516sq.ft.	20,040sq.ft	27,446sq.ft	12,500sq.ft.	25,968sq.ft.		—
Coal consumed	9.5tons/hr.	8.75tons/hr.	11.75ton/hr_	7.4tons/hr.	11tons/hr.	oil fired	oil fired
Bunkers	176tons	196tons	210tons		300tons	oil	oil
Engine/boiler m.	128fL	118ft				110R_	112ft.
Propulsion	paddles	triple screw	triple screw	triple screw	triple screw	twin screw	twin screw
Propeller diam.		7ft.0ins.	7ft_2ins.	2/5'7'1/6'2	6ft.8ins.	—	
Pitch.	<u> </u>	6ft.6ins	7fL0ins.	2/5'0"1/5'7	2/5'9"1/6'7		
Speed:	<u> </u>				L		
In service	20.5kts	22.5kts.	23.5kts	22kts		21.8kts.	21.8kts.
Maximum	22.0kts.	23.5kts.	24.5kts.	23.14kts.	23.63kts	22.5kts	23.5kts.

The Search for Speed:- A comparison of various types of vessels from the Company records.(1897-1930).

This comparative schedule "The Search for Speed" has been prepared by the author from marine engineering records in the Douglas Offices kindly provided by the Superintending Engineer of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, Mr Mike Casey, in October 1995.

Ron Evans December 1999

THE LOSS OF THE "MUNSTER" - 7th FEBRUARY, 1940

by John Shepherd

The **Munster** was launched on 3rd November 1937 and was intended to operate the Liverpool-Dublin service. She was owned by Coast Lines who chartered her to the British & Irish Steam Packet Company.

On the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Munster was laid up at Barrow, but when the Ulster Monarch departed for her war service in December 1939, the Munster replaced her on the Liverpool-Belfast service from 15^{th} December.

On 6^{th} February 1940 the **Munster** sailed from Belfast with 180 passengers. At about 6am on the following morning, when the **Munster** was in position 53°36'N. 3°24'W, some twenty miles from the Liverpool Bar Lightship, there was an explosion which seemed to come from under the port side of the bridge. The fore part of the vessel was lifted into the air and fell back on the water with a thud. The **Munster** had become the victim of a magnetic mine and had sustained a mortal wound in her auxiliary pump room.

Such was the force of the explosion that the compass was thrown out of the binnacle on the bridge and the radio equipment was destroyed, preventing the transmission of distress calls. The master, Captain Paisley, suffered a broken arm and dislocated shoulder. The passenger cabins and alleyways were plunged into darkness.

Meanwhile 'S.O.S.' was sounded continuously on the ship's whistle The swinging out of the lifeboats was not without mishap. Fractured by the explosion, the forward davit of No.1 lifeboat snapped and the bow dropped, leaving the boat suspended from the after davit. The other boats were quickly lowered and the passengers, now assembled with their lifebelts, were ushered into them by the officers and crew. Spare lifebelts followed the passengers into the boats and on the **Munster's** weather side the lightly laden lifeboats were swiftly brought round to the lee side to complete loading their complement. The **Munster's** bar was 'raided' for spirits to help out the rigours of long hours in open boats, and the motor lifeboat shepherded the other boats and adjusted loads. The last act was a thorough search of the passenger and crew quarters to check for stragglers or injured.

Shortly before 7am on 7th February the flares burning on the **Munster** were sighted by the small Dublin steamer **Ringwall** which hove into sight and set about the task of taking the survivors on board. Meanwhile the **Munster**, still afloat, but with a heavy list to port and her propellers out of the water, silhouetted starkly in the pale dawn light, awaited her final plunge. It was just over two years since her launch.

The tragedy of the loss of the **Munster** was relieved by the fact that no lives were lost, either in the explosion or subsequently. Thanks to the magnificent behaviour of the crew and passengers alike, the entire ship's complement reached Liverpool safely on board the **Ringwall** at noon on 7th February, 1940.

The **Munster** was the first Irish registered vessel to be sunk in the war, but De Valera's government made no protest to Germany. The view appears to have been that the **Munsters's** employment between two belligerent ports rendered any diplomatic protest inappropriate.

THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Maritime Archives and Library, Tuesday, 1st February, 2000

Dear Members,

I start this letter by wishing you all a happy New Year and a prosperous Millennium.

I can assure you that The Liverpool Nautical Research Society steps into the new century in good heart and condition with a membership at the last count of one hundred and forty-four who have the widest possible range of interest in nautical research. Any Society which holds ten meetings each year with a strong programme of expert speakers and which has exclusive use of the archives and library of a world renowned nautical museum on forty days each year can only be described as vigorous and flourishing. In addition to a membership which is worldwide, our arowing involvement with the Internet not only keeps us together, but permits the Society to correspond efficiently with its many friends and colleagues with similar interests throughout the world. I think even the Honorary Treasurer would agree that the finances of the Society are in fairly good shape, and as I have said before, 'The Bulletin' is the cement that keeps us all together. We certainly have to thank the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer and Editor for all the time and work they contribute to the Society.

It should be obvious that I am proud to be associated with such a Society.

As you know, the Council of the Society consists of some twelve members who meet between four and six times each year. At present we meet regularly every three months and get together at other times as necessary. The Secretary produces minutes for every meeting and glancing through some recent minutes, the following are some of the subjects raised at the meetings. The provision of 'the *Monday Facility* days' and the cost and the question of attracting younger people to the Society have been studied. A notice has already been produced for distribution in the Liverpool Universities and other places and societies of possible interest. One of the Council members has volunteered to oversee this project. We discuss '*The Bulletin*' and the usage of the Internet has been a subject of constant interest to the Council, including its legal aspects. We receive regular financial updates from the Honorary Treasurer of the financial position, and the overall future of the Society always receives considerable attention. I want you all to feel completely free to ask questions about the proceedings of your Council, and to feel free to suggest subjects for consideration at our meetings. As a politician would say: "It is your Council".

I do wonder what nautical researchers at the end of this millennium will make of shipping of this present day. We have many great shipowners and their vessels of the past to study, to say nothing of smaller individual owners and traders, and our wonderful shipbuilding history. I looked at a copy of the recent P. & O. / Nedlloyd container ship sailing schedule the other day which gives sailing and arrival dates for all over the globe from Europe. It included a list of all the vessels involved and their flag of registration. Some two hundred and thirty eight vessels were named, seventeen being recorded as flying the flag of Great Britain, and I counted only forty-four which even followed to the new P. & O. /Nedlloyd naming scheme. Remembering that ships now seem to change their name and flag with great rapidity, there will be a lot of work for our Society members in a hundred years time !

Looking forward to another very good year with the L.N.R.S. I give you my best regards and wishes,





THE STORY OF THE CLIPPER SHIP "LIGHT OF THE AGE"

by L.N.R.S. Member Cam Ford

(part 3)

On 14th March, 1866, the Light of the Age rounded the southern coast of Tasmania and, carrying a broken topgallant mast, arived in Moreton Bay on 26th March, only to encounter further controversy. A total of 7,381 emigrants was brought to Queensland that year, but the Government was extremely critical of the character of some of the single male passengers; describing them as: 'loafers who had been gathered off the streets to make up the numbers'. The health standards of the ships involved were also brought into question, and, in response to complaints from many passengers about the conditions and accommodation aboard the Light of the Age, the Government Health Officer presented a critical report to the Colonial Secretary on 27th March 1866, stating that:

"the greater part of the poop cabin was allotted to the married couples, of whom it contained nearly the whole. This part of the ship was light, airy, clean and well arranged. The between decks under the poop was on the one side appropriated for the use of the remaining married couples, on the other for the young men. This part of the ship was ill-arranged, rather dark and ill-ventilated. Behind this compartment, quite at the stern, was a dark semi-circular space communicating with the married couples' compartment. This space, although ventilated by 2 bell-mouthed ventilators, was perfectly dark and altogether unfit for the accommodation of the 11 single females who occupied it. The other part of the between decks was occupied by the single men, who had enclosed cabins, 8 in each cabin, with the exception of a few in the bows who had open berths; the latter much better in every respect. Little attention appears to have been paid to the ventilation, and less to the cleanliness. Many of the bunks were, I am given to understand, wet during the greater part of the voyage. This arose from leakage from the galley and the single females' water closets."

Further criticism was levelled at the state of the main deck, which was frequently dirty and leaked water into the cabins below (due mainly to the passengers' habit of washing clothes on deck); also at the male water closets, which had lost most of their doors during the voyage, and were "certainly disgusting-looking when seen filled by occupants"; and at the inadequate size of the hospital facilities. There were also complaints that the Gravely fresh water condenser had broken down on several occasions, but it was later conceded that no real shortage of water had resulted. In addition, several crewmen were prosecuted on various charges of insubordination and stealing.

Dr. Henry Harrison, the Surgeon Superintendent of the Light of the Age, subsequently registered several complaints in regard of Captain Porter's drinking habits and his handling of the vessel, and an inquiry by the Board of Immigration was held on 11th April 1866. Several witnesses from among the passengers claimed that the captain had been "a little excited with rather more than he could carry" on several occasions, especially on Christmas Eve, and on the evening of 25th March, when the

ship sighted the Cape Moreton light at the end of the voyage. On the latter occasion, one passenger testified that, at about 2 or 3 in the morning:

" I was on the poop that night; the second mate (Mr. Orme), myself and the Captain were there. The second mate was looking for a light on the port side. There was one of the crew who came up and said 'Here's light!' on the starboard side. He told Mr. Orme, and spoke to Captain Porter. He was lying on the hen coop. He said that the passengers had had their day and now he should have his. I heard him say that with his own lips. He could not be sober."

Another passenger claimed that, at 7 a.m., Captain Porter was still on deck, rather dishevelled, after having apparently slept the night on the hen coop. Following these testimonies, Captain Porter called several witnesses of his own, who refuted all the charges laid by Dr. Harrison. The next day he countered with a complaint about Dr. Harrison's own alleged drunkenness, producing witnesses who declared that the Doctor:

"....... was frequently seen by the steerage passengers staggering to his cabin from the Purser's Room so often that he became a saying among the passengers: 'There goes the Doctor, turning up his heels again!'"

In its subsequent report to the Colonial Secretary on 16th April, the Board of Immigration stated that, in its opinion, all the charges were: "..... for the most part very frivolous and generally unsupported by evidence" and took no further action - the inference being that such petty disputes were only to be expected among a large number of people cooped up together in a claustrophobic shipboard environment for many weeks.

Whilst all this fuss was going on ashore, the Light of the Age was being unloaded and, as on her previous visit to Moreton Bay, began taking on ballast to leave without cargo or passengers. With no fanfare or advance notice in the newspaper, she weighed anchor at 2.30 p.m. on 23rd May 1866 and sailed in ballast down the east coast of Australia to Newcastle to take on a cargo of coal for Hong Kong. She arrived in Newcastle on 28th May, and, despite the prosaic nature of her visit, the *Newcastle Chronicle's* shipping news columnist was moved to write:

"The Light of the Age:- This fine ship, as beautiful a specimen of naval architecture as was ever witnessed, may be seen in the harbour of Newcastle at the present time. She is 1,287 tons register; length 200 feet, breadth 39 feet and a depth of hold 34 feet.

The Light of the Age, on her last trip to Brisbane, Queensland, brought 250 (sic) passengers. The saloon of this fine vessel, besides being tastefully laid out and conveniently constructed, is intended to accommodate sixty passengers. Purposely constructed as a passenger ship, she has been a great favourite in that trade, during her passages between Sydney to London. Her last trip was made to Melbourne, in the short space of seventy-two days, notwithstanding that she had been very deeply laden, and drawing 21 feet 3 inches. She will leave Newcastle for Hong Kong, and take about 1,500 tons of Waratah coal. The vessel is one of those far-famed Black Ball liners, and is consigned to the house of Charles F. Stokes and Co., of this city"

On 20th July 1866, with an eventual load of 1,525 tons of coal, the Light of the Age quietly slipped out of Newcastle harbour, bound once more for Hong Kong. After discharging her cargo of coal, the Light of the Age sailed from Hong Kong on 12th October, with Captain Porter setting his course for Callao, Peru, on the western coast of South America. Passing through the Sunda Strait on 6th November, he took the Light of the Age southwards down the coast of Western Australia before turning east to pick up the mighty winds of the Roaring Forties which would speed her across the Great Australian Bight and the vast empty expanse of the South Pacific to Peru. The voyage was not to be without incident.

On 5th December, four days before reaching Melbourne on her maiden voyage, the iron built clipper **Dallam Tower** was involved in a collision with the **Light of the Age** off the southern coast of Australia. An eyewitness aboard the **Dallam Tower** later wrote:

"We sighted a large vessel ahead, which turned out to be the clipper ship **Light of the** Age. We were making only 8 knots in a light wind. As we approached the stranger, she appeared to be lying-to. Our captain, thinking she wanted something, drew near

to enquire, but just then the **Light of the Age** allowed her sails to fill and drifted across our bows. She bumped on our starboard bow and then amidships as we slid past. The damage, fortunately, was not very serious. A studding boom was broken and fell on the forecastle among several passengers, who luckily escaped injury."

After a six week crossing of the South Pacific, the Light of the Age made landfall in Peru, finally mooring in Callao harbour on 16th January, 1867. After some time in that port, the Light of the Age sailed further down the coast of Peru to the Chinchas Islands, before setting sail for home on 26th March 1867. She arrived in Flushing (Vlissingen) in Belgium on 8th July before docking in Antwerp the following day. After a few weeks stay unloading her cargo, the Light of the Age sailed for England and returned to Liverpool on 1st September 1867.

Meanwhile, in Liverpool, the Black Ball Line was reeling after the sudden collapse of its London bankers, Messrs. Barned's, on 1st May 1866. The bank had liabilities of almost £4,000,000 and the recession of 1866 had rendered it unable to continue trading; as a consequence, Mackay and Baines found themselves with borrowings and debts of over £500,000 and assets of only some £10,500. From a state of affluence, during which time he had been able to buy five ships for cash in one day, James Baines and his partner Donald Mackay were now obliged to call in the liquidators to sell off some forty of their fleet of sixty Black Ball vessels. The Light of the Age, which at that time was worth about £5,000, was sold to her final owners, Henry Threlfall Wilson & Co's White Star Line of Liverpool - one of the Black Ball Line's main competitors. The Black Ball Line was able to continue in business in a reduced way, leasing back many of the vessels that it had sold, and even venturing into steam. However, many of its American soft wood clippers were by now old and waterlogged, requiring expensive maintenance; and the company was hard hit by the loss of the famous Lightning by fire at Geelong in 1869. With debts of over £30,000, the Black Ball Line would finally be forced to lower its famous flag in April, 1871.

Over the years, the White Star Line had also been borrowing recklessly to finance its expansion, and by 1865 already owed several banks, including the Royal Bank of Liverpool, almost £370,000. Being so dangerously overextended, Wilson could ill-afford his purchase of further vessels, such as the Light of the Age. Barely a year after the crash of Barned's Bank, the Royal Bank also failed, forcing the White Star Line into bankruptcy. The name and goodwill of the Line was bought by Thomas Henry Ismay, whose business acumen rebuilt the company and would ensure that the White Star flag flew well into the 20th century.

On the evening of 12^{th} October 1867, the Light of the Age sailed from Liverpool, now under the White Star flag, with Captain Porter and a cew of 34. She was carrying 45 passengers and a £25,000 general cargo of salt, slates, pipes, liquors and sundries, bound for Melbourne, on what was to prove to be her final voyage. It was her eleventh passage to Australia, and if there were any superstitious passengers on board, they might have seen it as an omen of impending disaster when, just after midnight (on the morning of the 13^{th}), the Light of the Age inexplicably ran aground in the fog while following the steam tug which was towing her out into the Irish Sea. She was soon refloated, however, and set out on her ill-starred journey.

During the voyage, there were further indications that all was not well aboard the Light of the Age. Captain Porter was allegedly drunk when he came aboard at Liverpool, and was frequently either drunk on deck or locked in his cabin for days while at sea; in addition to this he was accused of making improper advances towards one of the female passengers. The vessel's charts and navigation books, being over seven years old, were well out of date, and she carried no proper lifeboats; the quarter boats having been removed from their davits and stowed for fear of damage during the rough southern passage. She had a larger boat (too big to hang from the davits) which was lashed on to the main deck and thus not readily deployable, and a small gig. This neglect was to lead to a further disaster. (to be concluded)

<u>"TITANIC" REPLICA</u>

A replica of the **Titanic** is to be built in Japan as a hotel and tourist attraction. The full-scale replica of the 882-foot long vessel is to be berthed in Tokyo Bay and used as a 800-room hotel and conference centre. A subsidiary of the Hitachi Corporation, which has been working on the project for two years, is finalising the funding of \$160 million and plans to begin construction this year. The replica will be built on a concrete base which has already been constructed below the water line in the bay.

ss "UNITED STATES"

CREDITS AND CORRECTIONS

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE "ROYAL IRIS"

The credit for the photograph of the **Royal Iris** on page 29 of the October, 1999 'Bulletin' should have been given to 'European Ferry Scene'. This is a quarterly magazine for ferry enthusiasts edited by John Hendy, who will be well known to 'Sea Breezes' readers for his Ferry Scene feature of the 1970s and 1980s.

'European Ferry Scene' is lavishly produced in A.4 format and contains a wealth of photographs, many of them in colour, within its 60 pages. Seven articles cover various areas around the U.K. and separate articles cover the Scandinavian and Northern European Scene, the Mediterranean Scene and Industry News. There are regular Special Features including Voyage Reports.

European Ferry Scene' is published by Ferry Publications at PO Box 9, Narberth, Pembrokeshire SA68 0YT.

A CENTURY OF STAFF SOCIALS

<u>Mr. T.D. Tozer writes:</u>

"I notice in the above article published in the December 1999 issue of The Bulletin, a change in the usual spelling of the two names King and Phillips.

May I suggest in the next edition of The Bulletin you confirm briefly the source from which you established this change of spelling for the names of these two men."

The Editor replies:

I note that in Mr Tozer's original text the name 'Aldred King' appears. I see that I have typed 'Alfred' for 'Aldred', but the surname 'King' appears to be correct in '*The Bulletin*'. As far as 'Sir Owen Philipps' is concerned, I can only apologise for mistyping the name as 'Phillips'.

It is editorial policy for a draft of a 'Bulletin' article to be sent to the author for proof-reading. In preparing the December 'Bulletin' I found that some articles had over-run their page allocation and I had two pages left which required a 'filler'. Mr Tozer's article seemed appropriate as it had a 'seasonal' touch to it, and I included it at the last moment and there was no time to send out a draft. The 'Bulletin' is proof-read, but the proof-readers have no access to original manuscripts and so would not be aware of the correct spellings of these names. The errors in Mr Tozer's article are entirely of my making, and I offer Mr Tozer my apologies. <u>j.s.</u>

READERS' LETTERS

L.N.R.S. Member Jim Cowden_writes:

"Just finished reading the December 'Bulletin' (excellent presentation) and have read with interest 'Forgotten Liners of Liverpool' re the Hilary.

Two small points of interest - on page 24 you mention: 'chartered to Elder Dempster Lines for some months to supplement their West African services' This is not quite correct - the **Hilary** was taken on charter to replace both the **Accra** and the **Apapa** which had been taken to Antwerp for the installation of airconditioning throughout.

Also, 'the ship's hull was painted white - the only one of the Booth fleet'. It is my understanding that when Booth Line purchased the **Baudouinville** and renamed her the **Anselm** (4) in 1961, she was also painted white overside.

May I take this opportunity of wishing the Society all the best for 2000."

Francis Kitts of Bolton writes:

"Many thanks for the copy of *The Bulletin*. I was enthralled by the Ron Evans' article on the **Ellan Vannin**. Recently I have been tempted to get the published book by Richard Stafford on the same subject, but the Ron Evans' article is far more satisfyingly technical."

L.N.R.S. Member David Spencer sent this e-mail:

"I much appreciate and look forward to receiving 'The Bulletin'. It's always worth reading many times.

Would it be of value to L.N.R.S. Members for you to publish a list of Members and their locality? I certainly have no objection to you publishing my name and address, but others may because of the Data Protection Act. Such a list would give Members the opportunity to meet up socially nearer to their homes."

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

"In 1987, mainly as a result of the severe contraction of the British merchant fleet that had been taking place for some time, the old established Liverpool firm of nautical instrument makers Sewills, founded in 1800, was threatened with liquidation.

This so shocked the former Liverpool shipping agent and freight forwarder Mr Tom Williams that he immediately set about mounting a rescue operation. His bold and courageous step ensured that today Sewills obviously prospers, witness the enormous range of products described in the many finely-designed brochures now available from them. Not only do these tastefully present the products themselves, but also a wealth of fascinating historical background to them.

Lately came their new brochure on optical instruments and I was delighted that Tom Williams had decided to feature the Sewill spyglass, now 145 years old, which once belonged to my Scottish great grandfather, Captain William Kennedy. Together with a picture of the spyglass is the little story of how his crew presented it to him on completion of a horrendous voyage from San Francisco to Liverpool on 15th January, 1854.

I think the story is worth relating in some way, because I just could not believe that the firm could still be going strong."

The background to the spyglass is reproduced on the following two pages:



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VYXXVW

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((TILEREDOT

"A Gratifying Testimonial "A Graptain"

10. 1854 the стем (голт а Такероо) оклесс аnd registered sating day of Malkae" returned from a long and hazadous voyage of almost 2 vens, including twee set working the following (2 work).

twice rounding the infamous Cape Hom. To show appreciation for their safe return and honour the Captain, they especially commissioned servills to make a spy glass for presentation to him.

The newsworthy occasion was in the Liverpool determy Newspaper of Eriday, 20th January 1854, as follows: 20th January 1854, as follows:

-nondripsmi s'adrosalat arti sew gurwollot artif.

Эннија Пос рихондалов Пос слеве зайса Поа Падирска изъбеа по кай вади а клидет пили. Пос Сариан Падирска апа соида гесовинска Исс ала ве чак ронай од Пили Апа соида гесовинска Исс ала ве Сариан Ка Сариан Пос и Сеснук свест Аос Сариан Сариан Сариан Пос и Сеснук свест Аос Сариан Сариан Сариан Пос и Сесника Сариан Са





Joseph Sewill founded his "Wartiesh Optican" workshop in Liverpool almost two hundred vears ago, five years before Mebous victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

This was the great era of sail, British pioneers and merehants were exploring the globe and expanding the empire which at its peak was to have severeignty over one third of the carth's land mass.

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As Britannic's sea trade developed so did the demand for accurate and reliable cavigational instruments - an opportunity which Sewills mulised to the full. Our range of and releacopes quickly established and releacopes quickly established and releacopes quickly established enternation for upperdiscrable and withstand the upperdiscrable and withstand the upperdiscrable and seaterne forces at sea.

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During Queen Victoria's reign, Sewills quality and precision attracted some of the highest accolades

throughour Europe. In 1862 the company was awarded a medal by Napoleon III at the Paris International Echipunon and also appointed as Maker to the Queer of Spani.

14

Perhaps Sewills pinnacle of achievement came in 1867 when we were invited by the Admiralry to participate in Marine Chromometer Trials held a the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, After rigorous testing, Sewills marigational chromometer No. 2263 came 1st, proving to be the most reliable and accusite. This bestowed on Sewills the honom of accusite. This bestowed on Sewills the honom of beameter the prized legend "Maker to the Manualty"

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And was Sevell's status as natured instrumention had erethat in 1809 we were constructionated to phoshice chemometer 4008 for a new dipper why dimension contering service the Cart Mark and computer helped to enhance voyage muse by facater navigational efficience during the Great Facater navigational efficience during the Great Facater family fund

"A Gratifying Testimonial to a Captain"

"When I inherited a ship's spyglass that once belonged to my great-grandfather, William Kennedy, of Greenock, Scotland, I was intrigued by the ringing tones of its Victorian inscription, with its sprinkling of capital letters, and by the elegant copperplate style in which it was written. The spyglass is a handsome instrument, two and one half inches



in diameter and reventy inches long, extending to some three feet. On the brass slide tube that forms the sun-hood of the instrument are engraved the words:

"Prosented to Captain Konnedy, of the Ship Hallace, by his orens, as a mark of Esteem for his Gentlemanty conduct to them during a royage from Gan Francisco to Virespool, January 174 1854".

Was such conduct by a captain so rare that a ship's

crew would celebrate it with such a handsome gift to him at the end of the voyage? We might think so if we take seriously the writers and filmmakers who have dramatised the seamier side of life at sea in the past. Despite the stern 'Regulations for Maintaining Discipline' of the period - twenty two in all, and pretty tyrannical they sound to us today - it is heartening to think that a captain could inspire his erew to such a gesture.

An interesting discovery about the spyglass was that its Liverpool manufacturer, Sewills, established in 1800, is still active in the port".

Charles Dawson Charles Dawson

Charles Dawson is a retired engineer, born in Liverpool, England, in 1921 and currently residing in Sweden. Since he first became interested in maritime history as a result of inheriting his great-grandfather's spyglass, Charles has investigated the histories of all the vessels in which Captain William Kennedy served, beginning with the wooden brig 'Salur' in which he first went to sea at the age of thirteen in 1829.

Captain William Kennedy died aged 60 and was buried in San Fransisco, a long way from his birthplace, Greenock, Scotland.

> Captain Kennedyt Sewill Spy-Class plotographed by kuid permision of bis great grandum Charles Dawnen (see page 2)

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society <u>NOTICE BOARD</u>

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Thursday, 17th February, 2000 "RISE OF LIVERPOOL SHIPPING IN THE 19TH CENTURY" (*H. Hignett*)



Thursday, 16th March, 2000 "CAMERA TO CANVAS" (Mrs P. Ballard)

Thursday, 20th April, 2000 "CAPTAIN THOMAS PRITCHARD, RNR" (*Ron Dennis*)

> Thursday, 18th May, 2000 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

"THE MONDAY FACILITY"

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Maritime Museum on Mondays will continue in 2000 as follows:

> FEBRUARY : 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th MARCH : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th APRIL : 3rd and 10th MAY : 8th, 15th and 22nd JUNE : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th JULY : 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editor wishes to thank the following for their assistance in the preparation of this edition of 'The Bulletin': Barto Arnold, the Director of Texas Operations of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A & M University for e-mailing the Denbigh material; L.N.R.S. Member Ron Evans for the Viking article and L.N.R.S. Member Cam Ford for the Light of the Age article. The loss of the Munster was compiled from contemporary newspaper cuttings and from Robert Sinclair's book 'Across the Irish Sea'. Thanks to John Luxton for the 'news items' on pages 9 and 25 - visit John's website : < <u>http://:www.merseyshipping.co.uk</u> >

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Editor John Shepherd

Volume 43, Number 6, April 2000



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The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

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(e-mail: < kingorry@globalnet.co.uk >)

Front Cover : The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **King Orry** (3) which was lost at Dunkirk in the early hours of 30^{th} May, 1940.

'The Bulletin' has been issued every two months over the past year to cover adequately the anniversaries of the **Thetis** disaster, the stranding of Liverpool No. 1 Pilot Cutter **Charles Livingston**, and the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**. From June, 2000, 'The Bulletin' will revert to being a quarterly journal. Articles for possible inclusion in 'The Bulletin' are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor at the address given above. In the interests of accuracy, a proof will be sent to the author, before the article appears in 'The Bulletin'. j.s.

ENTRY INTO STEAM

by Captain F.J. Thompson, O.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.

from: Lloyd's Register, 1900 **RANZA** Official Number: 102168 Signal Letters: N M K D Steel screw steamer built in 1894 by Palmers at Newcastle Owned by the Caledonia Steamship Co. Ltd., registered at Liverpool Gross Tonnage: 5,272 Nett Tonnage: 3,434 Length: 410ft Breadth 49.3ft Depth: 32.1ft

In June 1900, on applying for the position of third officer of the steamer **Ranza** owned by the Caledonia Steamship Company of Liverpool, the master asked me if I had ever been through the Suez Canal before. He seemed hesitant when I said 'no', so that I assumed the third officer took the ship through the canal; but I soon found out that he was little more than an automaton, transmitting orders by means of the bridge telegraph.

The **Ranza's** master, Lt. G.H. Arnot, was a keen officer in the Royal Naval Reserve, and with a complement of over 10 R.N.R. officers and men, he held the Admiralty warrant to fly the Blue Ensign. The **Ranza** was a vessel of 9,000 tons deadweight. She was schooner-rigged, with two raked masts and looked quite smart when loaded. She was capable of 9½ knots under favourable conditions.

We loaded a cargo of coal for Colombo which we eventually discharged into lighters in the harbour. Gangs of coolies came on board and discharged the cargo in hand baskets working all hatches, both sides of the ship. The chief officer was the only person fully occupied supervising the discharge, and the second officer and myself killed time by doing such odd jobs as correcting charts and overhauling signal flags and other gear. The boat deck was of wood and with the awnings spread and side-screens laced down, it made a comfortable retreat from the coal dust. After discharging we commenced loading 'gunnies' (gunny bags in bales) for New York.

Service in steam was a gentleman's life compared to sail. Instead of keeping watch and watch, three watches were maintained. Pacing the bridge in a white uniform was very different to running the watch in a sailing ship, bracing yards and shortening sail. Still, sail held a great attraction for me, and I seriously considered asking to be paid off in Calcutta and going as first mate of a sailing vessel. But I was dissuaded from doing this by Captain Arnot who pointed out, quite rightly, that sail was declining and steam rapidly taking over.

After returning through the Suez Canal and sailing through the Mediterranean, winter had set in. The **Ranza** bunkered in Algiers and made the Atlantic passage in 36°North to the vicinity of Bermuda, when we hauled to the northward and ran from semi-tropical weather to the snow and ice of New York.

Whilst shifting berth from a Brooklyn pier to a North River pier on the Jersey City side of the Hudson River, under tow of two tugs, one ahead and one

alongside, we came into collision with a New Jersey ferryboat. At the subsequent inquiry, the captain of the ferryboat stated that he saw the navigation lights of two tugs and thought he could pass between, apparently ignoring the **Ranza's** lights. The ferry struck us in way of No.1 hold above the waterline, damaging several plates. The ferry with her overhanging bow suffered little damage and bounced off the **Ranza** like a ball, albeit throwing many passengers off their feet.

On completion of discharge, the **Ranza** moved to the Erie Basin for repairs, but before we could enter drydock we were frozen in. Consequently Todd's shipyard carried out repairs with forges and other gear on the ice. Whilst in New York the second officer obtained his discharge in order to sit for his master's certificate and I was promoted second officer. The new third officer was a J. Campbell, direct from sail, the son of a parson in the Shetland Isles.

The **Ranza** received orders to load a full cargo of case oil for the Standard Oil Company consigned to Hong Kong. We moved up the East River under the Brooklyn Bridge, thence up a narrow creek to the case oil wharf. It was the practice in New York harbour in those days for the senior captain of the tugs to proceed to the bridge and take charge of the operation. The tug captain in this case was a well known character; he handled our big light ship with a tug ahead and one on each side through the East River, crowded with traffic, and up the creek where we were sucking the bottom. It was so narrow that one of the tugs alongside had to cast off, and take a rope off the stern to his bow to act as a check when necessary.

After discharging the cargo of case oil into lighters at Hong Kong, the **Ranza** was ordered to proceed to Java to load sugar in bags. Our first port was Sourabaya and then on to Banjuwangi in the Straits of Bali at the eastern end of Java Island. This visit to the Dutch East Indian port was quite an event. The captain went ashore and after the usual ship's business had been concluded, he paid a visit to the Eastern Telegraph Company's headquarters where resided the only Englishman in the port. Captain Arnot had a very cordial reception and returned with an invitation to the ship's officers to pay a visit, which was accepted by a small party of us. In arranging a return of hospitality, the third officer and myself suggested holding a dance on board - something with which the captain did not at first agree.

Two problems arose: first, how to find partners in this Dutch colonial town for the male guests, and, second, how to get people from and to the shore in the strong tideway. The first problem was solved by the captain's wife visiting the port and inviting many Dutch women residents and their daughters; the second was solved with the aid of the harbour master who provided the harbour lifeboat which, together with one of the **Ranza's** lifeboats, conveyed all the guests. We decorated the saloon deck under the awnings and sidescreens with flags, and arranged a buffet refreshment bar.

When one thinks of the lonely life these people had perforce to lead in this outlying port which formed the cable connecting link from Europe and the East to Australia, New Zealand and the Far East, one can understand how much the visit of a British ship was appreciated. From Bunjuwangi we proceeded to Tchilichap on the South coast of Java where we lay two miles off while our cargo was brought out in lighters under sail. The native labour brought out to stow the cargo were not stevedores and consequently the ship's officers had to supervise closely the stowage of cargo in all holds, the second officer taking charge of the after end and the third officer the forward holds.

From Java we sailed for New York again and on arrival berthed at a Brooklyn pier. It was the summer of 1901 and New York was all agog with excitement over the international yacht race for the America's Cup. Sir Thomas Lipton had again challenged for the cup and his new yacht **Shamrock II** had arrived while the American yacht **Colombia** had been selected to defend the cup for a second time. It so happened that my uncle, then in command of a White Star liner, was in port, and as he was very friendly with members of the New York Yacht Club, he was invited to view the race from one of the club patrols, a tug chartered for the purpose of keeping the course clear, and he was able to include me in the invitation. It was a memorable sight: the harbour was crowded with all kinds of craft making their way to the starting point of the race off the Sandy Hook lightship.

The American yacht Columbia's strong point was to windward, but some experts thought that the Shamrock II with her greater sail area might benefit by the light wind. She was, too, slightly the bigger vessel and had to give 43 seconds time allowance to the Columbia. The yachts got away to a good start and there was nothing in it for some time, but gradually the British yacht drew away and by the time the mark boat was reached, 15 miles to windward, she had a good lead. However, the run home with spinnakers set proved disastrous. The wind fell light and the Shamrock II developed a considerable roll in the swell - so much so that she dipped her main boom 3ft or 4ft in the water with each roll, retarding her progress. The Columbia gradually shortened the gap between the two vessels and eventually crossed the finishing line within her time allowance.

The Shamrock II moored alongside the Ranza in Brooklyn and one day, seeing a member of her crew on shore, I asked him why they did not top the main boom up clear of the water. His reply was that they topped it up 'two blocks'; apparently no one had thought of rigging an additional tackle to top it up more. The series was won by the Columbia, although in the opinion of many Americans the Shamrock II was the better craft.

After discharging the New York cargo, the **Ranza** was fixed to load a full cargo of rice at Rangoon for Liverpool to the joy of all on board - and we made a fine passage without unusual incident.

I had by now completed my sea time for master and took the opportunity to go to the Nautical College at Liverpool and submit my papers to the examiners, while the **Ranza** on completion of discharge went round to Cardiff to load coal, again for the East. This gave me only two weeks to study and sit the examination which meant one week at school. The headmaster said that this was ridiculous and that I could not be properly coached, but I pointed out that I had been studying at sea and did not want to miss my ship. So I went up the following week and fortunately got through, somewhat to the chagrin of the headmaster. Captain Ellery, the chief examiner, told me years afterwards that there was nothing he liked better than to examine a man straight from his ship. In his experience he could tell, after a few viva voce questions, what nautical school the candidate had attended.

The following voyage on the **Ranza** went well until the chief officer contracted conjunctivitis on the coast of Java; in consequence he was unable to keep watch at sea, and after consulting medical opinion at Colombo where we bunkered, he was confined to his cabin with the ports darkened. The third officer and I had thus to keep watch and watch. Shortly after leaving Colombo the master took sick with Java fever and became unconscious so that the navigation and charge of the ship devolved upon me. Unfortunately it was the period of the south-west monsoon and we had to steer to the southward to avoid its full strength.

Making the land south of Cape Guardafui (Raas Caseyr, 11°50'N, 51°16'E) rather surprised us as the **Ranza** had been set to the westward some 25 miles, full warning of the current having been noted from the Admiralty Sailing Directions. Proceeding up the Red Sea was the worst part of the voyage; the weather was very hot and sultry. On watch and watch, it always seemed to happen that when we were making a prominent landmark necessitating an alteration of course, it was my watch below and I had to turn out.

On reaching Suez Bay I was about 'all in' and it so happened that we entered the Canal at night. Fortunately, the Canal pilot, a Dane, was first rate and all went well. Not so after changing pilots at Ismalia - again on my watch below - for the new pilot was a Frenchman, nervous and fussy.

A medical officer was called to the **Ranza** at Port Said and after examining the invalids he ordered the chief officer home for treatment; the captain was permitted to proceed with the ship but was not allowed to go on deck for some days. We then went to Algiers for bunkers. By this time the captain was convalescent and was much cheered by the arrival there of his wife who had been sent out by the owners overland. On completion of bunkering at Algiers we proceeded to Delaware Breakwater for orders and received instructions to discharge at New York. It seemed that we were becoming a regular New York trader. On completion of discharge we loaded for South African ports (Port Elizabeth, Durban and East London). Then it was on to Karachi where we loaded a full cargo of bagged wheat for Hull.

I now felt that the time had come to give up the 'tramp' cargo ship and join a liner company. After taking the **Ranza** round to the Bristol Channel to drydock and refit, I left the Caledonia Steamship Company.

During my well-earned leave, I learned of a berth as chief officer in the Knight Line (Greenshields, Cowie - Managers) and had an interview with the marine superintendent; the prospects looked encouraging. However, I had received my commission as a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve and decided to make an application to the Cunard Line. I therefore applied and had an interview with the dock marine superintendent. I remember him saying to me: "Well, unless you have an extramaster's certificate, or have held command, or belong to the Royal Naval Reserve, you'll never get higher than chief officer." To this I replied that I had held temporary command during the master's illness, was a sub-lieutenant in the R.N.R., and was then studying for extra-master. I asked what the pay would be on joining to which he said that as fourth officer (actually sixth) the pay was \pounds 7 per month and I would have to find my own uniform. I replied that I would prefer to accept an offer I had received as chief officer at \pounds 14 per month.

On returning to the office of Greenshields, Cowie, an appointment was made for me to see Mr Greenshields, senior. I was cordially received and during the conversation was informed that the company held a large insurance risk on the ship and did not wish to have excessive claims. I was told of my responsibilities, given some good advice and generally taken into the owner's confidence. On coming out of the private office and meeting the marine superintendent, I thanked him for the appointment as chief officer of a new ship building at Barclay Curle's yard on the Clyde. In due course I joined the **Knight of the Thistle** and had my first experience of native crews. She was a shelter deck ship of 6,675 gross tons and capable of a speed of 14 knots. We went out light to the Black Sea for a cargo of grain, although the Knight Line were fairly regular traders to Bombay. This short voyage enabled the ship to 'find herself' and we carried out tests on coal consumption at speeds from 8 to 14 knots. We loaded in Odessa for Rotterdam, from where we sailed to the Bristol Channel and loaded a full cargo of coal for Bombay.

On arrival at Bombay the crew (which was a second-rate one, the survivors of a stranded Clan liner) was paid off and we shipped a new crew. A serang was selected from many applicants and I chose a Mussulman of sturdy physique who turned out to be a splendid seaman and except for the tindal (boatswain's mate) and the cassab (storekeeper), I left it to the serang to choose his men. We carried 25 Lascars on deck. Four white quartermasters were carried and a European carpenter.

On the homeward voyage, having got all the bloom off the steel, we set to work painting ship. However, we had to put into Algiers for bunkers and unluckily it was flat calm when we coaled so that the ship was enveloped in a cloud of coal dust. This was somewhat distressing as it was winter time, and I knew that outside Gibraltar the weather would be foul. Next morning the serang turned to with his men at daybreak and washed the whole ship fore and aft, houses, rails and masts and funnel. In the evening I saw that he looked pleased with himself when he came up for his orders. He proposed that as they had some paint left, they could apply 'one thin coat all over'. As the weather was good the next day, he successfully carried this out. I never saw men work more assiduously, driven by this capable serang - as good a boatswain as I ever met.

During my two voyages in the Knight of the Thistle, I learned from the captain, chief engineer and others that the company had practically ceased trading regularly to Bombay; some ships had been away from home between eighteen months and two years. This did not suit my plans - I was 27 and I wished to obtain the much coveted extra-master's certificate. Eventually I decided to resign, take the examination, put in some R.N.R. drill and join a regular liner company. After completing discharge at Antwerp, I left the ship to carry out this programme. +1 (to be continued)

THE LOSS OF THE "KING ORRY" AT DUNKIRK

A SURVIVOR'S STORY - AS TOLD TO DAVE HANDSCOMBE

Operation Dynamo - the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk - took place sixty years ago and lasted from 26th May until 4th June 1940. The total number of troops landed in England from Dunkirk is given as 338,226 (Winston Churchill : "History of the Second World War"). Of these, 24,669 were brought out on the eight steamers of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company which took part in the operation. Three Manx steamers were lost at Dunkirk: the Fenella, King Orry and Mona's Queen. This article is the account of Able-Seaman Joseph Jones of the King Orry who related the events to Dave Handscombe some years ago.

The **King Orry's** first trip to Dunkirk was made on 26th May under the command of Cdr. J. Elliott, RNR, and she embarked 1,131 troops before returning to Dover in the early hours of 27th May. The **King Orry** returned to Dunkirk in the late afternoon of 29th May. She suffered dive bombing attacks in which her steering gear was put out of action and all her bridge instruments were shattered. In the early hours of 30th May the **King Orry** was ordered to leave the Dunkirk mole as it was feared she would founder and block the approach channel.

As the King Orry manoeuvred away from the mole, Able Seaman Joseph Jones formed part of the forward berthing party mustered on the fo'c'sle. It was about 2 a.m. on 30th May 1940.

It took a long time for the **King Orry** to clear the entrance to Dunkirk as her rudder had been put out of action by bomb damage, and she could only be steered by using her propellers. With the current pushing her back towards the harbour, the Engineers down below in the Engine Room and Boiler Room worked to a state of near exhaustion as they continually put the two propellers either ahead or astern in order to give the **King Orry** some form of steerage. The sea water poured into the machinery spaces through the numerous shrapnel holes below the water line, and it soon became apparent that the pumps were no longer controlling the level of the water. The Chief Engineer, Engineer Lieutenant Cowley informed the Captain that he would not be able to maintain a head of steam for much longer as the ingress of water was in danger of extinguishing the boiler fires. The Captain asked him to keep going as long as he could, but not to put the lives of his Engineers into unnecessary danger if it became obvious that the battle against the water could not be won.

The Captain then informed his Officers that it seemed likely that the **King** Orry would not stay afloat for much longer and that plans to beach her in shallow water would have to be abandoned.

Meanwhile Able Seaman Joseph Jones had gone up on to the boat deck. He couldn't remember why he chose to go there, but at least he would not be caught

below decks if the **King Orry** decided to take a sudden plunge. He checked that he was wearing his life belt and then huddled into his duffle coat in an attempt to keep warm, even though it was a fairly warm May night. As Joseph's eyes became accustomed to the dark he looked around the boat deck and noticed that it was littered with the remnants of battle. The lifeboats hung in their davits, either smashed completely or peppered with shrapnel holes; shattered life rafts sat in their cradles and items of personal clothing and equipment were everywhere. He looked forward towards the bridge, although he was aware that the **King Orry** was no longer being steered from there, but he knew that the Captain would not be far away from its shattered remains.

The boat deck was enveloped in an eerie shadow of flickering shapes caused by the reflection from the town of Dunkirk. The whole horizon was a mass of flames and explosions as the Germans continued to shell and bomb the town's remains. Although he could not see them, Joseph knew that the roads and beaches were still filled with the tired survivors of the British Expeditionary Force and their French Allies, all of them hoping that ships like the **King Orry** would come to their rescue. Suddenly, Joseph heard a roar of steam as the funnel safety valves vented; at the same moment the vibration caused by the engines ceased. Down below in the Engine Room, Engineer Lieutenant Cowley had lost the battle; the water had risen to a dangerous level and so he had ordered the boiler fires to be put out as he did not want to risk a boiler explosion if the sea water flooded into the furnaces. He ordered the Engine Room crew, which included the other four Manxmen on board, to get to the upper deck and to prepare to abandon ship.

One of these, Engineer Reggie Scarffe, decided that he wanted to retrieve some of his belongings from his cabin, so he went and casually packed his suitcase, as if he was going on leave. Up on the boat deck, Joseph Jones noted that the King Orry was beginning to take on an alarming list to starboard, so he grabbed hold of a Lewis Machine Gun mounting to prevent himself from losing his balance and sliding down the sloping deck. As he hung on to the gun deciding what to do next, Joseph remembered that this was the same gun that his friend Ray Hughes had been photographed with a few months earlier. Ray was now safely ashore in hospital and Joseph wished that he was also on dry land. He didn't remember hearing any order to abandon ship, but to Joseph it was obvious that the King Orry was about to roll over and that it was now time to go. He took off his duffle coat and adjusted his life belt, ensuring that it was fully inflated, as he was a poor swimmer. Dressed only in his uniform jumper and bell bottom trousers, Joseph clambered up the sloping boat deck to the port side, having remembered being told not to abandon ship by the side that she was listing towards, in case she rolled over on top of you while you were in the water.

With difficulty, Joseph climbed over the guard rail and fell rather than slid into the sea. Even though it was the end of May, the water was freezing and he caught his breath and took a mouthful of water as he plunged below the surface. It was then that he discovered that the surface was covered in fuel oil. As he spluttered back to the surface, gasping for air, Joseph involuntarily swallowed some of the pungent slime and his head became covered in the sticky substance. Joseph's mouth, nose and eyes began to burn as the oil penetrated them.

Fearing that the King Orry's boilers might explode at any moment, or even worse that he might be sucked down as she sank, Joseph made frantic efforts to swim away from her hull. As he was not a good swimmer he wasted a lot of energy in his floundering attempts and inevitably swallowed more of the oily slime. His clothes soon became impregnated with the oil which restricted his movements and added to his problems. While he struggled in the water he could hear the screech of grinding metal, accompanied by heavy crashes and a hiss of escaping steam. There was then a sudden silence and he knew that the King Orry had gone.

Apart from the sound of distant gunfire, the only noise that Joseph could hear was the cries of men like himself, struggling to stay alive in the water. One of the King Orry's officers, a Royal Naval Reserve Lieutenant, who was known to be a strong swimmer, swam past. Joseph called out but was disheartened when his calls for help were ignored. After what seemed an eternity, he heard splashing in the water and it was a great relief to him when he realised that it was coming towards him. As he stared into the darkness through his oil stained and smarting eyes, Joseph saw a dark shape moving through the water, and then noticed that it was being pushed by two swimmers. The dark object turned out to be one of the King Orry's large wooden seat-type life rafts which were stowed on the upper deck and in happier times had been used as seats by passengers. The raft was being pushed by two Royal Fleet Reservists, one of whom was a telegraphist and the other a seaman called 'Smithy' with whom Joseph was friendly. The two pushed Joseph on to the top of the raft, as by this time he was exhausted by his efforts trying to stay afloat. Once out of the water, the effects of the cold began to take hold and Joseph started to shiver uncontrollably and began to lose control of his actions as he drifted in and out of consciousness.

As Joseph lay on top of the raft, he recalled the stories about German aircraft machine gunning survivors in the water and he hoped that on this particular night the German pilots couldn't see him in the dark. A short while later, a small boat passed by their raft frantically being rowed out to sea by its two occupants. Calls for assistance went unheeded although there was plenty of room in the boat for the three **King Orry** survivors.

After what seemed to be a lifetime, but in reality was only an hour or two, the life raft was suddenly illuminated by a shaded searchlight and the thumping sound of a steam reciprocating engine became audible. The next thing that Joseph recalled was a ship's side suddenly looming up alongside the life raft, and being grabbed by strong hands and pulled on board the vessel which turned out to be the trawler **Lord Collingwood**. Joseph was cold and stiff and initially couldn't help himself. Two crewmen from the trawler stripped off all of his oil-sodden uniform and wiped as much of the oil off him as they could before wrapping him in a dry blanket and giving him a mug of hot tea. His two comrades from the life raft received similar treatment. The hot tea warmed Joseph, but the oil that he had swallowed earlier reacted with it and he thought that he was going to be sick, although the nausea soon passed.

As Joseph began to recover from his ordeal, he began to realise just how lucky he was to be alive. The Lord Collingwood was crowded with seamen and soldiers, all looking tired and exhausted. He didn't recognise any other members of the King Orry's crew and began to fear that there were no other survivors. He heard later that nearly all the crew had been picked up. The trawler continued to move slowly through the dark oily water, occasionally illuminating swimmers with her searchlight before hauling them on board. Suddenly the searchlight illuminated two men who appeared to be walking on the water, but as the Lord Collingwood drew towards them, their saintly image gave way to that of two men dressed in tan Naval duffle coats. Joseph immediately recognised them as Lt.Cdr. Elliott, the King Orry's Commanding Officer, and the 'Buffer' (Chief Boatswain's Mate). They were picked up by the trawler's boat and once they were on board he noticed that apart from their feet, they were both bone dry. They had both been standing on a high point on the King Orry's superstructure, probably the remains of her shattered bridge, which had remained above the water. Before the Lord Collingwood withdrew from the wreck site she swept the area with her searchlight and it was very eerie to see the funnel and foremast of the King Orry protruding above the water.

Dawn was now beginning to approach and as the Lord Collingwood already had dozens of exhausted survivors from both the Navy and the Army on board, her captain decided to seek the relative safety of the open sea. As she headed away from the beach the old 'V and W' class destroyer HMS Vivacious approached and offered to transfer the survivors. The offer was accepted and the men quickly boarded the warship. As soon as the last man had clambered on board, HMS Vivacious sped away from the French coast and made for Dover and the safety of English soil. The Lord Collingwood returned to the beaches to continue her rescue work.

HMS Vivacious was attacked by German aircraft and bombed as she charged homewards across the English Channel. This was an all too familiar experience for the King Orry's survivors, but due to the expert seamanship and ship handling demonstrated by the destroyer's crew, she managed to avoid all of the bombs, suffering no damage or casualties. Shortly after 11 a.m. on 30th May 1940, HMS Vivacious tied up in Dover Harbour and quickly unloaded her human cargo. The Royal Navy survivors were all taken to Ramsgate where they were given food and dry clothing to replace the blankets and remnants of uniform that some were still wearing. Towards the end of the afternoon they were given orders to report to Portsmouth and were put on a train. A pleasant surprise awaited Joseph when he arrived in London - he was taken to the Union Jack Club just outside Waterloo Station to spend the night. However, he was far too exhausted to even consider exploring the Club to see if any of the bars were open! After breakfast on 31^{sh} May, Joseph and his fellow survivors boarded a special troop train for Portsmouth, where

they arrived at 11.30 am. Having had his personal details recorded by the drafting service, Joseph was informed that he had been granted 14 days survivor's leave and given a railway warrant. He caught the 5.40 pm train from Portsmouth for London and then the 9.20 pm from Euston to Chester. This arrived in Chester at 3 am. and Joseph then had the problem of reaching his home in Connah's Quay, Deeside. He was fortunate in getting a lift and an hour later, just 48 hours after jumping for his life from the listing decks of the **King Orry** at Dunkirk, Joseph Jones was walking up the road to his house.

Able Seaman Joseph Jones had endured the ordeal of battle and shipwreck, but had survived to tell the tale. When he related his experiences to his family they were shocked but proud, for they had no idea that he had been involved in the carnage of the Dunkirk evacuation, and had not been informed that his ship had been sunk.

> See also : 'The Royal Daffodil at Dunkirk' - The Bulletin, Vol.41, No.1, Summer 1997, p.18, and 'The Tynwald at Dunkirk' -The Bulletin, Vol.42, No.2, Autumn 1998, p.61.

Captain J.E. Quirk was Master of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Fenella** (built 1936) when she was bombed and sunk as she lay alongside the mole at Dunkirk at 17.00 on 29th May 1940. She had 650 troops on board when a force of German aircraft bombed the pier with such effect that heavy stone portions crashed into the side of the **Fenella**, and her engine room was flooded, causing her to settle on an even keel. Captain Quirk and the **Fenella**'s crew, along with the troops on board, were able to escape before she sank and took refuge in the General Steam Navigation Company's **Crested Eagle**, but she too was bombed and sunk, this time with loss of life among the **Fenella's** crew. The Liverpool and North Wales Steamship Company's **St.Seiriol** rendered all possible assistance and took on many survivors, but Captain Quirk managed to swim ashore.

That evening, Captain Quirk and his second officer, Mr A.W.G. Kissack (who in the 1970s became Commodore and later Marine Superintendent of the IOMSPCo.), came across a group of soldiers endeavouring to prepare a ship's lifeboat for the Channel crossing. Considering this to be seamen's work, they took charge of the venture and set off again for home. During the crossing they were sighted by the sloop **Mosquito** which bore down on them and took them on board and soon landed them at Dover. Captain Quirk later recalled that the **Mosquito** was later bombed and sunk with great loss of life.

There was a popular myth at one time that the Fenella was raised when the mess of Dunkirk was being cleared, and that the ship was brought into harbour and eventually towed away. The myth continued that the Fenella was repaired, renamed **Reval**, and that the Germans used her as a troopship between Baltic ports and Norway. Research in the German Naval Archives, however, shows that the Fenella was broken up where she lay. <u>j.s.</u>

THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING A RIVER BERTH ON THE MERSEY

by John Shepherd

Ferry services from the Mersey to Dublin and Belfast have expanded massively in the 1990s and in April, 2000 the Cenargo Group operates the fast modern ro-pax vessels Lagan Viking and Mersey Viking on the Liverpool-Belfast service (formerly Norse Irish Ferries), and the Dawn Merchant and the Brave Merchant on the Liverpool-Dublin service. Peninsular and Oriental have the European Leader and the European Envoy on the Liverpool-Dublin route, and whilst these two are not in the same league as the Cenargo vessels, P. & O. is building a 35,000 ton 400 passenger ro-pax vessel which will be in operation by January 2001. All these services have one common problem and that is the lack of provision of a river berth in the Mersey, necessitating locking in or out of the Gladstone or Langton river entrances on every crossing. When sailing or arrival times coincide with low water, over an hour is required to pass through from the Mersey into the enclosed dock system.

Liverpool has the fourth largest tidal range in the world after the Bay of Fundy, Newfoundland, the Bristol Channel and the Rance estuary in Brittany. Extreme spring tides at Liverpool have a range of 10.4 metres (34.12 feet). These tides necessitated building the enclosed dock system to provide a stable level of water and as protection from the prevailing westerlies which bring the strongest gales and heaviest swells to the Mersey. However it was recognised from the 1850s that a 'river berth' was necessary for the cross-river ferry traffic and this resulted in the construction of the George's Stage at the Pier Head. Twenty years later the Prince's Landing Stage was added, producing a floating structure 772 metres long. This accommodated the ocean liners whilst they were embarking or landing passengers, and local passenger traffic such as the Isle of Man and North Wales steamers. The Irish traffic used the Prince's Dock and to speed up operations the Waterloo River Entrance was opened in 1949 to provide access at all states of the tide. This was only 20 metres wide and up to the mid 1970s vessels such as the Belfast Steamship Company's Ulster Prince and Ulster Queen were built to 'Waterloo Lock dimensions'. The lock closed on 31st December 1983, by which time the old landing stage had been demolished and replaced by a much smaller stage capable of accommodating the Mersey ferries and the side-loading Isle of Man vessels.

The need for a 'river berth' was evident by the end of the 1980s and a scheme was proposed whereby the Waterloo Lock (by now filled in with rubble) would be equipped with a linkspan. Vessels would back up to the linkspan and moor to dolphins outside the lock entrance. The scheme came to nothing as the maximum beam of any vessel using the facilty would be restricted to 20 metres (the new **Ben-my-Chree** is 23.40 metres). A feasibility study was carried out to look at the possibility of adapting

the landing stage, but since the removal of the 'floating roadway', which provided a gradual gradient to the stage at low tide, the remaining connecting bridges were a) too steep at low water and b) too fragile for heavy lorries. There was also no room for marshalling or manoeuvre once on the stage.

In the early 1990s the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company (MDHC) sold about 26 acres of derelict Wirral dockland to the the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC). This was a government agency charged with regenerating areas of rundown Merseyside. The area in question was to the south of the Alfred Basin, covering the Wallasey, Morpeth and Egerton dock areas, known locally as 'Twelve Quays'. In October 1993 the MDC proposed the creation of a roll-on roll-off ferry terminal on the site. About two-thirds of the Wallasey Dock would be filled in to provide access and a marshalling area, and the terminal itself would be in the same position as the old Wallasey Cattle Stage, long since demolished. Two roll-on, roll-off ferries could be worked simultaneously at the new terminal.

Chris Farrow, the MDC's chief executive announced in December 1993 that bids to build the new terminal had to be in by the end of February 1994. One of these came from the MDHC, but in March 1994 the MDC selected two London property companies to develop the site. The MDHC bid was rejected as it involved using the southern section of the site which the MDC wished to retain for a mixture of commercial and residential uses. However the accepted bid from Capital & Regional Properties was dependent on a grant of £8million from European Objective One funding. The terminal, once completed, would be operated by Forth Ports.

Just over a year later, in July 1995, the MDHC announced plans for its own river terminal at Trafalgar Dock, about three-quarters of a mile to the north of Liverpool's Pier Head. Unlike the Twelve Quays scheme which required European funding, the MDHC would finance its scheme out of its own resources. Trevor Furlong, chief executive of the MDHC insisted the Trafalgar Dock site is: 'superbly located and commercially realistic'. Some eighteen months later, in November 1996, the scheme hit problems following objections from the MDC and the residents of the Waterloo Warehouse flats and it was announced that the Sectretary of State had indicated that a public inquiry would have to be held. This would have the effect of delaying the Trafalgar Dock scheme by at least twelve months. Meanwhile, across the Mersey at Twelve Quays, the £8million requested from Merseyside's Objective One programme had been refused and the application was scaled down to £4million.

The proposed schemes were now turning into farce and fiasco. The Liverpool Ship Owners' and Port Users' Association was becoming increasingly frustrated and on 3rd February 1997 wrote to the 'Liverpool Daily Post': 'We urge the decision makers to have due regard to and consider closely the consequences of on-going delays to the project which will be to the serious detriment of ferry operators, hauliers and the wider business community.'

By April 1997, the MDC had admitted defeat as lack of any Objective One Funding had effectively 'scuttled' its Twelve Quays scheme at Birkenhead. Peter Jones, MDHC port operations manager, announced: 'Trafalgar Dock on the Liverpool



side of the river has always been the preferred site for a river berth among ferry companies and haulage firms.' Some five months later, in September 1997, the MDHC announced that it had bought out Capital and Regional Properties' stake in the Twelve Quays scheme and Peter Jones now proclaimed: 'this site is the best in the country for such a terminal' - well, just fancy that ! The MDHC now recognised the pressing need for river terminals on both sides of the Mersey.

In December 1997 a drilling rig was at work at the site off the Twelve Quays terminal collecting data on the composition of the river bed for civil engineers charged with designing the mooring posts against which the vessels will lie. A similar exercise had already been completed off Trafalgar Dock. A month later, in January 1998, transport minister Glenda Jackson gave the go-ahead for the Twelve Quays terminal and rejected the single objection lodged against the plan. The MDHC said it had earmarked a total of £35million for the development of the Twelve Quays site and a matching terminal at Trafalgar Dock. However, the MDHC wished to issue a single contract for the construction of both terminals and tender details had already been issued throughout Europe.

Meanwhile, back to the public inquiry over the Trafalgar Dock site. Another year of inactivity passed and in January 1999 the MDHC called on Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott to put the inquiry on ice while it looked at an alternative site at Langton Dock, a mile or so to the north of Trafalgar Dock. MDHC chief executive Eric Leatherbarrow said: 'We've requested a postponement of the public inquiry into the Trafalgar Dock river terminal for a feasibility study to take place to determine whether Langton Dock is a suitable site'.

At the start of the 21st Century the situation remains the same. No work has commenced on either terminal and one gets the impression of 'raging apathy and lethargy' on the part of the MDHC, with a total lack of will to proceed. There really is no alternative to Liverpool for the ferry operators as Heysham is working to capacity and Fleetwood is not a viable option. A new £30million deep-water berth at Mostyn on the Dee is under construction, but this is hardly likely to be an attractive option.

When Norse Irish upgraded its service with two new ships in 1997, a joint press conference was held with the MDHC to announce both the new service and plans for the river berths. An MDHC spokesman said he hoped the river berths would be available by the summer of 1998 or at the latest, early 1999. At that stage Norse Irish was indicating that daytime sailings would commence when the river berths became available. In the event daytime sailings were offered from mid-March 1998 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays only. Daily daytime sailings are not possible because of the time lost passing through the Langton Lock. Merchant Ferries may well have an interesting case from a legal point of view; the MDHC was, at one point, a minority shareholder in Cenargo and it was during the period of 'joint ownership' that the decision was taken to operate a Liverpool-Dublin service and the new ships ordered. The MDHC sold out before this actually came into being, but it was written into the terms of the sale that the Liverpool service would still go ahead. It would seem
strange if there was not an agreement for the MDHC to provide facilities, but no doubt some 'get-out clause' was incorporated in the agreement. The **Dawn Merchant** and the **Brave Merchant** are fast ships but can only operate two Liverpool-Dublin crossings a day because of the time lost in locking in and out. With a river terminal three crossings a day would be possible.

The fact remains that Liverpool has a monopoly. Faced with a similar scenario, ports such as Southampton and Portsmouth have to watch their actions - a failure to modernise automatically loses the customer to the other port. At the end of the day, the Mersey river berths have still not been built and services are being handicapped as a result. Which isn't good enough!

Since this article was written, further delays and policy changes have occurred please refer to 'Loose Ends', on page 33 of this 'Bulletin'. j.s.



The Alexandra Towing Company's Hornby approaching Gladstone River Entrance. Built at Selby in 1936, she was broken up at Dalmuir in 1968.

THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Maritime Archives and Library, Ist April, 2000

Dear Members,

It seems to me that many people of about my age have recently invested in a computer and I joined the throng a few weeks ago. A psychologist might want to tell us that we do it only to keep up with the younger gereration, and certainly we do not want to be left behind, but we have simply discovered a marvellous tool and in addition it is FUN !! From the beginning my computer has almost taken over my life from the moment it arrived in nine boxes, followed by the excitement of coupling it all together. I have had a very steep learning curve getting more into my head in the last four weeks than in many previous years. I still have very much to learn and it will take me a long time to master it all as every time I use the machine I am left with at least one other question. I find at idle moments my mind quickly returns to the computer, no matter where, and I start to wonder how I can do 'so and so'; or why does the computer do 'so and so'? I must not become a computer bore and so as before I will just say it is FUN !!

Towards the end of February our Society was invited to participate in the Local History Exhibition to be held in the St. George's Hall in Liverpool on 5th March. The Council quickly agreed to accept the invitation as it would help to bring the work and aims of the Society into the eye of the public. Many volunteers from the Society soon offered to help to man the stand and also to provide items of interest which could be displayed. Harry Hignett designed and produced a fine wooden backdrop for our exhibit. A similar exhibition had been held last year in Liverpool Town Hall which was so well attended that the larger venue of St. George's Hall was chosen for this year. However, the exhibition this year attracted many more people with the queue of those waiting to get in at one stage stretching half way round the outside of the Hall, and together with the multitude inside it was obvious that the event was again a huge success.

Our stand was as popular as all the others and we met many old friends and made many new friends during the day. We had gone well equipped with copies of 'The Bulletin', the Society's Diamond Jubilee Book, copies of the future programme and application forms, and I am sure that this will lead to many new members joining the Society. The exhibition was such a success that it is to be held again within a year and will be open over a whole weekend instead of just a Sunday. I feel sure that the Society should again participate and we shall have more time to prepare and expand our exhibits and stand. The Liverpool Nautical Research Society has also been represented on Radio Merseyside as in February the Society was invited to contribute speakers to the Sunday afternoon programme 'All At Sea'. On 20th February Michael McClory talked about Ellerman Papayani Lines, and I spoke about Thos. & Jas. Harrison Ltd. On the following Sunday our Editor John Shepherd talked at length about the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, and whilst the series has now come to an end, there is to be another in the Autumn and the Society has been invited to provide regular speakers for the thirteen week run. There are a number of members who are both willing and able to contribute and the suggestion has yet to be fully discussed by the Council. The programme 'All At Sea' covers the general subject of the sea and ships of the Mersey, together with the docks and shipbuilding etc. It is not involved directly with nautical research but it is a medium which will make the Society better known to the general public. Even during the exhibition at St. George's Hall, 'All At Sea' was again 'on the air' and Secretary John Tebay and I were able to briefly further the name of our Society.

I am therefore able to report that in addition to the excellent meetings of 17th February and 16th March, the Society has been busy in other ways.

With my best regards



JUST FANCY THAT !!!

There was a time in the 1930s when vistors to the Dorset resort of Weymouth discovered that the Red Funnel paddle steamer Queen had been replaced by an absolutely identical vessel called the Mauretania. What then, had happened to the Queen, and how on earth had a little paddle steamer come to be given such a grand name as 'Mauretania', once borne by arguably the most famous Atlantic liner of all time?

The visitors' questions were soon answered. Nothing had happened to the **Queen** except that her identity had been changed so that the name 'Mauretania' could be kept in reserve for the new Cunard liner being built at Birkenhead. Under this arrangement between Cunard and Red Funnel Steamers, the Wessex **Mauretania** returned to her modest identity in the summer of 1938 when Cammell Laird launched the new **Mauretania** for Cunard.

THE STORY OF THE CLIPPER SHIP "LIGHT OF THE AGE"

by L.N.R.S. Member Cam Ford conclusion - the stranding and loss of the Light of the Age

On 9th December 1867, during rough weather in the 'Roaring Forties' south of the Cape of Good Hope, the Light of the Age had four men aloft furling the royals. A broken stay resulted in the loss of the fore-top mast and main royal mast, and three of the four men were swept overboard, whilst the fourth was badly injured. Lifebelts were thrown to the men, but rough seas and the damaged rigging fouling the foreyard made it impossible to turn the ship around. Since the large boat would have taken too long to deploy, the gig was hung out and made ready to launch, but as conditions were by then considered to be too dangerous, the attempt was abandoned. The sad result was that the three men were lost. The damaged rigging took a week to repair, during which time Captain Porter remained drunk in his cabin while Mr Hastings, the Chief Officer, navigated the vessel. By mid-January 1868, the Light of the Age was heading east into the Bass Strait, sighting King Island on 14th January, and soon after, the grim 'Shipwreck Coast' of southern Victoria; a rugged length of shoreline which over the years has gained the reputation of having claimed a ship for every one of its 1,200 kilometres.

Cape Otway was passed at about 8 p.m. on Wednesday 15th January and, as the Light of the Age approached Port Phillip Heads later in the evening, the weather became thick and hazy with poor visibility. A more prudent master would have stood out to sea until daylight, but Captain Porter had apparently been under the influence of alcohol since noon; and rumour had it that he was engaged in a race against the skipper of the **Dover Castle** to be the first to arrive at Melbourne.

At about 11 p.m. the lookout on the Light of the Age spotted a bright fixed light on shore, and reported it to Captain Porter. It was the new warning lighthouse on Point Lonsdale (erected in 1863); but, as it was not shown on the captain's outdated charts, he assumed that it was one of the leading lights on the Heads at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay (which actually lay further to the east). Captain Porter ordered the helmsman to steer NE by N towards it, keeping watch for the presumed second leading light. So sure was Captain Porter that he was on course, he neglected to call for soundings with the lead, which would have warned him that the water was rapidly shoaling and that his ship was in imminent danger of running aground. The Light of the Age spent the next two hours tacking towards the light at about 4 knots, and signalling for a pilot at intervals with the appropriate blue lights.

At about midnight, the crew of the pilot schooner **Rip**, which was patrolling the mid-channel of the real entry into Port Phillip, finally spotted the distant blue lights of the **Light of the Age** far to the west, and realised that they came from a vessel which was well off course. The **Rip** began chasing after her, trying to attract her attention by flashing white lights every five minutes. The watch on the **Light of the** Age saw these signals briefly through the thick mist and reported them to Captain Porter. Certain that his northerly course was taking him safely into Port Phillip, and not expecting to see a pilot ship approaching from the east, Captain Porter dismissed the lights as probably those of another vessel well out to sea (the **Dover Castle**, perhaps?); instructed the helmsman to continue on his course, and to keep signalling ahead for a pilot. He then went below to his cabin, unaware that the Light of the Age was by now well out of safe navigation channels and heading for disaster.

Just before 1 a.m. on Thursday 16th January 1868 the fog lifted sufficiently for the watch to see that the ship was not entering Port Phillip as believed, but was instead steering dangerously close to the shore. Captain Porter was urgently called on deck, and he immediately ordered all hands to put the ship about, but in the confusion the manoeuvre was ineptly executed. The Light of the Age missed stays and began to drift broadside on towards the rocks. There was still time to save her by letting go both anchors, but the captain delayed too long in giving the order, and then only deployed one anchor. It was too little, too late, and at about 1.30 a.m. the Light of the Age ran aground, some four miles east of Ocean Grove. Captain Porter ordered the crew to fire signal guns, distress flares and rockets, and to get out the quarter boats, which had fortunately been reswung on their davits only two days previously.

At around 1.45 a.m. the **Rip** arrived on the scene and hove to at a safe distance from the Light of the Age, sending her two boats across with the pilots. After discussing the problem with Captain Porter they concluded that, as the weather was calm, the Light of the Age was probably not in any immediate danger, and the captain requested that the **Rip** should sail for Queenscliffe to telegraph for a steam tug to haul her off. The pilots returned to the **Rip** and Captain Porter ordered all the masts cut away to relieve the strain on the hull. At about 2.30 a.m. the pilots changed their minds and came back on board the Light of the Age to advise Captain Porter that, as the vessel was by now shipping water badly, and that as there was a possibility that the weather might soon deteriorate, it would be prudent to transfer the passengers and their luggage to the **Rip**. This was accomplished, using the **Rip's** two boats and two of the lifeboats from the stricken vessel. Captain Porter, eight of his crew, the pilots and a few passengers stayed on board to await the Lloyd's agent.

At around 4.30 a.m. the **Dover Castle** appeared at the entrance to the Bay, signalling for a pilot. The **Rip** despatched a crew to guide her in and began the return voyage to Hobson's Bay carrying the passengers and some of the crew from the Light of the Age. Soon after, at dawn, the lookout at Point Lonsdale (about a mile and a half from the scene), observed the drama and telegraphed the news to Queenscliffe, from where it was relayed to Melbourne. The steam tugs **Resolute** and **Titan** were immediately despatched to render what assistance they could and at about 1 p.m. the steamer tug **Warhawk** went out to the wreck with Mr Moffatt, the Lloyd's representative, aboard.

In the sober light of day, the Light of the Age was a sorry sight. With her masts gone and by now with 15 feet of water in the hold, she was obviously doomed, and Mr Moffatt soon left the scene to carry the bad news back to the vessel's agents, Messrs Lorimer, Marwood and Rome of Melbourne. He took the remaining passengers with him, as well as the eight crewmen, who were by this time drunk and of no further

use. Later in the day, at about 4 p.m., the pilot schooner **Rip** arrived at Hobson's Bay wharf with the first group of rescued passengers and their luggage, and that evening Captain Porter - still drunk - came ashore as well. He left the mate on board, under the authority of the pilots, but by the next morning (Friday 17th January), he too left the ship. Early on the following morning (Saturday 18th), while the **Warhawk**, **Resolute** and **Titan** stood by, the **Light of the Age** began to break up and, over the next two days, the coast for miles around was strewn with her debris and cargo. Local residents headed for the beaches in great numbers, where, as the *Geelong Advertiser* remarked:

"...... it is anticipated more profitable business than gathering shells will be provided them for some time to come."

The schooners **Ben Bolt**, **Result** and **Phoenix** carried out salvage operations for several weeks; the **Phoenix** herself subsequently becoming a casualty when she was wrecked near Point Lonsdale while returning with a cargo of salvaged goods.

On 22nd January 1868 the Steam Navigation Board began an inquiry into the loss of the Light of the Age. After a hearing lasting six days, the Board delivered its findings on 30th January. The report condemned the owners of the ship for allowing her to sail with outdated charts and inadequate lifeboats, but its main criticism was directed at Captain Porter, stating that:

"...... Captain Porter's evidence showed gross ignorance, and (that the Board) thought that he had become incapacitated, through intemperate habits, to perform the duties required to command the ship, and that his conduct had rendered him totally incapable of further trust."

The Board held Captain Porter completely responsible for the loss of the Light of the Age, due both to his neglect in navigating her and to his ill-advised attempt to enter port, when:

"...... especially on a dark night it was the duty of a Captain, when he found that his signals for a pilot were not answered, to have kept his lead going and stand off land until daylight."

The Board's final summation was brief and to the point:

"The Board deems the drunkenness of the Captain during the voyage, taken in connection with his state after the ship became a total wreck, to be of so gross a character, as in their opinion thoroughly to unfit him for the position of commander of a ship, and for these reasons regret it to be their duty to cancel the master's certificate No. 7738, issued by the Board of Trade, London."

It was the end of Captain Porter's career - not only had he lost his ship; now, even worse, he had lost his reputation as well.

The wreck of the Light of the Age still lies in the waters off Point Lonsdale, and was for a long time a favourite diving spot for scuba diving clubs. Many artefacts have been recovered from the site over the years, including some of her keel timbers, a signal gun, an anchor, pottery, glass and even crockery which bore the crest of the Black Ball Line. Today, the Light of the Age is classified as an historic wreck, and her last resting place is protected by law from further exploitation.

At the time of writing, no picture of her has yet been discovered

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE ???

by The Editor

From the end of the Second World War until 1961, some twelve liners were built specifically for Liverpool based services. They disappeared from the Mersey, almost overnight it seemed, in the late 1960s, and the seamen's strike of 1966 was undoubtedly a catalyst.

Four of these liners are still in service, and a further two remain laid up. So, whatever happened to the **Aureol**, the **Carinthia**, the **Empress of England** and the rest? This article attempts to answer the question.

The ACCRA of 1947.

Gross Tonnage: 11,600 Overall Length: 471 feet, Breadth: 66 feet. Speed: 16 knots

The Accra was built by Vickers-Armstrong Ltd at Barrow-in-Furness in 1947. She had been ordered in 1945, along with the Apapa, to re-introduce Elder Dempster's three-weekly Liverpool-Lagos service. The Accra was launched on 25th February 1947 and left Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 24th September. She had cost £900,000 to build and originally had a black hull. Her passenger capacity was 259 in first-class, 24 in second-class and 145 intercoastal deck passengers. During her 1949 overhaul she received her familiar grey hull with green boot topping. The Accra made 171 voyages on her designed service, and after arriving back in Liverpool in October 1967, she sailed for shipbreakers at Cartagena, Spain on 8th November, 1967.

The APAPA of 1948

The Apapa was a sister ship to the Accra and was launched at Barrow on 1st September 1947. She left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Apapa on 11th March 1948. Like her sister, the Apapa appeared originally with a black hull, but this was changed to grey with green boot topping in 1950. On 20th September 1968 the Apapa left Liverpool on her 177th and final voyage to West Africa, and in November 1968 she was sold to the Shun Cheong S.N. Company of Hong Kong. She was renamed **Taipoosham**, but her port of registry remained Liverpool. As the **Taipoosham** she operated a Hong Kong-Singapore-Penang service and remained on this route until February 1975 when she arrived at Kaohsiung for breaking up by the Yun Shen Steel and Iron Works.

The AUREOL of 1951

<u>Gross Tonnage: 14,083</u> Length overall: 537 feet Breadth: 70 feet Speed: 16 knots The Aureol was built in 1951 by Alexander Stephen & Sons, Linthouse, Glasgow. Her keel was laid on 17th November 1949 and she was launched on 28th March 1951. The Aureol commenced her maiden voyage from Liverpool to Apapa on 3rd November 1951 and maintained a fortnightly service to Lagos with the Accra and the Apapa.



The Accra of 1947 and the Apapa of 1948 appeared with black hulls



The Aureol of 1951



Anchor Line's Caledonia of 1947, identical to the 1937 Circassia and Cilicia



Cunard's Carinthia of 1956



The Empress of Britian (1956) and the Empress of England (1957)



The Empress of Canada of 1961 in the new 'corporate livery' introduced in 1968



The Saxonia was given an extensive refit by John Brown & Co over the winter of 1963/63 and was renamed Carmania. Her sister, the Ivernia, was similarly treated and became the Franconia.

After 1968 she was the sole liner on the run and was converted to one class, carrying 451 passengers. On 16th March 1972 the Aureol operated the final West African passenger sailing from Liverpool, and Southampton then became her UK terminal port. She was laid up on 21st October 1974 after 203 round voyages. On 15th November she was sold to the Marianna Shipping & Trading Company of Panama and in March 1975 she arrived at Jeddah for use as an accommodation ship and was renamed Marianna VI. Four years later, in 1979, she was towed to Piraeus where she was overhauled and refurbished. The Marianna VI was then based at Rabegh, 125 miles to the north of Jeddah and remained there until 1989 when she returned to Eleusis, near Piraeus.

Ten years later, in 1999, the Marianna VI (ex Aureol) is a museum of vintage navigation equipment, fine burled woods, period furnishings and fittings. Her decks and bulwarks are weather-worn and damaged by neglect. Many windows are broken and her upper decks have suffered water damage. Various scrap merchants have been inspecting the Marianna VI and it would seem highly likely that she will be sold as soon as the metal market recovers from its recent recession.

The CALEDONIA of 1948

Gross Tonnage: 11,252 Length overall: 506.6 ft Breadth: 66 ft Speed: 161/2 knots

The Caledonia was built in 1947 by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co of Govan. She was launched on 12th March 1947 and a year later entered the Glasgow-Liverpool-Bombay service, her maiden voyage commencing on 23rd March, 1948. She joined her pre-war sisters the Circassia (1937) and Cilicia (1937) on this route. The Caledonia had a short career of just 17 years with the Anchor Line, and on 29th December 1965 she arrived at Amsterdam for use as a floating hostel for students of Amsterdam University. In March 1970 the Caledonia was towed to Hamburg and broken up by Ritschers.

The CARINTHIA of 1956

Gross Tonnage: 21,947 Length overall: 608 feet Breadth: 80 feet Speed: 20 knots

The Carinthia was built by John Brown & Co at Clydebank and was launched by Princess Margaret on 14th December 1955. Her maiden voyage was from Liverpool to Montreal on 27th June 1956. On 13th October 1967 the Carinthia took Cunard's final Liverpool to Montreal sailing, and returned to Southampton. She was the only one of the Cunard 'quartet' not to receive a white hull. On 9th December 1967 the Carinthia was laid up at Southampton and on 31st January 1968 she was sold to the Sitmar Line of Genoa. She was renamed Fairland and remained in port at Southampton for a further two years, with a 'Sitmar' funnel. This delay was due to Sitmar having lost its Australian emigrant contract. In January 1970 the Fairland left for Trieste where she was converted into a cruise liner by Arsenale Triestino San Marco. In November 1971 there was another change of name to Fairsea and the following year she commenced cruising on the U.S. West Coast. In 1988 Sitmar was purchased by P. & O. and there was another change of name to Fair Princess for use within the Princess Cruises' division. In 1995 the old ship was to have been sold to Regency Cruises but the deal fell through and the Fair Princess was laid up at Mazatlan and later Los Angeles. With no potential buyers, the Fair Princess was returned to the P. & O. fleet in early 1997 to replace the Australian based Fairstar. She initially had some mechanical problems, but the old Carinthia is currently enjoying great success cruising in Australian waters. The Fair Princess (ex Carinthia) is due to be replaced by the Sky Princess in the autumn of 2000.

The EMPRESS OF BRITAIN of 1956 Gross Tonnage: 25,516 Length overall: 640 feet Breadth: 85 feet Speed: 20 knots

The Empress of Britain was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company at Govan and was launched by Queen Elizabeth II on 22nd June 1955. She arrived at Liverpool on 2nd March 1956 and entered the Gladstone Graving Dock for a repaint and final inspection. The Empress of Britain ran her trials off the Isle of Arran on 8th March 1956 and left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Montreal on 20th April. On 10th October 1963 she arrived back at Liverpool on the completion of her 123rd voyage for Canadian Pacific and then went on charter to Max Wilson's Travel Savings Association. This organisation was unable to maintain the charter payments and on 22nd August 1964 the Empress of Britain arrived back in Liverpool for the last time. On 16th November she was sold to the Greek Line for \$8million and renamed Queen Anna Maria. A lido deck was fitted by the Mariotti Shipyard, Genoa. In 1965 the **Oueen Anna Maria** operated a Piraeus-Naples-New York service and remained with the Greek Line until January 1975 when she was laid up at Perama. In December of that year she was bought by Carnival Cruise Lines who gave her another refit and in early 1976 she emerged as the Carnivale and operated weekly Caribbean cruises from Miami. In 1993 the Carnivale was transferred to Fiesta Marina Cruises and took the name Fiesta Marina. Two years later she was sold to Epirotiki Cruises and the name was again changed, this time to **Olympic**, and as such she operated Aegean cruises. At the end of 1997 the old ship was purchased by Topaz International who gave her a \$20million refit at the Skaramanga Shipyards. Renamed The Topaz, the old Empress of Britain is currently operating a highly successful fly/cruise programme on charter to Thomson Holidays.

<u>The EMPRESS OF ENGLAND of 1957</u> Gross Tonnage: 25,585 Length overall: 640 feet Breadth: 85 feet Speed: 20 knots

The Empress of England was launched by Lady Eden on 9th May 1956 from the yard of Vickers Armstrong (Shipbuilders) Ltd., Walker-on-Tyne. She left Liverpool on her

maiden voyage to Montreal on 18^{th} April 1957. In October 1963 the Empress of England went on charter to the Travel Savings Association and cruised from the U.K. and Cape Town. She returned to Canadian Pacific's Liverpool-Montreal service on 28^{th} April 1964 and remained on that route until the end of 1969. On 3rd April 1970 the Empress of England was sold to Shaw, Savill & Albion and renamed Ocean Monarch. She made one round voyage to Australia and then returned to Cammell Laird at Birkenhead for refitting as a one-class vessel with lido decks for cruising. A series of strikes resulted in the refit over-running by six months and twelve summer cruises had to be cancelled. The cost to Cammell Laird of this fiasco was £1.25 million. It was 17^{th} September 1971 before the Ocean Monarch left Birkenhead. She operated one cruise from Southampton to the Mediterranean and then sailed for the Pacific (*via* Panama) and was based on Sydney for a programme of cruises. Her performance was marred by persistent breakdowns, crew trouble and a bad reputation. Shaw, Savill returned the Ocean Monarch to the U.K. and on 13^{th} June 1975 she sailed for the breaker's yard at Kaohsiung, where she arrived on 17^{th} July.

The EMPRESS OF CANADA of 1961 Gross Tonnage: 25,585 Length overall: 650feet Breadth: 87feet Speed: 20 knots

The Empress of Canada was launched on 10th May 1960 by Mrs Diefenbaker, wife of the Prime Minister of Canada, from the yard of Vickers-Armstrong (Shipbuilders) Ltd at Walker-on-Tyne. She left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Montreal (*via* Greenock) on 24th April 1961. In 1970 the Empress of Canada became the last Canadian Pacific ocean liner in service but she made only 13 trans-Atlantic round voyages, the rest of the time she was cruising. On 23rd November 1971 she arrived at Liverpool for the last time and Canadian Pacific's North Atlantic service ceased after 68 years. In January 1972 the Empress of Canada was sold to Carnival Cruise Lines Inc., of Panama and was renamed Mardi Gras. She left Tilbury on a delivery cruise to Miami on 26th February 1972. The Mardi Gras became a highly successful ship and was given several overhauls and modernisations. She sails on today as the Apollon on charter to Direct Cruises and visited Liverpool regularly in 1999. Her external appearance remains virtually unchanged since her Canadian Pacific days.

The IVERNIA of 1955

Gross Tonnage: 22,592 Length overall: 608 feet Breadth: 80 feet Speed: 20 knots

The Ivernia was built at Clydebank by John Brown & Co and was launched on 14th December 1954. She ran her trials on 16th June 1955, but her maiden voyage on the Liverpool-Montreal service, scheduled for 1st July, was delayed two weeks because of a catering strike. In April 1957 Southampton became her main U.K. terminal port, although she still came to Liverpool on occasions. During the winter of 1962/63 the Ivernia returned to Clydebank for a complete overhaul which included building a lido deck. She was renamed Franconia and sailed the St. Lawrence route in summer but

cruised extensively in the winter. On 30th January 1968 the Franconia became the last Cunard liner to leave Liverpool on a scheduled service to New York, *via* Bermuda. She then took up the weekly New York-Bermuda run but at the end of 1971 she was advertised for sale and laid up in the River Fal on 14th May 1972 alongside her sister the Carmania. In 1973 she entered service for the Soviet-owned Black Sea Shipping Company as the Fedor Shalyapin and sailed under charter to CTC cruises. Following a German charter she was laid up at Iliychevsk early in 1995. An unexpected reprieve came in the form of a Russian charter which took the Fedor Shalyapin to the Indian Ocean on trooping service. A Somillion upgrading was commenced at the Iliychevsk shipyard, but the money ran out, leaving her only half finished. To the best of my knowledge she remains laid up at Iliychevsk in January 2000.

The REINA DEL MAR of 1956

Gross Tonnage: 20,750 Length overall: 601feet Breadth: 78 feet Speed: 18 knots

The **Reina del Mar** lasted for just 19 years. She was built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast and launched on 7th June 1955. On 3rd May 1956 she left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Valparaiso *via* the Panama Canal. In 1963 she went on charter to Max Wilson's Travel Savings Association and on 10th March 1964 the **Reina del Mar** went back to Belfast for conversion into a cruise liner. On June 10th 1964 she was placed under Union-Castle management and the following November she was painted in Union-Castle colours. During her last six years she was shunted around: in 1969 she was transferred to Royal Mail Line ownership and in September 1973 the **Reina del Mar** was sold to the Union-Castle Line. In July 1975 she arrived at Kaohsiung and was broken up by the Tung Cheng Steel Company.

<u>The SAXONIA of 1954</u> <u>Gross Tonnage: 22,592</u> Length overall: 608 feet Breadth: 80 feet Speed: 20 knots

The **Saxonia** was the first of a quartet of almost identical ships designed for Cunard's Canadian service. She was launched by Lady Churchill on 17th February 1954 at the Clydebank yard of John Brown & Co. and left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Montreal on 2nd September 1954. In 1957 the **Saxonia's** U.K. terminal port became Southampton and five years later she returned to her builders for conversion work over the winter of 1962/63 during which she was renamed **Carmania**. She had a '*Caroniagreen'* hull from 1963 until 1967 when it was painted white. The **Carmania** maintained a Canadian service from Southampton during the summer months, but 'off-season' she was used extensively for cruising. She was laid up in the River Fal in May 1972 as a result of failure to agree manning levels with the National Union of Seamen. In May 1973 the **Carmania** was purchased by the Soviet controlled Black Sea Shipping Company and following a three month refit by Swan, Hunter she was renamed **Leonid Sobinov**. She was chartered to C.T.C. for U.K. and Australian cruising and on 24th November 1975 the **Leonid Sobinov** became the first liner to pass

through the Suez Canal after its clearance following the 1967 war. She had a spell of trooping service taking Cuban troops to Angola in the 1980s and following a refit at Piraeus in 1989 the Leonid Sobinov operated Mediterranean cruises out of Malta. In 1995 she was laid up at Iliychevsk and offered for sale or charter. On 27th January 1999 the old ship sailed for Odessa, continuing *via* the Bosphorus and Suez to the scrapyard at Alang. The Leonid Sobinov ran out of fuel in the Indian Ocean and was adrift before being dragged on to the beach at Alang for demolition on 1st April, 1999.

The SYLVANIA of 1957

Gross Tonnage: 22,017 Length Overall: 608 feet Breadth: 80 feet Speed: 20 knots

The Sylvania was launched on 22nd November 1956 at Clydebank by John Brown & Company. She left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Montreal (via Greenock) on 5th June 1957. Four years later she replaced the Britannic as the Liverpool-New York vessel. On 10th February 1965 the Sylvania operated Cunard's first cruise out of Liverpool since 1939 and on 24th November 1966 she closed the Liverpool-New York service after 126 years. In 1967 the Sylvania was given a white hull and operated flycruise holidays based on Gibraltar, and was back on the St. Lawrence route in the summer, although Southampton based. On 31st January 1968 the Sylvania was sold to Sitmar and renamed Fairwind. Like her sister, the Carinthia, she remained at Southampton for two years before sailing to Trieste for a complete refit. Sitmar had lost the UK-Australia emigrant contract for which the Sylvania had been purchased, but following a 1970 Trieste refit the Fairwind operated highly successful Floridabased cruises along with her sister the Fairsea (ex Carinthia). The P.& O. owned Princess Cruises acquired Sitmar in 1988 and the Fairwind became the Dawn Princess. She continued with U.S.-based crusing until 1993 when she was sold to 'V-Ships' and renamed Albatros. She then went on charter to Phoenix Secreisen and the Albatros (ex Sylvania) continues to be a popular and successful ship. She returned to the Mersey for one day in 1997 as part of a cruise itinery.

Sources and References

"Whatever Happened to the???" has been compiled from files the Editor has maintained on 'Liverpool Liners' for many years. Sources include the Liverpool Daily Post, Liverpool Echo, Journal of Commerce, Sea Breezes and Ships Monthly. Extensive reference has also been made to the Duncan Haws' 'Merchant Fleets' series of books, from which the drawings which accompany this article have been taken. <u>j.s.</u>

The next edition of 'The Bulletin' will be sent out to Members in mid-June. There will be a full précis of John Lingwood's paper 'William Wheelwright - The Man'; Mike Stammers has written on 'Ships of the Alt'; and there will be articles from regular 'Bulletin' contributors Terry Kavanagh and Charles Dawson. The Chairman of the Trustees and the Director of the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside

Invite you and a guest to the opening of a new suite of galleries





A STORY OF MERCHANT SHIPS AND SEAFARERS

Opened by special guest Antony Booth

on

Wednesday, 16 February 2000

"LIFELINES - A STORY OF MERCHANT SHIPS AND SEAFARERS"

by Alan McClelland

"Morale", the Deputy Director General of the Ministry of War Transport informed the Permanent Under Secretary at the height of the U-Boat campaign in 1942 during the Second World War, "has not so far been affected and the only thing one can say with conviction is that it is admirable, indeed wonderful." The subject was the conduct of the majority of those people serving in the British Merchant Navy, enduring the longest continuous trial to which they had ever been subjected. The sceptical should note that the report was from one who knew all the facts for the private information of one who needed to know the truth.

LIFELINES opened by Antony Booth on 16th February is a fitting tribute to the importance of shipping in war and peace. Approached by an accommodation ladder alongside the realistic representation of the rivetted side of a merchant ship, the suite of galleries provide a wealth of information in a straightforward, yet imaginative way, free of the gimmickry which distracts in some other national museums. Much material has been displayed and the sequence of exhibits is easy to follow. Some visitors might like to see more information on particular exhibits and displays, but surely it may be argued that as presented they are invitations to seek further - perhaps within the Museum Archives.

I was most impressed by the appreciative comments of the many professional seafarers and retired seafarers present at the opening of the exhibition. A wealth of experience was displayed in the gathering, complemented by those who make a study of ships and the sea. LIFELINES is well worth an extended visit, indeed it is a 'must' for any person interested in the development of what is still an essential if often woefully neglected service industry.

READERS' LETTERS

from Mike Stammers, Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum:

The Light of the Age article contains a couple of errors which I should like to correct. James Baines' partner was Thomas Miller Mackay and not Donald McKay who was the famous builder of clippers at Boston. I have made extensive enquiries and they were not related; they also spelled their names slightly differently.

The second error is that Barned's was a Liverpool bank and not a London one. The whole 1866 financial crisis was precipitated by the failure of the London bank Overend Gurney which had a 'domino effect' on vulnerable banks elsewhere. I go into the whole business in my book '*The Passage Makers*' (Brighton, 1978).

Terry Kavanagh's article 'Three Early Screw Steamers on the Mersey' ('The Bulletin' vol.38, no.4, Spring 1995) gives a detailed account of John Grantham's Liverpool Screw built about 1843. After some successful excursions on the Mersey and to Chester in that year, she disappeared from the local newspapers. As Terry pointed out, it was possible that she was the same screw vessel ordered by the Mersey & Irwell Co. from Mather & Co. in July 1843. The biographical monograph on Bennet Woodcroft by John Hewson and published by the British Library in 1879 contains some more evidence on this vessel. Bennet Woodcroft (1803-1879) was a Manchester inventor who later went on to set up the Patent Office Library. In 1833 he patented his own form of screw propulsion and tried it out on the River Irwell with a hand propelled boat. In 1844 he patented a variable pitch propeller. He also took an interest in Grantham's work and one of his scrapbooks contains a poster for 'Aquatic Omnibus. A Steam Packet (the Liverpool Screw) to ply from 1st September 1843 between New Bailey Bridge and the first lock near the Botanical Gardens'.

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

L.N.R.S. Members John Hill and Alan McClelland have re-opened their inquiry into propulsion developments, particularly in the inter-war period. Of

particular concern at present is the White high speed compound engine, and its performance in mid - long term service. If any of our engineer members have any information on this matter could they please get in touch with Messrs Hill and McClelland at the Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives.

ss "ALASKA" / SHIP'S TOBACCONIST

Edward Paintin has e-mailed the Society and would be grateful for any information about the ss Alaska which sailed from Liverpool on 13th September 1884, arriving at New York on 20th September.

Mr Paintin states he has one member of his family who gave his profession as 'Ship's Tobacconist' - just what did this position on board ship involve ?

MERSEY CHAMBERS

L.N.R.S. Member Pat Moran has come up with some more information about Mersey Chambers, the headquarters of the Harrison Line in Covent Garden, Liverpool. The plot of land was sold in 1842 by the Tower Building Estate, and the original building on the site was a hotel used by the masters and passengers of American packets. By 1880 the original building had been replaced by the present Mersey Chambers and in 1881 it was the Head Office of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. Messrs T.& J. Harrison are recorded as being tenants in 1882.

REPORT ON MEETING

CAMERA TO CANVAS - Mrs P. Ballard (Thursday 16th March, 2000)

Mrs Ballard, a member of the Society of Architectural and Industrial Illustrators, gave a fascinating presentation of her work. It was most significant that her patient and meticulous approach to her subjects, without losing sight of her integrity as an artist, was much appreciated by the audience - especially the engineers.

In 1987 Mrs Ballard visited the Penmaenbach Tunnel while it was under construction and she found a new perspective which allowed her to combine her earlier style of work using technical drawing with landscape.

Her first commission in the world of Civil Engineering was to paint the East Portal of Penmaenbach nearing completion for presentation at the tunnel opening. This was followed by a series of paintings showing the tunnel's progress. In 1991 Mrs Ballard worked extensively in Demnark recording the construction of the West Bridge which forms part of the European Storebaelt project, and by 1996 several of her works had been reproduced as lithograph prints.

Civil engineering work, particularly tunnels and bridges have now become of great interest to the artist. The ability to reproduce on canvas the design, construction and atmosphere of these vast projects has resulted in works almost unique in the world

of art. Mrs Ballard emphasised that, having undertaken some commissions in the past, she would like to return to marine art.

a.h.mc.c

LOOSE ENDS

UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR THE "LADY OF MANN"?

A decision has to be made this year about the future of the last traditional Isle of Man Steam Packet vessel - the 1976 Lady of Mann. She will be unable to operate in the year 2001 unless she complies with the SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) regulations which were introduced following the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster.

The work required on the *Lady* will involve the fitting of sponsons (basically large buoyancy tanks) to her hull, and probably the installation of watertight bulkheads on the car-deck. Surveyors have been on board to cost the work, and the generally accepted figure seems to be in the region of £2 million. This should be seen in the context that Sea Containers has just spent £500,000 refitting the 10-month old **SuperSeaCat Three**, so £2 million on a 25-year old ship doesn't seem too excessive.

Speaking on Manx Radio on 14th February, Sea Containers Irish Sea Ferries' managing director Hamish Ross said that the Lady of Mann has a very crucial role to play this year. She has already covered the passenger sailings whilst the Ben-my-Chree was in dry-dock at Birkenhead; she will be covering for the SeaCats during the inevitable bouts of bad weather this Spring and next Autumn; she will be sailing to capacity during the TT fortnight carrying up to 530 motorcycles each crossing and she will be operating a few of the highly popular Fleetwood and Llandudno excursions.

Steam Packet communications manager Geoff Corkish states: "The Lady is there for back-up purposes only". When this back-up was not available over the 1998-1999 New Year weekend because the Lady herself was in trouble, five consecutive days' SuperSeaCat crossings between Liverpool and Douglas were cancelled due to gales and the passenger back-log was only cleared by chartering Manx Airlines flights to Liverpool.

If the so-called 'fast-craft' are here to stay, then there has to be conventional back-up to operate services when wave heights in the Irish Sea exceed three metres and the SeaCats are not permitted to put to sea. In December 1999 these conditions prevailed on 21 out of 24 consecutive days and the Lady of Mann was brought into service and provided regular crossings with no problems whatsoever.

In nine months' time the Lady of Mann will not be able to sail unless she complies with SOLAS requirements. Many people remember only too well some spectacular Steam Packet fiascos over the last twenty years - let us hope there isn't another one in the making here. \Box

DIRECT CRUISES ABANDON LIVERPOOL

It appears that the former **Empress of Canada** of 1961, now the Apollon, will not now be visiting the UK this year. The six scheduled cruises from the Greenock Ocean Terminal have been cancelled, as have the Liverpool calls.

Just two years ago there was impressive talk of Direct Cruises operating three vessels out of the Mersey by 2000. Now there are going to be no cruises at all!

The 'Brocklebank' column in the *Liverpool Daily Post* on 15th December 1999 had this to say about Liverpool's future as a cruise ship port-of-call:

"It is intriguing news that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company is "making a bid' to extend the Pier Head landing stage to its former glory, according to Liverpool Lord Mayor Coun. Joe Devaney at Cunard Line's **Caronia** renaming ceremony last Friday (10th December).

"MD&HC broke its pledge to create Pier Head cruise facilities in time for the Spring of 1999 for Direct Cruises' liner Apollon, which has had to use the socalled cruise terminal at Langton Dock.

"This building, with its overpowering stench from use as an antique vegetable warehouse, has been consistently criticised by passengers. Apparently Cunard was sufficiently appalled by Langton Dock to decide on renaming the **Caronia** at the Pier Head landing stage in spite of the complications of dredging, tides and fickle weather. So much for Liverpool's great cruise liner revival."

FORMER BAR LIGHTSHIP 'PLANET'

Funding for the restoration of the former Liverpool Bar Lightship Planet is being sought. The lightship is currently berthed at the Historic Warships site at Birkenhead.

The **Planet** was placed on the Bar station in 1960 following the withdrawal of the former lightship **Alarm**. The **Planet** was withdrawn in September 1971 and replaced with a LANBY buoy. (Large Automatic Navigation Buoy).

Can any 'Bulletin' readers supply information as to what happened to the **Planet** after her withdrawal from Liverpool Bar? She currently carries a board marked 'CHANNEL' under her light tower which suggests that she may have had a spell as the Channel Light Vessel until that too was automated.

CAMMELL LAIRD

On Monday 17th January Cammell Laird announced that they had acquired 59% of Wright & Beyer Limited, which operated the competing Bidston Dry Dock facility at the West Float, Birkenhead. The £1 million cash deal also includes an option to purchase the remaining Wright & Beyer shares from April, 2000. Commenting on the deal, Jon Schofield, Cammell Laird finance director said; "This acquisition is an important addition to our operations on the Mersey as it adds capacity to the Group's existing facilities at Birkenhead and the recently acquired Clarence Dry Docks." Work continues at the Birkenhead yard on the lengthening of the Seaway Condor for Stolt Comex, and work is starting on the new build section for the Costa Classica

cruise ship conversion. Cammell Laird is confidant of winning a similar contract to lengthen the Costa Romantica which will be awarded in September 'as long as the cruise market remains buoyant'. "It is only a matter of time before shipbuilding returns to Cammell Laird," said Jon Schofield.

FURTHER DELAYS TO THE RO-RO TERMINALS

Another twelve month delay to the Twelve Quays ro-ro terminal at Birkenhead has been announced. This time the problem centres around a dispute concerning the future of the Grade 2 listed pumping station situated on the river wall at the Wallasey Dock and which occupies part of the proposed development site. The building is now owned by the North West Development Agency which inherited it from English Partnerships. It occupies part of the site which is subject to the planning application for the terminal.

Meanwhile across the Mersey at the Trafalgar Dock site Any plans for a ro-ro terminal on the Liverpool side of the river have now been effectively abandoned following the announcement by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company of an ambitious £200 million plan to turn 70 acres of former dockland into a quality residential, recreational and commercial area. MD&HC is to apply for outline planning consent for the development which will stretch northward from the present Waterloo Warehouse apartments to the Bramley-Moore Dock. The famous six-sided Victoria Clock Tower at the former Salisbury Half-Tide river entrance will be restored.

IRISH FERRIES

The world's largest passenger-car ferry, currently under construction for Irish Ferries' Dublin-Holyhead route is 'on-target' for entering service in the Spring of 2001. The giant keel section was laid at a ceremony on 24^{th} January in the Aker Finnyards shipyard in Rauma, Finland. A fortnight later it was announced from the Dublin HQ of the James Joyce Centre Museum that the new vessel is to be named Ulysses.

THE "SOLWAY HARVESTER"

Video footage taken by divers of the Solway Harvester reveals that the hull has a 'concertina-style' bump on the starboard side and that the deck is severely damaged. The bodies of the seven man crew have been recovered, but attempts to salvage the wreck itself have been repeatedly prevented due to poor weather conditions and have been postponed until the Spring. The British Marine Accident Investigation Branch is reviewing videotape taken by divers and plans to issue an interim report by the end of March. Reports that the Solway Harvester was involved in a collision with a container or other vessel are being played down.

Members with access to the Internet can keep up to date with these and other Mersey stories by visiting John Luxton's website at \leq www.merseyshipping.co.uk >. The site is updated weekly, usually on Sunday evenings.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

NOTICE BOARD

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Thursday, 20th April, 2000 "CAPTAIN THOMAS PRITCHARD, RNR" (Ron Dennis)

> Thursday, 18th May, 2000 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

(All meetings are held at 12.30pm in the Education Suite of the Merseyside Maritime Museum)

"THE MONDAY FACILITY"

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Maritime Museum on Mondays will continue in 2000 as follows :



APRIL : 3rd and 10th MAY : 8th, 15th and 22nd JUNE : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th JULY : 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st AUGUST : 7th, 14th and 21st SEPTEMBER : 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

AND FINALLY

The Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire Link Group has outlined plans to match the skills of the thousands of unemployed in North Wales to the thousands of vacancies in Ireland, with the intention that Welsh workers would commute daily to Ireland by ferry. Talks are understood to have taken place with Stena Line for cut-price commuter fares on its Stena Explorer HSS service.